

# RADICALLY Service Oriented

*Rule number one: Never recommend or sell the client something they don't need.*

COVER STORY



Photography: Benjamin Margalit

The Parma Heights Rad Air location started with two bays and has long since expanded to a nine-bay shop that handles everything from routine maintenance to Hi-Tech emission, electrical and electronic repairs, including engine and transmission overhauls.

by Mimi Vanderhoven

If you've ever driven into an auto repair shop with one problem and driven out having paid to fix three or four, Rob Marflak thinks he might know the reason.

"Just about all dealerships, national and regional chains pay their service writers and technicians at least partially on commissions and incentive plans," explains Rob, service manager of Rad Air Complete Car Care and Tire Center, in Parma Heights. "That creates an incentive for the service writer and technicians to find things to fix on your car, whether you need them fixed or not. On top of that, they set quotas on the number of brake jobs or other services that each location has to meet. That's unfair to the customer and it puts unfair pressure on the staff to just sell something at all costs just to make a paycheck."

"We never recommend or sell the client something they don't need," he shares. "It's one of Rad Air's four Golden Rules." The others are:

- Fix the car right the first time.
- Charge a fair price.
- Make sure the client is happy.

It's easy for Rad Air to follow its Golden Rules, Rob explains, because:

- Rad Air managers are certified, experienced automotive technicians; not salespeople.
- Rad Air's staff is paid fair, hourly wages or salaries; they do not receive commissions or incentives on what they recommend to clients.
- Rad Air makes company values of honesty and integrity its highest priority.
- Rad Air's technicians receive up-to-date, expert training and education various times throughout the year.
- Rad Air stands behind its work and provides an excellent lifetime warranty.



"Those are core values that make us different from many of our competitors," Rob says. "

Rob joined Rad Air's first location in Parma Heights back in 1992 when he was 19 years old. Rob is a "mechanic's mechanic," says Andy Fiffick, President & CEO of the family-owned company with 10 shops. "Mechanics and Technicians like Rob just have the mechanic gene—they have a knack for seeing the big picture, knowing how to diagnose, and what to repair."

**Rad Air offers a limited lifetime warranty on almost all repairs.**

Those are the kinds of technicians we hire—people who want to fix things and not sell things."

"Rob, Andy recalls, was a perfect fit for Rad Air, which began as a specialty radiator and air conditioning shop in 1975, and how we got our name Rad Air."

"He walked in the door and said, 'I have a family and I need a job.' I wasn't even looking for a tech, but I hired him on the spot," Andy says.

Starting as an apprentice, Rob became the Parma Heights service manager eight years ago and has earned the national "Technician of the Year" award for his outstanding mechanical, diagnostic and repair abilities, Andy says.

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"We're happy to do the easy things to keep our clients' cars running safe and sound, but we stand out by working on the tough, hard-to-diagnose problems that a lot of shops don't want to deal with," he says.

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Rad Air offers a limited lifetime warranty on almost all repairs, he emphasizes. “Some others are now copying us, but we’ve been doing it for many years,” he says. “The warranty covers OEM (Original Equipment Manufacturer) quality parts. If the part fails, it’s covered. That’s on top of our two-year, 30,000 mile base warranty on all of our parts and labor. That warranty is far better than anybody else in this area. Dealers warranties are typically 12 months, 12,000 miles.”

Speaking of dealers, Andy reveals that automobile dealers are stiff competition for Rad Air; however, for the wrong reason.

“Many people are under the fallacy that they have to take their car back to their dealer to get tough repairs done,” he says. “That’s hogwash. You have the right to take your car wherever you want to. In most cases, we will get the work done faster and less costly than a dealership. We have the same technology as the dealers and our technicians are trained to work on any make of vehicle out there.”

Plus, Rob adds, Rad Air offers free loaner cars—a convenience the company pioneered in Northeast Ohio some 35 years ago.

“People are too busy today to be without a car for even half a day,” Rob says. “That’s why a lot of people delay small repairs until they turn into major problems. That doesn’t have to happen. We have 15 loaners at our location alone.”

And you needn’t squeeze yourself into a tiny bargain basement vehicle while your car is being serviced. Rad Air has been

upgrading our loaner to brand new Jeep Compasses.

“We were offering Dodge Darts, but we found that they were a little tight and uncomfortable for some people,” Andy says. “People are delighted with the Jeeps. We just hope they’re willing to bring them back.”

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In accordance with Rad Air’s Golden Rules, the staff will be sure clients are happy before they leave the shop. And to make double sure, Rad Air follows up with a text two days after a repair is completed.

“We just shoot them a quick message to ask whether everything’s all right,” Rob says.

*To be sure everything is all right with your vehicle, you can visit Rad Air Complete Car Care and Tire Center, at 6565 Pearl Road, in Parma Heights. You also can visit [RadAir.com](http://RadAir.com) for more information, or to set up an appointment online. You can call Rad Air at 440-647-8854.*



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