



#ORIGINALWORKSHOPS

ORIGINAL ADVICE TO HELP YOUR BUSINESS

LEARN HOW A
SUCCESSFUL WORKSHOP
USES DIGITAL MARKETING

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INTRODUCTION

This eBook discusses a relatively new aspect of the workshop business and one that will be vitally important in the future – digital marketing. If you want to make sure your business stays visible to your customers – and stays ahead of the competition – you’ll find ideas on how to do it in this book.

There’s tips on how to optimise your business for Google, how to create a referral programme that can boost profits and spread the word about your workshop, and much more. It’s all tried and tested, too. We understand the workshop business because we talk to installers and garage owners every day and many of the ideas here are taken from conversations we’ve heard or comments we’ve read. There’s some good ideas here. Take a look and we’re sure you’ll find more than a few that will work for you.

WHAT IS DIGITAL MARKETING AND HOW CAN IT BENEFIT YOUR WORKSHOP?

Digital marketing is, quite simply, any piece of marketing that you put out online – whether viewed on desktop, tablet or mobile. For a small to medium-sized business such as an auto repair workshop, without the team or the budget to organise big advertising campaigns, digital marketing usually means making the best use of your social media, email and websites to connect with existing and prospective customers.

Marketing, digital or otherwise, has always been about reaching your target audience in the right place and at the right time. Most of us spend a significant amount of our time on our mobiles, reading emails and participating on social media. Nowadays many people don't even watch TV without also doing some online browsing. That means your marketing effort, however large or small, must reach customers in the place where they are already spending a lot of their personal time: online.

As an independent business you probably don't have a marketing team to write blogs and eBooks, or to plan email marketing campaigns that attract new business, but with a little thought and time you can turn digital marketing to your advantage. There are essentially two ways to attract customers using digital marketing: Outbound Marketing and Inbound Marketing. So what's the difference?



OUTBOUND MARKETING

Outbound Marketing puts messages directly in front of as many people as possible in the online space; for example, you might pay to place a banner ad on someone else's website. This is something you have to pay for and unless you have someone in your workshop who knows digital marketing you would typically have to pay a marketing expert for their support. But there are things you can do yourself without paying for either advertising space or for the help of marketing professionals. These come under the category of Inbound Marketing.

INBOUND MARKETING

Inbound Marketing uses online content to attract target customers to websites by providing information that is interesting or useful to them, for example, a well-written website page that explains what your business offers, or social media posts that make regular news and announcements about special deals.

A great advantage of Inbound Marketing for small to medium-sized businesses is that you need little or no budget to use it. All you have to do is to create interesting or useful content that your audience will want to see, and the only investment you'll need is a little of your time.

So where do you start? The best way to begin is to cultivate an email list of your current customers. You can send these customers discount offers, reminders for service, and news about your business. The trick is to send messages periodically, but not so often that your customers get irritated by the frequency. Make sure that when you do send a message there are clear benefits for the reader, such as a

reminder that they need a service, or a money-saving offer. Continue to grow that email list by adding the names of each new customer that comes to your business.

"72% of customers open an email due to the discount it offers." Campaign Monitor, 2018

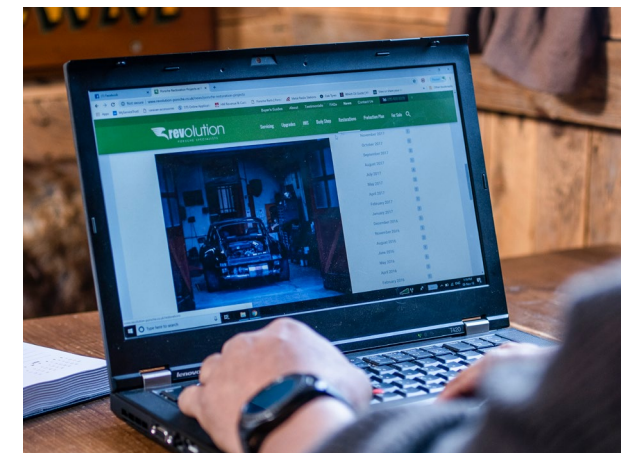
You should also start connecting with your customers on social media. Most of them will be on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, so you'll want to start there. Invite them to follow you on social media when you contact them via email. Share updates daily or as often as you can. You can share news about your workshop and details of discount offers, but not everything has to be carefully written and strategically planned in advance; you can also share things that are much quicker to prepare – such as satisfied customer reviews, photos of your employees and pictures of things going on in your local area that you want to support. All of this will present your workshop as a place that offers not only good work but also as friendly, caring people. And not all your content needs to be generated by you; you can share links from the rest of the internet – useful information about cars, or just fun stuff that you like, or causes you support (just make sure they stay relevant to your customers). Give your customers engaging content, and they will start to interact and tell others about your business.

