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A phone is no longer just a phone - have you got the message?

by Geoff Mutton

Australians really do love their smartphones, using them even while watching other media and they are always within arm's reach at work. But most people are apparently not using them to make phone calls.

According to Deloitte's 2018 Technology, Media and Telecommunications Predictions report, Australia will exceed global trends, with smartphone penetration in Australia expected to rise above 90% in 2019.

The survey also found that more than one in four Australians were no longer using their smartphones to make "traditional" phone calls, with 27 per cent saying they made fewer than one phone call per week, instead preferring text-based communication.

'The telephone has evolved to such an extent that, for many, its original purpose is now defunct,' the report said, noting that nearly nine out of 10 Australians regard text messaging as the preferred method of regular communication. The report also found that the younger generation no longer see voicemail as appropriate or relevant.

So what does this mean for the humble workshop? Put simply – messaging could be your new best friend. You're in an industry that demands quick responses, so it could make good sense to follow the trend, and change the way you reach your customers.

Most workshops are still reaching people by phone call and email but if the Deloitte survey is any guide, most customers want to communicate via SMS, in-app-chat, push notifications, and messaging apps.

In some circumstances, a direct phone call will be needed, but for simple, quick communications messaging could be the way of the future. Examples include sending service reminders, safety inspection reminders, repair reminders, workshop specials, special occasions, thank-you messages, 24-hour booking reminders, service reports, repair updates, authorisation approval and vehicle-ready-for-pick-up messages.

Messaging brings other advantages to any workshop.

Improved efficiency

Text messages are meant to be short and concise. The average person checks for messages more than 80 times every day and the average open and response time for a message is much faster than any phone call. This means workshops can keep customers up to speed with their vehicle repairs without demanding too much of their time.

Phone calls are missed and customers don't always check their voicemails or have the ability to respond right away. If you are waiting on service approvals, that's a missed opportunity to get another vehicle in the bay. Time is money, so by speeding up the approval time you can increase workshop efficiency.

Consumer convenience

When repairs or services are necessary, customers are already inconvenienced by having to cope without their essential wheels. Phone calls can only add to the inconvenience. For many customers, taking private phone calls while at work is not always possible. Messages are a less intrusive interruption to their daily routine and will have a much quicker response time than phone calls.

Sales conversion

There are many times when more than words are required. Sometimes, sending images and videos will help a consumer understand why something needs maintenance or repair.

Uploading images and videos is seamless in most messaging systems and once you get used to it, it is much easier than trying to send visual material by email.

Records of conversation

Have you ever ended a phone call and realised that you have already forgotten important parts of the conversation? Messaging means the customer and the shop will have a complete record of everything that has been discussed. Miscommunications are eliminated – no more 'but I thought you said' moments.

Good on you if you've already integrated messaging into your consumer communication arsenal. If you haven't, the first place to start is to review what functions are available within your current office point of sale system. You will find that more and more providers are building advanced communications functions into their software platforms. If your current point of sale system doesn't have any messaging function, check out the SMS facility within Capricorn Auto Boost.

So start giving your customers what they want! Focus on your customers when it comes to choosing how your business will communicate. Not only will your customers appreciate the convenience of text but your shop will benefit, as well.

The place to start is www.tatbiz.net.au/capricorn

Just go for it!