



Auto Shops and the Internet

Building loyalty and lasting connections
with customers.

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Introduction

In this day and age, finding an auto-service provider is as easy as browsing online. Consumers can enter queries into search engines like Google or Bing and be instantly served up a host of options—often including shop details, directions, customer reviews, photos and more.

For auto repair shops, the all-important aspect of marketing often gets lost in the shuffle of daily jobs and service bay operations, so the thought of entering the online sphere can be an intimidating one. In the past, shops have relied upon traditional methods of advertising: direct mail, ads in local papers and the yellow pages. But in an age where about 86%¹ of consumers read online business reviews before making purchase decisions, and 90%² say they trust these reviews, the fundamentals of the game have radically changed.

The concept of “Word of Mouth” as we know it, now also takes the form of quick-published reviews and posts, shared photos, smartphone testimonials and digital feeds. And, the notion of telling a friend about an experience with a business is now public knowledge, potentially in a major way.

Old-fashioned customer referrals can go a long way in spreading the word, when you can get them. But, traditional advertising is another story. One common frustration point—especially among small business owners—is the time and effort it takes to plan and facilitate, not to mention getting the message right. Shop owners and managers would surely prefer to do what they do best, rather than have to analyze marketing effectiveness and advertising buys.

On top of that, advertising and marketing can be expensive. Ad space and mailers are also costly, and the ability to monitor for success rates is limited. And, it’s virtually impossible to tell the full story within just a few inches of newsprint, or on a mailer.

It’s time to start thinking beyond traditional methods of spreading the word. Think about the positive interactions you’ve had online—for buying, selling or just chatting with family and friends. What if you could incorporate those types of experiences into your own business and have similar kinds of interactions with your customers? Moreover, what if you could recreate the feeling behind those positive interactions? You can’t put a price tag on that kind of customer experience. On top of that, being online can help convey the full story behind the solutions your business offers—something you just can’t do effectively in a static print ad.

The right marketing plan can eliminate these obstacles. Whether you’re a smaller neighborhood shop or part of a national chain, knowing what capabilities exist online to engage with prospects and customers is key in running a successful auto repair business. Read on to learn how you can take advantage of these tools and ultimately, drive more business—using MotoREV.



“ Being online can help convey the full story behind the solutions your business offers. ”

Using Email to Your Advantage

While certainly not as labor intensive as rebuilding an engine or replacing a timing belt, using email for your marketing efforts may not be as straightforward as it seems. Employing email for your business needs is very different than doing so for personal use. For example, sending batch emails to customers can easily trigger spam filters, and can often come across as cold or impersonal. Then there's the question of consistency. Unless you're a seasoned graphic designer or copywriter, getting your emails to look and read right can be a challenge.

But on the bright side, email can be a quick, affordable and efficient way to market your business.

Make It Personal

A handshake, a friendly call and other personal touches tend to go a long way in building customer loyalty. Email can be used in a similar fashion. A friendly follow-up after a service appointment, or a helpful schedule reminder are two great ways to establish a lasting connection with customers. And when you include relevant information such as service histories, recall notices and shop specials, you can further expand the relationship.

At the end of the day, email is a form of customer service—make the most of it.

The Inbox vs. The Mailbox vs. Voicemail

Recent surveys have shown that customers prefer to receive email above any other form of communication.³ Today, consumers want direct, relevant communications, not to mention less clutter in their lives, whether that takes the form of voicemail solicitations or physical junk mail. A quick message awaiting them in their inbox is far less intrusive than most other methods. Better yet, it takes into account that they may also be very busy and don't have time to shuffle through paperwork or wade through voicemails.

Unlike traditional mailers, email can be tracked behind the scenes, right down to if and when the recipient opens it. This aspect alone provides for a more efficient method of marketing and communicating.

Embracing Automation and Segmentation

Automating and segmenting your email communications can save you time and provide a better customer experience. But, this generally requires going beyond basic email programs and signing up with a service dedicated to servicing and deploying more complex email campaigns.

With a more sophisticated email solution, you can create marketing campaigns based on the types of customers you have. Say you want to reach customers that are more than 30 days past their service date. A personalized, automated email can send them a coupon to encourage coming into your shop. Better yet, you can automate and schedule emails to always be sent to those who are 30 days past their service date. The same can be done for other types of customer segments you have.



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Delivering these kinds of targeted communications is far more effective than sending out massive email blasts. And according to Jupiter Research, relevant emails drive 18 times more revenue than broadcast emails. Additionally, the Aberdeen Group found that personalized emails can boost the amount of times a customer clicks through by 14%.⁴

Cutting Costs

The cost of creating and sending direct mailers can be expensive. You can easily spend thousands on direct mail campaigns and shipping costs, with no real way to track their efficiency. Email on the other hand, often costs just pennies to deploy, and can provide valuable documentation for future marketing initiatives, since you can easily track results and pinpoint what worked well and what didn't.