Social media is, of course, interactive and that means you need to think about how you respond to customers as well as how you put out your own messages. For example, what do you do if you get a bad review? No-one wants to receive a bad review, but you can turn a negative into a positive. Handling bad reviews in a professional manner may actually give you the opportunity to make a very positive impression

on prospective customers. Read our blog on How to deal with negative comments on social media.

Also, put yourself in your customer's shoes, think about the places they are visiting online and make yourself visible and relevant in those places. For example, if you have knowledge of a particular type of vehicle, get involved with forums that people visit to get advice on those vehicles and offer some of your own knowledge. It will be self-evident to potential customers that you are knowledgeable and that you are a helpful workshop that likes to engage with customers.

In summary, digital marketing can significantly benefit your workshop because, with very little cost, it can keep customers engaged with your business, prompt return visits, and establish a connection with you that increases customer loyalty. It can also grow awareness of your business and expand your potential customer base if the customers you reach begin to share your offers and news with their friends.



HOW TO USE DIGITAL AND SOCIAL MEDIA TO CREATE A SIMPLE REFERRAL PROGRAMME

Word-of-mouth advertising is powerful – you can't beat a personal recommendation from a trusted friend. An online referral programme for your workshop can have a similar effect – offer customers an incentive and you can encourage them to spread the word about your workshop to people who will trust and listen to them.

“According to global data analysts Nielsen, people are four times more likely to buy when recommended by a friend.”

A referral programme can generate business for the workshop and reward customers for doing the work of finding those leads for you. What's more, the leads that a referral programme creates are more likely to result in sales because your customers have shared the news about your workshop with people who they feel – or know – may be interested.

But how do you go about creating a successful, manageable programme for an auto repair workshop with real-time results? Here's a guide to using digital and social media to create a simple referral programme.

1. Create an offer

Imagine you are a customer. Think what kind of incentives would interest you. Think of incentives offered by shops

and services that you use, which have driven you to make a purchase.

All customers appreciate a discount, so an obvious benefit is to offer an existing customer a money-off voucher on their next visit if they refer a customer to you. The simpler the offer, the better. Your goal is to make the process of referring new customers to your workshop and earning rewards as easy as possible.

You may be happier offering a discount on specific purchases, so you can encourage greater take-up on services you offer, rather than offering a general discount on any bill. Some ideas for a more specific offer would be:

- A half-price oil change
- A free oil change when you purchase an emission/safety test
- A free oil change for any repair that is above a given value
- A free or reduced cost tire rotation with the purchase of another service
- A percentage off a specific service (for example, £20 off a tune-up)

Of course, the key to getting money-off vouchers to work for you is to get them into the hands of your customers. Adding them to customer communications such as invoices and follow-up emails is ideal as these are messages that the customer needs and wants to receive.



2. Make the offer easily shareable

The fewer hoops your customer has to jump through, the better. Even the most loyal of customers won't want to take you up on your offer if they sign up for your referral programme and then find out there are too many steps to complete.

The simplest referral process of all is the post-purchase referral. According to referral programme makers Extole, customers are 16x more likely to share a referral if there is a call to action on the post-purchase pages.

The post-purchase referral can take the form of a simple 'Share' button at the bottom of an electronic invoice that enables the customer to share a discount voucher with a friend.

3. Promote your referral programme

Having created an enticing offer for your workshop and made it easily shareable, you need to make the most of the work you've done so far by promoting it. One of the best ways to do this is via email. You could start by sending an email to all customers on your mailing list, letting them know about the offer, and/or if you have a good following on a social media channel, post an announcement there.

Here's some suggested referral benefits and copy that you can adapt, or use, to get you thinking about how you could introduce, describe and promote your referral programme.

