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Leveraging the Web to Generate Leads and Build Customer Relationships

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If you’re like most engine shop owners, when you think about making better use of the Web, you’re likely thinking about things like your website, your Google ranking or maybe even your pay-per-click (PPC) ads.

But if one of your business goals is to maximize results, then improving the quality of your interactions with prospective and existing customers becomes key and you’ll find that websites and PPC ads are just the beginning when it comes to what the Web has to offer.

Integrating Web technologies into your daily routine can help you reach more potential customers, in addition to helping you take your customer interactions to a new and more personalized level — extending the relationship you build in the shop beyond the counter and to wherever the customer is. And that’s what we’re going to start covering in this article, focusing on improving your business by making the most of the Web and its technology.

Are You Getting Your Fair Share of the 2,000+ Searches Every Month?

The Internet has forever changed how an engine customer, searching for a solution to their problem, finds you. No longer do people let their “fingers do the walking” in the phone book. Instead, they let their fingers do the typing, going to Google to search for shops like yours in their area.

How many searches? For an average city with 20,000 drivers, or a population of around 60,000, there are between 2,000 and 3,500 Internet searches for auto repair services every single month! With numbers like these, it’s easy to see why it’s so important that you get your fair share of these searches.

Not convinced you need to make a Web investment? Imagine this: Your shop could be receiving some of those 45-90 calls every month, and your conversations could lead to 15-30 new customers coming into your shop every month. Are you willing to pass up that kind of lead volume? As a point of reference, the average amount spend on shop equipment in 2011 was more than $11,000. Twenty more customers entering in your machine shop can make for a good ROI.

Ranking Well is Important, But Frequency is Also a Factor

Engine shop owners who are doing well in the Internet are those who understand that ranking well in Google is only a start. Page one of any Google search result offers motorists plenty of choices. That’s why it’s important to rank on Google’s first page as frequently as possible, dominating as many of the search result listings as you can. You have 10 seconds to convince the searching engine enthusiast to click on “your link,” so the more often you appear, the more likely you’ll be able to capture their attention.
Google’s Focus on Local Business and What It Means for You

Google has made tremendous efforts in the last 18 months to focus its attention on local businesses just like yours. Just look at a Google Places listing, which has evolved from a brief entry to a full page with rich information, including images pulled automatically from your website. Google has begun tailoring its sponsored ads to local businesses. It has also increased the amount of space allocated for a local business’ listing by 220 percent in the last 1.5 years.

Leveraging User Reviews Influences Search Results and Searchers

Ranking well in Google used to be enough, but not anymore; user reviews are now part of the equation. Reviews matter to human users searching for a reputable solution to their problem and using Google’s search algorithm.

For example, in illustration below (Arrow a), you’ll notice that Google has included reviews from Top Shop’s home page because of their relevance to the search criteria. You’ll also notice that Google shows third-party review stats for two sites (see Arrow b). And, finally, notice that Top Shop has multiple appearances in the search results by effectively leveraging user reviews.

The Secret to Success on Google?
A Partner with Proven Results

Google ranks sites based on a number of factors and, in its attempt to deliver the most value to the searching public, it regularly makes changes to its search algorithm that can send once high-ranking sites for a tumble. In fact, Google made at least three major algorithm updates in 2011 that had search optimization and advertising professionals struggling to quickly adjust. That’s why it’s important to work with someone who can help you keep up with the ever-changing Google landscape.

When you’re ready to take advantage of what the Web has to offer, my best advice to shop owners is to work with a professional or a vendor that can show you real-time evidence of their results for shops like yours, in cities like yours, offering services like yours.

But the Internet isn’t only good for getting new engine customers in the door; Web technologies can also be extremely powerful when it comes to developing a stronger relationship with new and long-standing customers. EB

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Google has included reviews from this shop’s home page because of their relevance to the search criteria (a). You’ll also notice that Google shows third-party review stats for two sites (b).