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Other resources in step 2d:

- There are no other resources for this step

Facebook – is there reward for effort?

Properly managed, the social media giant Facebook and similar platforms, can help to generate business, or at least communicate *en masse* with their customers. Any business that relies on regular communication with customers or potential customers – and isn't that all of them – needs to consider adopting some form of social media as a modern way to stay in touch.

Note that the key words in the above introduction are 'properly managed'. Facebook, in particular, can be a highly abused and time-wasting nonsense media dealing in trivia, but if used sensibly, can be a simple and effective way to talk to your customers.

Even ultra-conservative institutions like banks and government departments are on the social media bandwagon. On the website home pages of the four major banks, for example, you will find the symbols for Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, Linkedin and Instagram. Our national government invites citizens to connect with its myriad departments through nine preferred social media channels, of which Facebook and Twitter are the most popular.

Auto workshops are not holding back either. Many are jumping onto Facebook in an attempt to win new customers. This is not surprising given more than 17 million Australians are active on Facebook.

As mind blowing as these stats are it doesn't mean that jumping on to Facebook will instantly generate new customers. You need to have realistic expectations for your reward for effort.

For those who sporadically post a couple of times a month, realistically Facebook will just be a branding tool – great for keeping your business front of mind with those customers who follow your page.

On the other hand, those willing to invest a lot more time, effort and some marketing dollars can expect Facebook to generate new customers.

Improve your engagement with the following basic posting tips.

Content format

Images are still worth more than a thousand words, so image posts are much more engaging than text-only posts. Video posts are even more engaging than image posts. This means that text-only posts will most likely lead to disenchantment with social media. Remarkably good photo quality is possible on most mobile phones, so there is really no excuse for not including an image with every post. You don't have to be a Spielberg to turn out interesting short videos on a mobile phone, and these will greatly improve your social media impact.

Make it personal

People buy from people. Customers really don't like dealing with faceless people – they get enough of that dealing with government and large institutions. Your customers will react positively if they can tie human faces and human stories to your auto repair business.

Post photos and fun information about your employees so customers can get a feel for your culture. Celebrate birthdays, accomplishments and funny stuff that goes on in the workshop. Maybe even show a photo (with permission) of happy long-term customers.

Think like a customer

In order to create effective and relatable content on Facebook, it's important to put yourself in the customer's shoes. What kind of content would be interesting or useful to them? You might like drag racing but it doesn't mean your customers will. The aim of social media is to provide content that will encourage customers to engage with that content by liking it, commenting on it, or sharing it with their friends?

How-to videos, customer testimonials and shop tours can be really engaging. Education videos are popular, but keep them simple, like how to check the engine oil, top up the wiper fluid or to explain the risks of prolonged driving with incorrect tyre pressures.

This may sound basic, but remember that most people have never opened the bonnet of a late model vehicle.

Don't be a serial seller

Remember that Facebook is a social media platform. If all your posts are sell-sell-sell, you could well turn followers away. Posts that relate to selling a service or special offers are much more effective when done sporadically and integrated with regular newsy posts about your workshop and its people.

It doesn't have to be perfect

People too often worry that their posts are not professional enough, and they become less inclined to keep the media platform active. Don't worry about that. Auto technicians don't need to be film producers. People are attracted to sincere, down-to-earth content from the workshop floor. They

are not looking for Oscar winning performances, just good stories that reflect your business culture. Avoid pictures or vision that show a messy workshop. This is more likely to turn customers off, rather than on.

Embrace the community

Most people are involved in the community in some way. Many donate to charities or sports clubs and others volunteer. Many workshops do the same – they sponsor sports clubs and adopt good causes. Such community involvement is prime content for Facebook. It shows that the workshop cares about its community and makes an effort to give something back, demonstrating that your business is interested in a lot more than just turning a profit.

Be consistent

With Facebook, you reap what you sow. If you post sporadically, don't expect lots of new customers. To turn Facebook into a lead generator, four posts every week would be the minimum.

Respond promptly

When customers make enquiries on Facebook, don't dismiss them as time-wasters. The younger generation in particular prefer to communicate via text than make a phone call.

Respond promptly to all enquiries, preferably on the same day. If it takes you a couple of days to get back to them, they may well have found a more responsive service centre

Try investing a few marketing dollars

One of the great advantages of Facebook is how targeted your marketing can be. If your ideal customer is a working mother who drives a European vehicle, Facebook lets you target them. Traditional media such as print, radio and TV can't provide this level of targeting.

To help increase your followers and the reach of your posts, try investing a few dollars into boosting posts or promoting ads. As with all marketing, start small and measure your results before you invest serious money.

If you're going to use Facebook as a tool to win new customers don't be half-hearted about it and then wonder why it's not working. You will need to invest time, effort and a few marketing dollars to make Facebook a consistent lead generator.

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

Just go for it!