"Refer a Friend and Be Rewarded at [insert the name of your workshop]"

We appreciate any referrals to our business. That's why we've developed a programme to reward customers who send their friends, family, neighbours and co-workers to our shop for auto repair. [Insert the name of your workshop] customers can enjoy the following benefits of our referral programme:

Bronze referral benefits:

If you refer one person to our workshop, we will reward you with a free oil change.

Silver Referral Benefits:

If you refer four people to our workshop within one year, you will receive free oil changes for a year.

Gold Referral Benefits:

If you refer eight people to our workshop within one year, you will receive free oil changes for a year AND 10% off repairs and services.

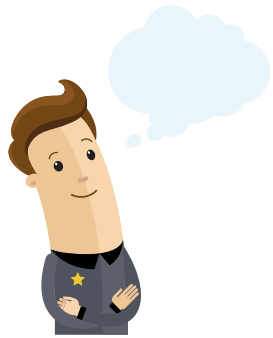
Simply fill out the attached referral form and bring it to the workshop when you come in for your next service. Please note, the customer you referred must be a new customer to [Insert the name of your workshop] and must have spent a minimum of £50 with us."

GIVING IT A GO

Creating a referral programme for your workshop doesn't have to be a hugely time-consuming project. In fact, the simpler it is, the better. And for the relatively little effort it takes, it can bring more loyalty and more customers to your workshop.



HOW TO CREATE A SIMPLE REFERRAL PROGRAMME ON SOCIAL MEDIA



01 - THINK OF AN OFFER

Imagine you are a customer. Think what kind of incentives would interest you. Referral programmes work best when the process of referring new customers to your workshop is easy, so the simpler the offer, the better.

Tip: All customers like discounts, so an obvious benefit is to offer a money-off voucher to a customer who refers a friend to you.



02 - GIVE 'TIERED' REWARDS

Maybe you could offer tiered rewards that get better with each referral? For example:

- Bronze (one referral) – a free oil change.
- Silver (two referrals) – free oil changes for a year.
- Gold (three referrals) – free oil changes for a year AND 10% off repairs.



03 - MAKE THE OFFER EASILY SHAREABLE

The fewer hoops your customer has to jump through, the more likely they will refer; for example, a simple 'Share' button at the bottom of an invoice gives the customer an easy way to share a discount voucher with a friend.



04 - PROMOTE YOUR OFFER

You could start by sending an email to all customers on your mailing list, letting them know about the offer. And if you have a good following on social media you can post an announcement there, too.

12 TIPS FOR BUILDING AND MANAGING YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING

Establishing a good social media presence is an easy win for improving your workshop's digital marketing.

Posting on social media is a great way to keep your customers engaged. It's a softer approach too, with no need for the kind of hard sell that is off-putting to many people. You don't have to be self-promotional, just helpful, relevant, or even funny.

If you can build a social media presence that's casual and engaging, you'll be developing something that's valuable – an everyday relationship between your workshop and your customers.

This can be financially very rewarding as next time they need a repair the first workshop they think of is yours.

“45% of customers read online comments to make purchase decisions”

According to a recent survey by multinational professional services network Pricewaterhouse Coopers, 45% of global respondents said that reading reviews, comments, and feedback influences their shopping behaviour.

Here are some simple tips that can make managing social media more efficient and effective for your workshop.

1. Get on Facebook

Facebook is still the world's largest social network and the platform that many consumers are influenced by when searching for goods and services. According to the software and marketing research firm Vision Critical, nearly a third of Facebook users have purchased a product or service from a given business after sharing, liking or commenting on it via the social media platform.

This makes Facebook the social media channel most likely to drive sales for your workshop. If you want to take your Facebook campaign further, you can pay to boost your Facebook posts so that they are seen by more people.

2. Post on Quora

On this platform, users can ask questions, tag them by self-defined categories, and choose to follow the best answers from the most qualified people. It's a great way to promote yourself to customers because by answering Quora questions related to your industry, you can demonstrate your expertise.

3. Use Yelp (if popular in your country)

Millions of people are now using Yelp to look up businesses, so it's a good idea to post on this site too. What's more, if you earn positive reviews on this site you can boost sales further: a survey from Dimensional Research found that 90 percent of consumers claimed that positive reviews influenced their buying decisions.

4. Get on YouTube

Whether it's something entertaining, or something informative like a 'How to' video, posting on YouTube will keep your workshop in the minds of customers and potential customers. It will also boost your search rankings and you can also share your YouTube video on Facebook (you can also post your videos directly within Facebook).

