



PROFIT MATTERS

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

The New Age of Marketing for Increasing Car Count

"It has taken me years to learn how to fix cars and run my shop. I don't have the time to learn how to do advertising; I'll just pay someone to do that." Does that sound familiar? Here at ATI, we have heard it so many times that it sounds like a broken record. The bottom line is that whether you like it or not, whether you want to do it or not, you're already in marketing! For better or worse. It is a fact of life. If you want to survive you had better learn what to do and how.

This month, we'll hear from George Zeeks, our Internet marketing instructor, who will get you started on stabilizing or increasing your car count. You can pay someone to do your marketing, but how do you know if it is sending the message that you really want? Knowing enough to control and manage your marketing efforts becomes the difference between wasting your money and putting the right type of customers' cars in your bays. OK, so maybe you're interested but want to know where to go to learn these mysterious secrets?

Learn Google Marketing

The big buzz these days is that you have to put your money in the Internet. Wow, I know that scares some of you out there.

"I barely know how to run my email account. How am I supposed to figure out the Internet?" Well, you figured out OBDII didn't you? Look at all of the changes you already have been through just to be able to fix the cars you have. The Internet is just one part of your marketing campaign, and we can show you how to take all of the pieces and put them together so they become more effective than just mailing some postcards and hoping that it all works out.

The Yellow Pages were a major part of the average shop's marketing in the past. Now, while there are some exceptions, the Yellow Pages are not nearly as effective of a tool as they used to be. People simply don't use it anymore, and the Internet has



replaced it. The first place for most shop owners to start is with their Google site. We need to keep in mind that 65 percent of all searches are done on Google, so it's natural that we begin there.

When someone searches for a new shop or checks on the shop because of a referral from someone, they normally will type in "Auto repair City State." The key phrases "auto repair," "brake repair" and "check engine light" become crucial to your success in getting found when the customer types that in for their search.

Once consumers type in keywords they are going to use for their search, Google will give the top seven sites/shops that it deems the most relevant and useful. The big key here is to try and make sure that your Google site is one of the top seven. Most customers will go with someone on page one. They might look at some of the sites on page two, but if your Google site is past that, then you are the golf clubs with the cobwebs on them, behind the camping gear that you used three years ago and have completely forgotten about. My suggestion is to not be the golf clubs; it's not good for business.

Claim Your Position

Years ago, everything was about having the best website. It is still important to have

QUESTION OF THE MONTH

QUESTION:

What do you think of 'word of mouth advertising' these days?

It is still the best but there is rarely enough of it to stabilize car count in most shops. You have to try new techniques or you will stop growing in these economic times!

Do you have a question for Chubby? Email him at cfrederick@autotraining.net.

a good website, but more people will find you and call you based on a good Google site. They might never even go to your website if you are compelling enough on the Google site to get them to pick up the telephone.

The first step is to find yourself on Google, just like a customer would. See where you are and how far you are from page one. Second, we need to claim the page and start upgrading the site to have the pictures, keywords and descriptions that will draw and keep the attention of potential customers. Third, get your customers to post referrals showing how great you are. This is a very simplistic list and there are more things that need to be done, but this is a great start.

The next step is to repeat this on all of the major and then minor search engines. A very important point to keep in mind is that this is just one part of your marketing campaign. No business can rely on just one source of customer acquisition!

Be Consistent

The problem is that all of your marketing efforts have to look and feel the same. Consumers are more sophisticated than ever, and it takes a little more finesse to capture their attention. Do you have a logo, a tagline and a consistent marketing message that matches the things that you value? Are the colors that you use in your marketing the same as your shop and your uniforms? How about the point of sale items you have on your counter; do they send the same message?

Who are your customers and what message do they want to hear? How do I find that out? Are they even the customers that I want and is my marketing targeted to Mr. Right or to Mr. "I-don't-even-want-that-person-back-in-my-store" Wrong? Are you tracking the effectiveness of the marketing that you are doing now? What is your return on investment for your marketing dollars? How do I even figure that out?

This is a journey that will never end! Your company should continue to grow

and adapt to the marketplace over the years and your marketing has to reflect that change. No one will know your business or your customers better than you, so if you plan on hiring a company to handle your marketing, you need to be actively involved in the content and process. There is no silver bullet!

If you would like a list of the top 10 things that you must have on you Google site, send your contact information to cfrederick@autotraining.net and I will also include the 10 things your website must have to be successful. *ML*

Chris "Chubby" Frederick is CEO and president of the Automotive Training Institute. He is thankful for assistance from George Zeeks, Brian Hunnicutt, Bryan Stasch and Matt Winslow in preparing this monthly column. Contact Chubby at cfrederick@autotraining.net.



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