Email builds loyalty without annoyance

With the rise in smartphone use, customers can access email everywhere, yet it's still seen as less intrusive than a phone call or text. Targeted email can be informative without being invasive. And used properly, it can be an effective tool for getting a variety of messages across, whether they are purely informational, or for marketing and educational purposes.

MotoREV makes email easy.

Utilizing the data stored in your shop management system, the MotoREV Shop Marketing Program can be used to send personalized and automated email communications to your customers. This can take the form of service history summaries and reminders, follow-up notes, newsletters, recall notices and other valuable communications that will help you engage with your customers, while providing useful information that leads them back to your shop.

Rather than sending emails based on generic calendar schedules, you have the option to customize.

Service reminders and communications can be based on:

- Odometer readings
- Recall announcements
- Shop coupons and special offers
- Seasonal campaigns
- And more

This personalized engagement provides an effective way to get your personal touch across, making your shop top of mind the next time your customers need service. And, it's extremely cost-efficient, with an average cost of just \$0.13 to reach a customer all year long—an exceptional value, especially when compared to the cost of planning, printing and sending out direct mailers.

Reconnecting with lost customers

MotoREV also aids in re-establishing relationships with lost and inactive customers. Often times, one friendly email can help jumpstart the relationship.

Recovering lost and inactive customers is not only smart from a customer service standpoint; it makes good sense financially.⁵ Using the information stored in your shop management system, MotoREV can identify and help you communicate with customers that haven't visited your shop in more than six months, or even over a year.

And, that's great news for your bottom line:

- Shops using MotoREV saw an average increase of 12.56 transactions per month from the lost and inactive customer categories
- The average transaction amount of this customer subset was \$221.30 higher than before implementing MotoREV
- When tallied, these averages added up to over \$8000 in recovered revenue within the first three months of using MotoREV

On average, shops reach customers 18 times per year with MotoREV, sustaining the relationship without becoming a burden.



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Forging an Online Presence

There's a strong likelihood that prospects and customers will search online for information about your business. Research shows that 76% of car owners go online when searching for an auto service provider.⁶ With that, it's a safe assumption that a fair amount of your regular customers were once prospects searching online for an auto-service provider themselves. This is why it is critical to have a strong online presence, one that is consistent and user-friendly.

Think of it in terms of the customer experience. When a customer is in the midst of making a decision to either visit your shop or go somewhere else, sometimes all it takes is having the right information right at hand to sway their decision. Removing roadblocks to information is a major benefit online—the less they have to search for it, the better off they'll be (and will appreciate you for it). The Harvard Business Review found that transparency and trustworthy information made customers 86% more likely to purchase a product.⁷

You can capitalize on this by having a clear, easy-to-navigate website with your shop's location, hours and contact information readily available. If you specialize in certain types of services, let it be known in a way that is easy to understand. The same goes for sales and specials that you may be offering.

If you don't yet have a website, you should strongly consider setting one up. Not only will your customers have a place to go to learn about the services your shop offers, you'll start building more familiarity with prospects and customers, which is key in nurturing and sustaining long-term business relationships.

“ 76% of car owners go online when searching for an auto service provider. ”

Start Reaching More Customers

In today's marketplace, having an online presence is crucial to your shop's ability to grow and to be found by potential new customers. Plus, your regulars will undoubtedly find it beneficial to have increased access to the services and options you offer.

What's the status of your online presence? If you're not completely happy with your current website, or are ready to launch for the first time, a MotoREV Professional Website may be the perfect solution.

MotoREV Professional Websites

Designed and branded specifically for your shop, a Professional Website offers:

- Increased shop visibility with online promotions and offers
- Custom web address, logo, and 12+ content pages
- Easy 24/7 admin allows you to make changes quickly
- Access to a dedicated account manager for assistance in maintaining your site

A MotoREV Professional Website can be created for your shop in under 10 days and includes dedicated technical support.

Navigating Online Reviews and Social Media

As stated throughout this document, maintaining a thriving online presence is key to reaching more customers and fostering loyalty. But, even when you're doing everything right, there's always a small amount of risk involved with spreading the word. What if you receive a negative review? Or, what if you fall behind on social media? These are fairly common concerns that can easily be managed when you've got the right tools at hand and understand the various channels available to you.

Boosting Credibility with Online Reviews

Plain and simple, online reviews give a shop credibility in a competitive marketplace. Research shows that as many as 8 out of 10 people trust online reviews as much as personal recommendations, and 73% of people say that positive customer reviews make them trust a business more.⁸

Negative Reviews Happen

It's bound to happen, and you shouldn't let it ruin your day. Spreading the word through online reviews will inevitably open you up to opinions that are less than positive—no matter how successful you are.