5. Use Twitter

Try promoting your workshop and building your business by establishing your online presence in the Twitter world. For example, you could use your Twitter account to promote discounts or special deals to your followers.

6. Get on Instagram

About 80 percent of all Instagram users follow a business on Instagram, which provides an excellent opportunity to interact directly with customers. Instagram offers the option to purchase ads that will be placed on viewer's feeds across Instagram, but there are also many ways to promote your auto shop at no cost, such as promoting deals, or using hashtags like #autoshop and #carrepair.



7. Create a daily, weekly or monthly series

If you have time and you want to drive engagement even further, you could create a series of posts on the same theme. If your post is, for example, a useful tip and your followers read it, they'll be even more likely to read a series of future tips and to stay engaged with your social media channel. If this begins to work for you, you could consider enhancing it by using YouTube or Facebook live streaming.

8. Run a simple giveaway contest

Everyone loves a freebie. Running a contest is one of the most impactful social media ideas when it comes to building engagement. According to data from analytics and marketing organisation Tailwind, social media accounts that run contests on a regular basis grow 70% faster than those that don't.

9. Reshare and retweet

Let your followers do your marketing for you. One of the great benefits of social media engagement is that not all the content has to be something you've taken time to create yourself. It doesn't matter what you share as long as it's something useful or of interest to your customers (and of which you approve!).

10. Give customers the spotlight

A great way to show your customers that you really appreciate their loyalty is to thank them on social media. Make sure you retweet people who mention your workshop, thanking them for doing so. You could also go one step further and (with the customer's permission) feature them as 'Customer of the Month', giving them a shout-out and maybe even a prize too.

Keep an eye out for Google and other social media reviews. See our blog on How to deal with negative comments on social media if the comments aren't positive.

11. Talk about cars

The kind of customers who follow their local garage on social media might well be the kind who love cars, so posting about classic cars, motor racing, festivals, new models etc might be of interest to them. And for those followers who are not passionately interested in cars, the message they will take away from these posts is that you are committed to automotive, care about cars and take pride in your work.

12. Shout about success

Finally, celebrate successes with your followers and show them you're an ambitious, happy workshop that's proud to be professional, successful and the best you can be. For example, if your workshop has been featured in a local newspaper or trade magazine; or reached a new milestone (maybe you've reached the 10th anniversary of the business or served your 10,000th customer) let your followers know.

All of these are relatively easy things to do and will help engage your audience, build your brand and create a positive image of your workshop. Creating these posts need not consume huge amounts of your time and the benefits for your business can be significant.

You don't need to do everything - pick one or two of the above ideas you think you can achieve and focus on delivering them well.

WHY YOUR WORKSHOP MUST THINK MOBILE FIRST

Most of us spend a significant amount of our time on our mobiles. Nowadays many people don't even watch TV without also doing some online browsing. That means your marketing effort, however large or small, must reach customers in the place where they are already spending a lot of their time: on a mobile.

BUT WHAT DOES "MOBILE FIRST" MEAN?

Until recently it was common practice to start with a desktop version of your website and then adapt that to make a mobile version. In today's world – where, according to media consultancy comScore, we spend on average 69% of our media time on smartphones – you must think about your mobile site first, and then your desktop version.

Here are some key reasons why and how a mobile-first strategy can impact your business.

61% OF USERS WILL NOT RETURN TO A SITE THAT ISN'T OPTIMISED FOR MOBILE

In 2015, Google confirmed that for the first time the number of mobile searches had overtaken those made on desktop. Mobile users want a personal, content-rich and fast experience. According to IT experts Indus Net technologies, nearly 40% of users will leave your site and visit a competitor's site if they feel yours isn't optimised for mobile. So, the faster you adapt your site for mobile, the better for your workshop. What's more, Google says that 61% of users are unlikely to ever return to a

mobile site that they had trouble accessing, so to protect your online business you need to think mobile first.

88% OF MOBILE SEARCHERS FOR LOCAL BUSINESSES MAKE CONTACT

According to data analysts Nectafy, 88% of consumers who search for a type of local business on a mobile device go on to call or visit that business within 24 hours. So if you do get the mobile experience right, you could be winning instant business for your workshop.

