

Staying secure with carwash tokens

With over 27 years of experience, Dottie Hopkins shares how tokens can you save time and money.

Dottie Hopkins has over 27 years of experience with helping customers select tokens for their carwashes. She works as a sales associate for Van Brook of Lexington, Inc., a company which has been involved with the carwashing industry since 1964 and introduced electronic tokens in the early 1990s.

With almost three decades of experience under her belt, it's needless to say that she knows what she's talking about when it comes to these small, lightweight discs. From safety and security to using them as promotional and marketing tools, Hopkins is more than happy to share with you the way in which tokens can help your carwash and your customers.

Professional Carwashing & Detailing:

How are tokens beneficial to a carwash?

Dottie Hopkins: There are many ways. They:

- Reduce theft and vandalism: Theft is less likely to occur because tokens have no monetary value outside of the carwash. Signage which calls attention to the use of tokens reduces theft and costly equipment repairs.
- Increase sales and profits: Tokens are used over and over again, so their per-use cost nears zero. The only time tokens need to be re-ordered is when they are purchased by customers but not redeemed for products or services. Unused tokens that end up in cup holders or ashtrays are called "walkaway" tokens and they generate a substantial profit. Additionally, since customers don't think of tokens as money they are more likely to spend them on vended products, additional services, etc.
- Save time: Many carwash owners/operators complain about supplying the neighborhood with quarters for Laundromats, poker games, etc. Switching to tokens saves time because you are not refilling the bill changer with quarters. A single token valued at a dollar takes up less room (and weighs less) than

four quarters — so emptying coin boxes is easier and can be done less frequently.

- Offer pricing flexibility: Tokens make it simpler to control pricing as opposed to quarters or dollar coins. Carwash mechanisms give one credit for one coin. Price changes are necessary in multiples of quarters or dollar coins. With a token system, the only thing that changes is the selling price of the token.

PC&D: What are high security tokens?

DH: High security tokens have unique electronic signatures that allow electronic coin acceptors to distinguish them from other tokens.

For example, our high security tokens are sold on a controlled area distribution basis — customers have the exclusive right to use the token within a 75 mile radius of their specified location (or locations).

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PC&D: What are the tokens made from?

DH: Tokens come in a wide variety of materials including brass, red brass, nickel plated brass, nickel plated red brass, and nickel silver. The metal composition of high security tokens is proprietary information.

PC&D: How can you keep tokens from being used at other carwashes?

DH: You should survey your area thoroughly to see if any other businesses are using tokens prior to your initial order. This enables you to pick a size and metal that is not already in use in your area.



PC&D: Do you think tokens can also be used as a promotional tool?

DH: Tokens are a wonderful promotional tool — in fact some customers refer to them as "mini billboards." There is no limit to the ways tokens can be used to stimulate sales.

For example, discount sales can be offered for quantity purchases. Direct mail promotions have been very successful. Cross-promotional efforts with nearby businesses are beneficial to both parties.

Seasonal promotions for Christmas, Easter, birthdays, and more, have been well received.

Dispensing a free vacuum token for your best wash customers has also been very successful.

Selling or donating tokens to local charities which hold auctions and raffles helps promote your business within your community. Selling discounted tokens to fleet accounts such as cab companies, rental car companies, and truck lines is another way to promote your business.

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