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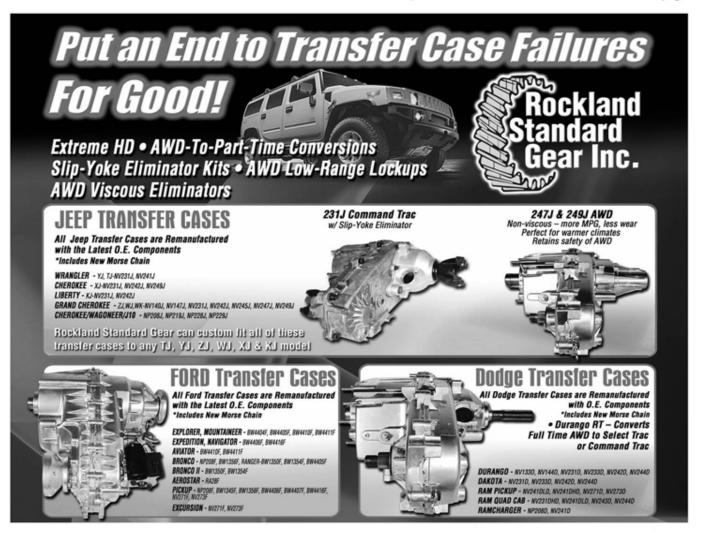
# **The Blame Game**

Fix The Problem, Cut The Blame

ur society seems to thrive on fixing blame. Everything is somebody else's fault and punishing that somebody will make everything right. Nobody wants to be accountable for his own actions. We have a court system, civil and criminal, that barely works - and at horrendous expense. This cycle will continue in all parts of our society until people begin to fix the problems instead of finding someone to blame. This trend in society finds its way into our industry. We always have someone to blame: the customer, the parts,

the torque converter, the rebuilder, the installer, the dealer, the manufacturer, ad nauseam. When I was young (just before dirt was discovered), an older man whom I respected a lot told be, "Play the hand you're dealt, never cheat and when you lose, pay up." Let's face it, s—t happens, and the only way out is to deal with the problem. In the immortal words of Gil Younger, "It is a whole lot easier to fix the problem than to deal with the hassle."

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#### **How To Break Out Of The Blame Game**

Mistakes happen in every human undertaking. The only people who don't make mistakes are those people who don't do anything. It is critical to analyze mistakes and change your routine to prevent them from recurring. One common mistake is mis-diagnosing a transmission problem and working on the wrong thing. The only way out of this is to improve your diagnostic skills, to understand thoroughly how a unit

works and how it interacts with other vehicle components.

Another everyday mistake is missing a faulty part on teardown and not including it in the estimate. This usually means that you will eat the parts, as upselling a customer is almost always impossible. The solution: Thoroughly clean and inspect all parts and then make up an estimate based on fact instead of guesswork.

#### Communication

Communicating clearly with the customer, the shop staff and parts suppliers is critical. The shop and the

customer must be clear about what is wrong in the vehicle, the cost and time to repair, and the length and coverage of the warranty. Each of the shop personnel should understand what his job is, how the quality of his work affects the business, the customer, his fellow workers and their financial future. Develop routines to double-check every production process for quality control, reduction of errors, and note any faulty parts of the car that may influence transmission operation adversely.

Communicating with your parts supplier is crucial. At least five calls a day come in where the person ordering the parts has no idea what transmission he is working on.

Logic tells us that if a man does not know what unit he is working on, he also cannot know its principles of operation, its specifications for proper assembly or common weak points in the unit. Know what you are working on and learn to identify the unit.

## **Theory Of Operations**

It is flat-out impossible to build good units consistently if you don't know how they work. You cannot diagnose problems before or after rebuild, nor can you be sure you won't damage a new or rebuilt unit by not having it adjusted properly. Case in point: A shop calls for technical help. They have just installed a new 229 transfer case in a Jeep Wagoneer. The unit isn't working properly and the man on the phone thinks it is defective (blame). After asking a few questions, I am





informed that there is no vacuum system present in the vehicle and that the front driveshaft is missing. Now, a 229 T/case cannot operate without vacuum and lack of a front driveshaft will kill off the viscous coupling in short order. This shop's lack of familiarity with the unit it is working on is financial suicide. The manufacturer will not warranty a unit that fails due to installation error, and a great deal of time and money will be wasted with the shop and the customer on the losing side.

## The 'Right' Parts

Getting the "right" parts means careful identification of the trans you are working on, and the vehicle it is part of. Year, make, model, VIN, production date, engine size, carbed or injected, turbo or non-turbo are just part of the picture. Tooth counts, bearing numbers, overall length, spline counts, etc. help make absolutely certain you are getting what you need. There is more to "right parts" than ID – there is quality. There is OEM or better quality, and there is "will fit." Which do you want to stake your checkbook, your reputation and your warranty on?

Ordering and getting the parts is only half the job. Inspecting the new parts and installing them properly is an overlooked area. When parts are received, open the boxes carefully and set them aside for reuse. No dealer and very few parts distributors will give you credit for parts returned that are in dirty, torn or unsaleable packaging. Compare the new parts with the old ones. Make sure the bearing dimensions are identical. Match gears for tooth count, bore dimension, pitch and overall size.

Many parts will come to you coated with rust inhibitors such as cosmoline. Thorough removal of all such coatings is very important for proper operation. Synchronizers will not work properly coated with cosmoline. Lube holes and passages may be blocked by anti-rust compounds. Inspect mainshafts thoroughly for correct length, spline counts and lube holes. Rifle-drilled shafts common to front-wheel-drive units can be cleaned and tested for lube flow in a solvent tank. Make sure all lube holes are drilled completely through.

All OEM-quality manufacturers try very hard not to let a bad part leave the plant, but it does happen. You are the final quality control on the parts you use. Trust nothing, leave nothing to chance. Only when new parts are cleaned, matched and completely inspected should they be installed. It won't be the first time that the part number of the package is correct, but the factory put the wrong part in the box.

### The Proper Tools

Having the correct tools is critical when you install these shiny new parts. You won't believe how many brand-new bearings I have seen ruined because they were installed with a hammer and a punch. Poor installation technique is costly and the cause of many a comeback, and it's your money.

Another of the proper tools is a repair manual for the unit you're working on. It will come in handy even if you are swapping in a new unit. You still need to know the type of lube and how much. Build a library as you go along, just as you build up your tool box. The first job pays for the book, the rest of the jobs make you money.

## **Don't Play The Blame Game**

When you do a job that doesn't work right, analyze the problem and correct it. You will learn more and increase your skill level. Pointing a finger never puts money in your pocket. Remember, the guys who can, do. Those who can't, complain and blame. Success is all luck – just ask any loser.



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