40% OF MOBILE SEARCHES HAVE LOCAL INTENT

According to a Google Mobile Moments Study, 40% of mobile searches have local intent. That's a huge percentage of people out there looking for a persuasive message from a local business. Since 2011, Google reports that searches containing "near me" have increased by 3400%, and, unsurprisingly, 80% of these searches have come from mobile devices.

We have got used to expecting information 'right now', because we have been given the technology that can deliver it.

HERE ARE SOME INTERESTING STATISTICS FROM GOOGLE REGARDING THE ON-GOING GROWTH OF 'NEAR ME' SEARCHES:

Since 2011, Google reports that searches containing "near me" have increased by 3400%, and, unsurprisingly, 80% of these searches have come from mobile devices.

We have got used to expecting information 'right now', because we have been given the technology that can deliver it. In the last few years, there has been:

- A 150%+ growth in mobile searches for "___ near me now" (for example, "food near me now," "gas station near me now," and "delivery near me open now").
- A 900%+ growth in mobile searches for "___ near me today/tonight" (for example, "open houses near me today," "cheap hotels near me tonight," and "movies playing near me today").
- A 200%+ growth in mobile searches for "Open" + "now" + "near me" (for example, "restaurants near me open now," "stores open near me right now," and "pharmacy near me open now"). Source : Google Trends, U.S., Search term "near me now," May 2013–April 2018.
- For more on "near me searches", see our Digital Marketing blog 'Car service near me' - The rise of local searches' and how to apply this to your workshop.
- Local businesses all over the world are waking up to the fact that mobile friendly websites are what searchers are looking for and are therefore the kind sites that will increase profits. Now is the time to adopt a mobile first strategy for your workshop, to stay ahead of your competition and reap the benefits.

'CAR SERVICE NEAR ME' - THE RISE OF LOCAL SEARCHES AND HOW TO MAKE THEM WORK FOR YOUR GARAGE

Smartphones have driven huge change in the way we search for services like restaurants, shops, bars, plumbers, decorators and car repair workshops.

Since 2011, Google reports that searches containing "near me" have increased by 3400%, and unsurprisingly 80% of these searches have come from mobile devices.

HOW DO CONSUMERS MAKE 'NEAR ME' SEARCHES?

To feature strongly in Google's 'near me' searches, you need to deliver useful, relevant content that's optimised for geo-location searches. Here's why:

According to digital marketing site Search Engine Land, "When a 'near me' search is conducted, Google's algorithm increases the importance of distance from the searcher's location." There was a time not so long ago when searchers paired their 'near me' searches with the postcode they were currently at. But now there's no need because Google's location settings have become so advanced. We now expect Google to automatically give relevant location searches based on our queries without us even having to tell it where we are.

Now that searchers are getting such good results from typing "near me" searches into their search engines they are

becoming even more specific. So, people are now searching not just for "restaurant near me", but for "best vegetarian restaurant near me".

HOW DO I MAKE SURE MY WORKSHOP FEATURES IN 'NEAR ME' SEARCHES?

Here are some tips, stating the key actions you should take.

GET YOUR NAME, ADDRESS AND PHONE NUMBER (NAP) RIGHT

Make sure that the name of your workshop, its address and its phone number (NAP) are frequently and prominently displayed on your website. If you have more than one business location try to provide a separate page for each location: if you can't, make sure the addresses of all your locations appear at least once somewhere on your site.

CHECK YOUR GOOGLE MY BUSINESS LISTING

Set up your Google My Business page and make sure it is optimised. As with the addresses on your webpage, you should try to give all your locations their own unique Google My Business listing. Make sure that the business name, address and phone number of each of your workshop locations matches the NAP information you are showing

on your website. It's easy to update your Business Profile on Google. You can adjust your business hours for the holidays, change or add a new phone number - changes are automatically updated across Google Search and Google Maps. Plus you can add photos easily, so you can show pictures of your location, your services and even add banners showing your latest offers. There's some simple steps to follow on the Google Business 'How it Works' page.



GET POSITIVE REVIEWS

Get as many positive reviews as you can, especially on Google. Reviews on other sites are good, too, but Google reviews are the most important because they will have the highest impact on local map rankings.

Source a few positive reviews from customers that you know are happy with your service. If you know them well, ask them personally for help. Podium's research showed that 77% of customers said they would leave an online review if asked by a local business. For more advice on this, see our Customer Service blog, 'Poor garage review? How to deal with negative comments on social media.'

