



CAPRICORN
...it's just easier!™

Other resources in step 2f:

- **There are no other resources for this step**

Are your customers talking about you?

The two essential elements for business growth are retaining the customers you've got, and gaining new customers regularly.

If the best way to retain existing customers is to give them exceptional service, what would be the best way for a workshop to attract new customers?

Same answer. Exceptional customer service is, without question, the main driver of new customers to anybody's door and 'word of mouth' is, and always will be, the best possible way of spreading the word about that exceptional customer service.

For thousands of years, humans have relied on 'word of mouth' for all types of information, perhaps even for survival of the species. Back in BC (that's before computerisation), the only way to communicate anything was through word of mouth. Story tellers in every civilisation passed down their folk law, customs, best hunting grounds and best water hole, to younger generations.

Even today, stories are an intrinsic part of our societies and culture. Stories define our values, desires and dreams as well as our prejudices and hatreds.

OK, so the digital age has provided some interesting new ways to tell stories, but the basics have not changed. And for those in business, the game changer that gave story telling a much sharper edge, is the online review platform.

For those who remain unconvinced, consider these recent statistics published by Forbes Magazine:

- 90% of consumers read online reviews before visiting a business.
- 84% of people trust online reviews as much as a personal recommendation.

- 74% of consumers say that positive reviews make them trust a local business more.
- Responding to reviews is as important as ever, with 30% naming this as very important when judging local businesses.

How to get reviews:

To start with, a business owner needs to be very satisfied that the service the business provides is genuinely great customer service – not just lip service.

If you pass that test, the next strategy to be adopted is to actively ask your customers to review the business. This is not as demeaning as it once was, because technology has made it much easier to post reviews and reviews have become a common-place measure of popularity.

Of course, despite the promises, many customers will be too busy or pre-occupied to bother posting a review, even if they thought a positive review was deserved.

Your business can do a lot more to generate good reviews, such as:

- Set up a tablet in the waiting room, dedicated for customer feedback and reviews.
- Run competitions with prizes for positive reviews and social media 'likes'.
- Leave business cards or flyers on the front passenger seat of the customer's car, prompting reviews.
- Send out a thank you letter, email or SMS suggesting that a review of the customer's last workshop experience would be appreciated.

Which review platforms:

It matters little. All social media platforms boast huge online numbers, so there is little point trying to steer your customers in a certain direction. Customers have their own preferences,

How to respond to negative reviews

Remember the lines made famous by Abraham Lincoln, 'You can please some of the people all of the time, you can please all of the people some of the time, but you can't please all the people all of the time'.

These words often haunt business owners who find it difficult to deal with negative reviews. Indeed many workshop owners report that they avoid review platforms because they find it too distressing or time consuming to deal with a bad review.

They convince themselves that's it better to be invisible than to have a negative review. Unfortunately, it doesn't work this way. Customers will review you whether you like it or not.

If you do get a negative review, consider taking these actions:

- Respond promptly
- Write like a person, not a corporation
- Correct inaccuracies
- Be real and admit if you have made a mistake
- Don't try to delete the post

A prominent workshop owner told this story at a recent business seminar: In a very negative review, their customer complained that the workshop would not use the oil he supplied for a service because it was against company policy.

The business owner took the initiative and phoned the customer, patiently explaining the complications of oils in the modern engine, and that the workshop policy was always to use the oil recommended by the vehicle manufacturer. He further explained that even though the customer was supplying the oil for his own car, the workshop would be held liable if it caused damage to the engine. After the call, the workshop owner emailed the manufacturer's oil specifications to the customer.

The result was that the negative review was removed by the customer and was replaced by a positive review. The customer went further and sent a text message that said, 'Thank you for correcting my ignorance and not calling me a d**khead'.

Show off your reviews:

Once your online reviews start to build, they will become very visible to prospective customers via platforms such as Google and Facebook. You can capitalise on this by linking or embedding the review feed into your own website.

Market intelligence suggests that your review feed is more likely to be read than everything else on your website.

So don't pretend that online reviews don't impact on your business. They will, whether you like it or not, so just embrace the technology and start using it to attract new customers to your workshop.

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

Just go for it!