

5 BIG MARKETING MISTAKES

THESE ARE THE BIGGEST ERRORS YOU CAN COMMIT IN YOUR SHOP TODAY. HOW MANY ARE YOU GUILTY OF?

BY CHRIS "CHUBBY" FREDERICK | CONTRIBUTOR

OVER THE past several years, stabilizing car count has been one of the biggest challenges, even for the shops typically loaded with cars. I overheard one of our long-term coaches, Eric Twiggs, tell a story in our marketing class. I thought you would enjoy the story and possibly learn from it.

I would like to introduce you to my friend Ed. He is a shop owner who was having a difficult time in his business. His cash flow was low, and he struggled to maintain a consistent car count. He saw winning the lottery as the solution to his financial problems. Every night, he said the following prayer, "Please let me win the lottery!"

Several weeks later, the Powerball drawing was announced and Ed did not win. Out of frustration, he looked up to the skies and yelled "My prayers were not answered!" Suddenly the clouds parted, and a voice was heard coming from above: "My son, work with me — at least go to the store and purchase a lottery ticket!"

Ed's story teaches us that if you don't have the right plan, you don't have a prayer when it comes to accomplishing your goals. In an effort to keep you from ending up like Ed, I have listed the five biggest marketing mistakes that you can make. Sometimes knowing what not to do is just as important as doing the right things.



Lacking Clarity of Purpose

When I go to your website, what is the next action you want me to take? Do you want me to call, stop by, leave my email address, subscribe to your blog or like your Facebook page? The consumer isn't sure what you want. The call to action "Call today to schedule an appointment" eliminates the confusion in the mind of the consumer.

According to a recent national survey of the automotive industry, 68 percent of consumers call a repair facility before their visit, so having this as a call to action works well. You can also have this invitation included in your direct

mail piece, email signature, business card or any other literature you send.

Ignoring W.I.I.F.M.

I have never been to your shop, but I bet your customers all tune in to the



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“WHAT IS THE LIFETIME VALUE OF A NEW CUSTOMER THAT BUILDS A RELATIONSHIP WITH A SHOP? A NEW CUSTOMER WITH A RELATIONSHIP WILL TYPICALLY STAY SEVEN YEARS AND INVEST APPROXIMATELY \$7,000 ON AVERAGE.”

CHRIS “CHUBBY” FREDERICK [ATI CEO]

same radio station. It can be found on W.I.I.F.M — What’s In It For Me. It’s great that you have ASE certified techs, a two-year/24,000-mile warranty and free WiFi, but how do those factors make my life better? Simply making a list of all your features without linking them to a benefit will keep you from connecting to what’s most important to your prospects. The most common benefits people care about are saving time, saving money, making money, avoiding effort, finding success, being pain free, having safety and security and living and loving.

Using these two words in your copy will allow you to connect the feature to the benefit: “so that.” For example, “We offer a courtesy shuttle so that you can get to work while we work on your car.” In this case, we have attached having a courtesy shuttle to saving time and allowing the customer to make more money by being able to get back to work. Mentioning the benefits that matter to your clientele will give you a competitive edge.

Marketing to Everyone

Several years ago, I spent \$1,200 on a direct mail piece I sent to 1,000 prospects in a randomly selected zip code. My strategy resulted in one new customer that came in to get her free oil change and never returned. The lesson that I learned was that if you market to everyone, you market to no one.

Pastor Rick Warren, author of “The Purpose Driven Life,” used an interesting approach when developing a strategy to grow his church membership. He conducted demographic research on the reading, spending and shopping habits of his ideal member. He also found out their age and income information. He named this member “Sam.” Whenever he created an ad, he had Sam in mind to include a picture of someone in the same age group on the flyer. The ads were placed in publications that Sam read and the radio stations that he listened to.

Who is your Sam or “Sally?” There are several retention companies that provide resources to help you identify



who your ideal customers are. You also can review your existing database and identify those that were the easiest to work with, gave you the best reviews and spent the most money with you over a period of time. Knowing who you’re trying to reach allows you to link your features to the specific benefits that are important to your Sally or Sam.

A Silver Bullet Mentality

Clients often ask me to give them the one idea that will fix their business. The answer that I give them is to try the lottery. This didn’t work for my friend, and there is a 99.9 percent chance it will not work for you. This is an example of the silver bullet mentality: the belief that there is one specific tactic that you can employ that will solve your car count and cash flow problems.

Successful marketing is a result of the application of the right methods over a sustained period of time. Having a consistent approach is key. The American Marketing Association (AMA) has concluded it takes anywhere from seven to nine “touches” to ensure you are remembered. The AMA reports you can contact someone up to 220 times in a 12-month period without irritating them.

Using a variety of contact methods will allow you to stay in the customer’s consciousness without pestering them. I would not recommend calling anyone 220 times, but making a thank-you call, sending a Facebook post and sending a maintenance reminder email would be a good way to use a mixture of the right methods to stay in touch.

Marketing is an Expense

When sales get tough, the first area that many shop owners look to cut is marketing. This is the equivalent of cutting off your oxygen supply because your

health is failing. The one area that can revive and sustain you is often first to go. I believe that this happens so frequently because marketing is viewed as an expense instead of an investment. Investing a minimum of 4 to 7 percent of your gross sales will keep your business breathing and thriving.

Understanding the lifetime value of your ideal customer will help you to view your efforts in the right perspective. To calculate this, you simply take your average repair order (ARO) and multiply by the number of visits made in a one-year time frame. Next, you take that number and multiply by seven, which represents the average number of years that someone does business with a shop.

If you apply this formula with an ARO of \$350 and three visits a year for seven years, a new customer is worth \$7,350 to you ($350 \times 3 \times 7$). Every touch gives you an opportunity to add more than \$7,000 in sales to your business. The initial investment of time and money can pay off in the long run if you stay the course.

If you can avoid the five biggest marketing mistakes, you will live like a lottery winner without purchasing a ticket! For a limited time we are offering a free interactive checklist of the most successful marketing methods used by shop owners across the country. Go to www.ationlinetraining.com/2014-09 to obtain a copy. 



Chris “Chubby” Frederick is the CEO and founder of the Automotive Training Institute. ATI’s 108 associates train and coach more than 1,150 shop owners every week across North America to drive profits and dreams home to their families. Our associates love helping shop owners who are having the same struggle as many of them have had, and who are looking for the same answers — and in some cases looking for a lifeline. This month’s article was written with the help of Eric Twiggs, a long-term coach at ATI.

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