CHECK YOUR WEBSITE SPEED

According to Google, '53% of visits are abandoned if a mobile site takes longer than three seconds to load... for every one second delay in site load time, conversions fall by 12%'. Try running a few tests on Google's 'Test My Site' page, or with Google Page Speed Insights, to make sure you are giving potential customers a speedy service online.

With a little care and attention to your digital marketing presence you can make your workshop the answer to potential customers' needs. For more advice on how to make your customers' searches work for you, take a look at our Digital marketing blog 'Why your workshop must think mobile first'.



FIVE WAYS TO BOOST YOUR BUSINESS ON SOCIAL MEDIA

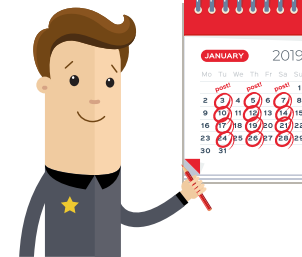


GET ON FACEBOOK, YOUTUBE, TWITTER AND INSTAGRAM

Facebook is still the world's largest social network and the platform that many consumers are influenced by when searching for goods and services.

A 'How to' video on YouTube will make you helpful and memorable – and can boost your search rankings.

Twitter and Instagram are good for promoting discounts or special deals. Hashtags like #autoshop or #carrepair can lead potential customers to you.



CREATE A DAILY, WEEKLY OR MONTHLY SERIES

If you post, for example, a useful tip and your followers read it, they'll be even more likely to read a series of future tips and stay engaged with your social media channel.



RUN A COMPETITION

Everyone loves a freebie. Running a contest is one of the most powerful ways to build engagement. You could offer a gift, or a free service as a prize, or your competition could be just for fun.



SHARE, REPIN, RETWEET

Not all of the content on your social feed has to be something you've taken time to create yourself. It doesn't matter what you share as long as it's something useful or of interest to your customers – and of which you approve.



SHOUT ABOUT SUCCESS

Celebrate your successes with your followers and show them you're an ambitious, happy workshop that's proud to be professional and successful. If your workshop has been written about, or reached its 10th anniversary, or served its 10,000th customer, let your followers know.

COMPELLING EXAMPLES OF SMALL BUSINESS OPTIMISATION FOR GOOGLE LOCAL SEARCHES

If you've been reading the advice in our Digital Marketing blogs and wondering just how effective these tips and ideas can be, then take a look at these examples of how local businesses have prospered by putting them into practice.

SELF STORAGE HAMPSHIRE

When Self Storage Hampshire opened their first facility in Aldershot, UK they were unsure of how best to attract a local audience. Like the car repair workshop marketplace, the self-storage market is very targeted. So, to ensure valuable website visitors, Self Storage Hampshire made local SEO its focus. A fast loading mobile responsive website was built using WordPress; according to Google, '53% of visits are abandoned if a mobile site takes longer than three seconds to load... for every one second delay in site load time, conversions fall by 12%'. (For more information see our blog 'Car service near me' – the rise of local searches and how to make them work for your garage).

The 'Self Storage Hampshire' brand name was then registered on Google Local and other directory listings to ensure good results from local searches. This was followed by the publication of search engine optimised articles. These articles provided useful information to meet the needs of local searchers. They included articles on subjects such as 'Self storage packing tips' and simple, practical pieces that helpfully

listed the opening times of the local recycling sites. These are the kind of informative guides searched for by people looking to move house or create space in their home. These people were, of course, the target audience of Self Storage Hampshire. Additionally, via a bespoke phone number on their website, they were able to measure how many new leads came from their website.

With their lightweight, mobile-responsive website, plus original and useful content, traffic to the site significantly increased and soon the brand ranked No.1 on Google for over 20 local keywords. Source: The Content Works

US DENTAL SURGERY

US dentist Savannah Dental Solutions was unhappy with its Google search position of No.20 in the local map results, despite having created a website that would load easily and quickly and having set up all the relevant business directories.

For this business the answer was to issue four online press releases over a four-month period. The power of these press releases was in the citations – the mentions of the businesses name, address, and phone number (NAP) as these are essential for good local rankings.

When Google recognises that a searcher is looking for a local service, it often displays a map with local businesses listed

below. To achieve a high ranking in these local search results, you must have citations - the more high-quality citations the better. Therefore, as an increasing number of websites published their press releases, the dentist began to climb the Google local rankings until they were No.1 on the first page of Google local results for their primary keyword 'Savannah dentist'. Source: Main Street ROI

WATCH AND HEAR MORE!