Scrolling through popular review sites, you'll undoubtedly see plenty of four-star and four-and-a-half-star businesses, but very few five-star locations. Why? Because negative reviews happen from time to time, and will bring even the highest scores down a notch.

One bad review positioned within a stack of positive ones won't steer a customer away from your business. In fact, it actually provides more validity to your star rating. If you find yourself on the receiving end of a negative review, think of it as an opportunity to fix an issue that you might not have otherwise been aware of.

Making a Memorable Experience

The act of writing a review helps solidify the relationship between you and your customers. The process extends the interaction beyond the service bay, reminding the consumer of their recent experience and further solidifying it, so they are more likely to remember you the next time they need work done. Lexus Sweden takes this process very seriously and has used reviews to boost customer engagement and satisfaction, while adding a high level of authenticity to its communications.⁹

Social Media Matters

Social media channels are designed to enable and facilitate honest, conversational interactions with customers. They can be great tools for promoting a friendly atmosphere and putting a human face on your business.

But for all of the upsides to using social media, there are some drawbacks to be conscious of and best practices to follow. Think of social media as an extension of your storefront—be as professional in front of your electronic audience as you would be with customers in



“8 out of 10 people trust online reviews as much as personal recommendations.”

your shop. Aside from obvious things like not posting inappropriate content or obnoxious photos, you must be consistent. If you set up a business page on Facebook but don't have time to update it, your customers and potential customers alike will find themselves staring at a blank screen. Customers can easily get the wrong impression about the state of things at your shop, and it can make your business look unprofessional.

Understanding Your Audience

Each social channel has its own uses and style. Twitter and Facebook users respond differently to different types of content. Do you want to share pictures and create more of a community online? Then Facebook, not Twitter, might be the way to go. If you want customers to be able to have quick conversations with you, voicing their issues or success stories, then Twitter is a good option. Other channels such as Instagram and YouTube can also be beneficial, but you need to explore all of the pros and cons before committing to maintain a regular presence.

All in all, it's important to know what you want out of social media before you begin juggling different accounts.

Maximize Your Marketing Efforts Online

Let Positive Reviews Be Your Best Assets

MotoREV can help you make the most out of every customer interaction by helping you build a library of positive reviews. Using your shop management system, MotoREV sends surveys to your customers after their service, which prompts them to review their experience. These reviews then get posted and shared on various sites and are often picked up in search results.

If you receive a negative review, it's put on hold while you have the opportunity to contact the customer to fix the problem. The customer then receives a follow-up email asking if they want to change the review before it gets published online. Not only does this enable you to fix a negative situation for one customer, it can also improve a potential gap in your shop's customer service practices. These types of interactions provide further incentive for customers to frequent the shop that treats them well.

Shops using the MotoREV Shop Marketing Program average over 90% in positive reviews. The average star rating across these shops is 4.6 out of 5.¹⁰

Social Solutions

MotoREV makes promoting your shop on Facebook easy by providing tools that allow your customers to track their service history, maintenance milestones and more. You can also offer customized content including coupons, advice articles, ownership tools and other options. With our Facebook functionality, you'll potentially be reaching thousands of prospective new customers as current ones spread the word.



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Conclusion

With so many new online avenues available for marketing and spreading the word, it's an exciting time to do business. Marketing your auto repair shop is no exception. And best of all, it doesn't have to be labor-intensive, complicated or require an expensive technology solution.

The MotoREV Shop Marketing Program integrates with your shop management system to help you attract, retain and connect with more customers. It makes marketing easy with personalized email service reminders, positive online review generation, increased customer interactions and more.

And, it offers guaranteed results with The 5X Guarantee, ensuring that you make \$5 for every \$1 spent on the Shop Marketing Program, or your next month is free. (See site for details.)

Don't have a website yet? No problem, we can build a Professional Website custom-tailored for your shop—so you can start reaching more customers right away.

Contact us to learn more:

Visit: www.motoshop.com/motorev

Call: 855-770-MOTO (6686)

Email: info@motoshop.com

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Notes

¹ R.L. Polk & Co., 2009

² R.L. Polk & Co., 2009

³ <http://bankinnovation.net/2013/10/what-do-customers-want-survey-shows-growing-appetite-for-more-communications/>

⁴ <http://blog.hubspot.com/blog/tabid/6307/bid/28943/25-Jaw-Dropping-Marketing-Automation-Stats-Data.aspx>

⁵ Data based on survey of 101 shops using MotoREV, 2013.

⁶ Source: Kelton Research

⁷ <http://hbr.org/2012/05/to-keep-your-customers-keep-it-simple/>

⁸ <http://www.marketingcharts.com/wp/topics/viral-marketing/8-in-10-say-they-trust-online-customer-reviews-as-much-as-personal-recommendations-30686/>

⁹ <http://www.bazaarvoice.com/industries/lexus-case-study.html>

¹⁰ Data based on a survey of 101 shops using MotoREV, 2013.

