



PROFIT MATTERS

HOW DO YOUR NUMBERS LINE UP? | BY CHRIS "CHUBBY" FREDERICK

Catch the Wave of the Present

If you want to increase car count by working on the relationships you have with your customers, then pay close attention to what our best clients are doing about it. Our 20 Mastermind members are made up of the best of the best from thousands of our shop owner clients. Any time the majority of this group gets excited about a marketing concept, you can be sure it is a winner. In this article, Senior Coach George Zeeks this month will teach you how to get started in the world of social marketing.

For many of us, the image of someone hunched over a keyboard, typing what he or she did today, why and with whom, brings to mind the average teen. If you are older than 45 and you are reading this, you will have a much different outlook on this information than someone 35 and younger.

Each of us has a different vision of reality, and that reality is the box that our head fits in. Sometimes the box is too small. That person hunched over the keyboard is your customer, and if they are not typing to you, they may be typing to your competition. It has been said to catch the wave of the future; this is the wave of the present.

Increasing Word of Mouth

We all know that word of mouth brings us our best customers. The problem is that it is

not "word of mouth" anymore. It has been replaced by Facebook, Twitter, texting, LinkedIn and other social networking opportunities. Let's face it, people do not



seem to talk to one another as much as they used to. Think about how many of your neighbors you talk with on a daily or even weekly basis. That's probably not that many. People have changed the way

that they interact with one another, and we need to make sure we are part of that new pattern. We call it social networking, social marketing or viral marketing, but for most people it is just everyday life.

To keep things simple, let's just deal with one medium for now: Facebook. If you do not have a Facebook page for your shop, you are missing the boat. It is that simple. More than 50 percent of the people on Facebook are over the age of 25, and that matches the demographics that we are looking for in new customers for our shops. Your customers are on Facebook, and their friends are there, too.

A key thing in the automotive business is customer retention. We try everything we can to keep our customers coming back, and for many of us it is a struggle. Having a Facebook page for our shop allows us to invite customers to become a member of our family and get to know us on a different level than just the people who fix their cars or change the oil.

We have the opportunity to become real people to them and bond them closer to us and our business. We have the ability to educate them about their car with pictures and video in a non-sales setting, which reinforces our image of knowledge and expertise. Heaven forbid that we can do all of the above and enter-

QUESTION OF THE MONTH

QUESTION:

If all my associates are opposed to a new ad I created, what should I do?

ANSWER:

Run it! It created emotion already and the odds are in your favor. It worked for me in this very magazine.

Do you have a question for Chubby? E-mail him at cfredrick@autotraining.net.

tain them at the same time. We all know that people buy from people whom they like. What would happen to your retention percentage if you gave your customers the opportunity to get to know you and your shop better in an environment they felt totally comfortable in?

Educate Your Customers

However, you must be careful of what you put on that Facebook page. It will become your face to the public and must represent the things you value. Think hard on your value system and how you want the customer to perceive you, because inconsistencies will become obvious. This is branding your organization on its most basic and perhaps most efficient level.

If you are a family-owned and operated business and you believe in the family, then show it. If you constantly strive for excellence through training and it is part of your shop culture, then celebrate it. If you are true to your beliefs and you are compelling, then the benefits are there.

There are times when the automotive world slows down. September brings to many of us a “back to school” slowdown, and we all love the week after Christmas, right? What would happen if we had built a following among our customers, shared with them that this is a normally slow week and offered them a savings if they come in during that week? No, not everyone will come in, but some will and that will help fill the schedule and the bays during an otherwise slower week.

Go one step further and invite them to share the message and the savings with friends. Some will share, new customers will come and we invite them to be part of our “family.” We now have a car count button that we can push, occasionally.

Do It Right Now

It is easy to get this marketing tool added to your inventory. You need to go to Facebook.com and register for a personal page. After you have built the personal page, go to the bottom right of the page, click on the word “Help” and then follow

the instructions to create a page linked to your personal page. The time involved is minimal and the rewards can be great.

Did I mention the cost? There is no cost — it’s free! The only cost to you is the time that you put into it. Working on your business instead of in it. That is where you should be anyway.

Scholarships Available

To learn more about this and other management techniques, look into scholarships being offered right now from ATI for 2010 to *Motor Age* readers. To apply, send an e-mail to Chubby Frederick at cfredrick@autotraining.net and tell him why you deserve a scholarship. Scholarships are made available by ATI, Customer Link, Moving Targets, Alldata and LSI. 

Chris “Chubby” Frederick is CEO and president of the Automotive Training Institute, which is a 2008 Frost & Sullivan Customer Value Leadership Award recipient and backed by 147 AMI credit hours. Frederick is assisted by George Zeeks and Brian Canning in preparing his monthly column. Contact Chubby at cfredrick@autotraining.net.

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