If this has whetted your appetite and made you wonder what you could do to help your workshop succeed by optimising for Google local searches, take a look at the Success Stories page on Google My Business. The video case studies here show how small businesses find, and interact with, local customers. Via Google, they can notify customers about new offers, see how many people are visiting their site and even gauge how busy they expect to be by observing the number of visits they see to their Google My Business page.

This blog demonstrates how businesses with challenges like yours have had success by paying attention to their Digital Marketing. It's not as difficult as you might think, and it's not something you have to do every day. Making a few small changes like, those mentioned here, can have a big effect on potential customers. They could be the difference that makes prospects not only see your website first, but also click on it and then use it to contact you.

HOW THE CUSTOMERS OF TOMORROW ARE SHAPING THE FUTURE OF DIGITAL MARKETING

Before social media, the way most businesses engaged with customers was through a poster or press ad, designed and circulated to proclaim their greatness and to reach and impress the widest possible audience.

Of course, businesses still use this method to promote themselves – you may well have used them to promote your workshop – but the advent of the digital age and the new channels for communication have changed the game. Compared to printing posters and paying for advertising space, social media is more immediate, more powerful, a lot more targeted – and often less expensive. Businesses of all sizes are increasingly discovering the potential for true customer engagement that digital marketing brings. It can do things that traditional media cannot. It meets customers where they are (because everyone is online, frequently, every day). It enables businesses to have conversations with customers, tell them stories, and inspire them to spread the word about their products and services, as well as buy them.

The following statistic from Facebook illustrates just how effective digital advertising can be: Castle – a Chevrolet and Buick automotive dealership in the US – ran a multi-phase Facebook ad campaign last year to prospects within 40 miles of their dealership. They achieved 23 vehicle sales, \$18,463 in profits and a 23x return on their ad spend.

SO THAT'S WHERE WE ARE NOW. BUT WHAT OF THE FUTURE?

In its recently published report, The Future of Marketing, Econsultancy surveyed close to 500 advertisers, marketing departments and marketing agencies to get their insights into where marketing is headed and what the objectives and priorities will be over the next five years. If you're looking at some sort of digital marketing for your workshop – and you should be – here are some insights identified in the report.

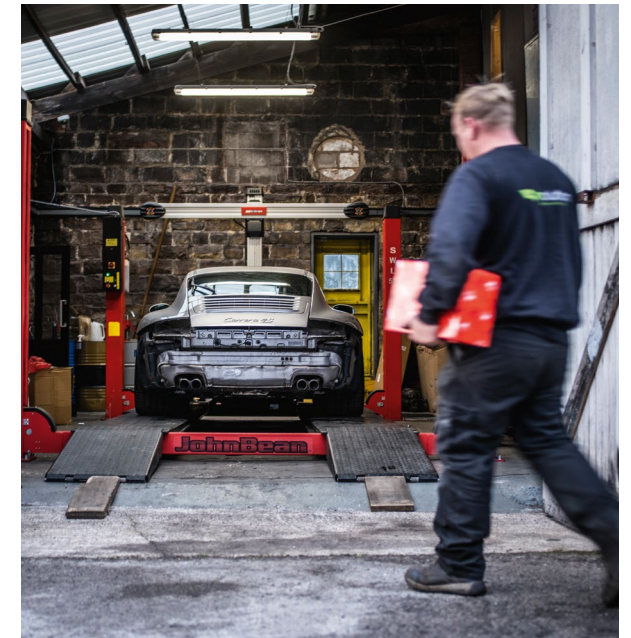
1. Story-driven, inspirational content marketing

Customers of just about all businesses have increasingly become turned off by direct advertising, particularly in comparison to content marketing, which has evolved as a softer, more persuasive means of attracting attention.

Rather than simply directing customers towards their product or service, today's businesses need to provide added value to followers – insight, inspiration, and an informative message.

Customers want to hear interesting stories behind the products or services they are choosing between. For example, social media provided by a workshop might include helpful videos (they don't have to be your own videos, they can be shared from elsewhere – as long as what they say reflects

an opinion or advice that you agree with). Similarly, personal stories about the workshop, even in the form of a short tweet, build a 'story' of your business that customers will connect with and remember.





2. Video

In just a short space of time, the smartphone has become 'the' way for people of all ages to instantly access content. And the more we use our smartphones, the more we watch video.

This presents businesses with a huge opportunity – if they get the content right. It's not a case of beating consumers into submission by pumping any old content at them; it's about telling a story creatively, grabbing the audience's attention with short formats, and providing entertaining, informative content that's relevant to them.

Here's five reasons why all businesses should create and/or share video – and why it will matter even more in the months and years to come:

- By 2021, 78% of content viewed on mobile will be video, according to marketing website TheDrum.com.
- 'Generation Z' (people born from the mid-1990s to the early 2000s) are spending more time on mobile than on all other devices combined.
- Ofcom data showed that in 2017, 16 to 34-year-olds watched an average of 2 hours 37 minutes of non-broadcast video content every day.
- By 2020 the average person will be spending 84 minutes a day watching videos online.
- The arrival of 5G will increase the speed of high-quality video on mobile a hundred-fold.

The conclusion is clear, if you want to create digital media for tomorrow's audience, you must consider video content for your workshop.

Simple video content that any workshop can easily create might include an introductory walk around and an overview of the reception area - show the organised environment and welcoming service that customers can expect to receive. Or, a video offering tips on how customers can take care of their cars in winter would provide useful content. And how about sharing a video from YouTube showing how an engine works to engage your less knowledgeable customers – this would show you are the kind of business that shares information, not hides it to retain power over the customer.

ONLINE BOOKING SYSTEM... SOMETHING YOU SHOULD CONSIDER FOR YOUR GARAGE?

Modern workshop management software is designed to assist in the every day running of your business, from taking bookings or raising estimates and invoices to sending regular reminders and statements.

Russell Stanley at Revolution Porsche, who you can see in our Digital Marketing film, uses Autowork, a cloud-based workshop management software system. But there are many such systems available and plenty of options for you to match against your needs and your budget. If you have fellow workshop owners in your network, perhaps consider asking them what system they use and if/how it saves them time.

An online booking system will allow you to create a variety of documents such as Estimates, Job sheets, Invoices, Policy Excess Invoices, Credit Notes and Statements. These give your workshop a professional look that builds your brand, many of the software tools will allow you to customise the document templates by including your own letter head/footer images, logos and even watermarks.

For your customers, online means convenience; they can book on your website rather than trying to catch you on the phone. They can book, for example, in the evening after they have finished work rather than having to try and call you during a busy working day. An online booking system may even allow your customers a way to book an appointment via your Facebook business page.

For your reception team, booking systems enable you to create appointments quickly, entering as much or as little information as required. This information can include facts such as the vehicle registration, make, model and customer details.

Online booking system... something you should consider for your garage?

An online booking system can also help you increase business if you make good use of the data it provides. This is because some systems can track your customers, produce statements, and present you with charts that show their spend over the past year and previous years. These systems also provide you with access to view each vehicle they own, and the capacity to communicate via email, SMS or by printing promotional materials. Using this data will enable you to send your customers' reminders, such as when their MOT tests and services are due. These can be printed for posting, but since many people today prefer the convenience of online communications, by email or as an SMS message (which will also be cheaper for you).

You can also perform advanced searches of your data to select appropriate customers for a variety of mass marketing communications such as targeted promotions or special offers. By targeting drivers in this way you can avoid irritating any customers who won't be interested in your message

while also pleasing those who, according to your data, may well be interested in the latest deal that you are offering. (See our Digital Marketing blog, How to use digital and social media to create a simple referral programme).

Some online booking systems also enable stock control; find out which items you have in stock by using search options including keyword search, category, manufacturer, supplier or a combination of these.

So, with an online booking system, you can make life easier for customers and for yourself. There are a lot of online booking systems available; perhaps write down the things you really want from a system and then begin to search for what offers the best fit for the best price. As mentioned above, you can always ask other workshop owners for their thoughts about the system they use.

THANK YOU FOR READING

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We hope you've found a few ideas here to help you solve problems, enhance your digital marketing and keep your business strong in the online savvy world of the future. Keep this book close at hand to keep your workshop visible online to your new and existing customers. And keep visiting #ORIGINAL WORKSHOPS to read more helpful tips and advice about more workshop topics such as customer service, how to achieve and maintain business success, and more.