



AUTOMATED ENGAGEMENT FOR AUTOMOTIVE

Building Customer Loyalty with 7 Touchpoints

Shawn Ryder



Create Loyal Customers with Assistance from Automation

One of the challenges of running an automotive dealership is creating a loyal customer base. Many customers will have one or two interactions with the dealership then fall off, seeking out a different automotive business for their regular vehicle maintenance. This change may be due to lower prices, better customer service, more convenient location or a number of other reasons.

So how do you create loyal customers who will keep coming back to your dealership time after time? Studies have found that businesses that provide excellent customer service have loyal customers who will choose their business over other lower priced or more conveniently located businesses. Clearly, customer service is one of the main factors that customers consider when selecting where to go.

Excellent customer service is all about creating meaningful, personal interactions with your customers, and showing them that you are working hard to resolve their issues. While it can be challenging to reach out to every customer manually, an automated marketing and communication solution allows you to connect with each of your customers on a regular basis with touchpoint messages that are relevant to their individual needs.

Automation allows you to form a personalized connection with each of your customers while reducing the amount of time you have to spend creating and sending messages. It makes it easier and more efficient to provide important information, follow up after a sale and bring in repeat business.



Build a Personalized Connection with Automated Messages

An automated solution is the ideal tool to help you build customer loyalty and offer a highly personalized level of customer service. You want to look for an automated solution that is easy to use and allows you to communicate with your customers using multiple channels, such as email, text messages and voicemail. You should also select a solution that can be easily integrated with your current dealer management system so you can be highly efficient.

All you need to do is integrate the solution with your current DMS and create some basic messages. We will be looking at seven common automated customer touchpoints that automotive dealerships can use to connect with their customers. These touchpoints can easily be set up in advance with an automated communication solution.

Customers enjoy being recognized and appreciated. An automated solution stores

each customer's purchase and maintenance history, important dates, vehicle information and contact information so almost all messages can be automatically sent based on a customer's stored profile.

This detailed information means that each customer will receive a highly personalized communication campaign, based on their own needs and vehicle. Targeted personalized messages outperform messages that are sent out to every customer on a list. They enjoy higher open and response rates and are more engaging to customers.

Maintaining meaningful contact with your customers through regular automated messages also helps your dealership to build trust and brand consistency. Customers will come to recognize your brand and will associate it with strong, personalized customer service and follow up.



7 Essential Customer Touchpoints

1 Check-In After Purchase

After a customer's initial purchase, it's a great idea to follow up with them with a quick message. The message can be fairly brief, yet should be friendly and provide some essential information. Include a thank you for purchasing, and encourage the customer to contact you if you can provide any type of assistance or answer any questions they may have. You might also want to include some type of promotion or coupon to spur the customer to visit your dealership again soon.

Why It Works:

A prompt thank you lets customers know that you appreciate their business. The message also lets customers know that you are there to help them out, and shows them that their needs are important to you. This follow up customer service helps to reassure the customer that they chose the right dealership to do business with.

2 Promotional Offer

After a customer's initial purchase, it's a great idea to follow up with them with a quick message. The message can be fairly brief, yet should be friendly and provide some essential information. Include a thank you for purchasing, and encourage the customer to contact you if you can provide any type of assistance or answer any questions they may have. You might also want to include some type of promotion or coupon to spur the customer to visit your dealership again soon.

Why It Works:

An exclusive coupon, discount or other promotion captures a customer's attention. Promotions help to drive repeat business and get customers excited about your dealership. Some customers may choose your dealership over another if you have a really good promotion going on at the time and you alert them to it.

Example:

"Hi Jane, just for you we have this 15% off coupon for your next service appointment. To redeem on your next visit, simply mention the promotional code SERVICE2014. We hope to see you soon!"



3 Regular Maintenance Reminder

Remembering to book an automotive appointment is just one thing on everyone's long list of things to do, so make your customers' lives a little easier with a friendly reminder. The message should simply let the customer know that the time has come for recommended maintenance (for example, a check-up or an oil change) and should provide an easy way for the customer to book the appointment. If the message is a text message, let the customer respond to the text message to book the appointment. If it is an email, tell the customer to click a link to book their appointment. If it is a voicemail message, the customer can press a number to speak with a customer service representative who will book their appointment.

Why It Works:

The reminder message is simple yet necessary. It lets the customer know that it's time to get their vehicle checked and makes it easy for the customer to book their appointment, helping to drive repeat business.

4 Appointment Reminder

Once a customer books an automotive appointment, it is important to remind them about the time and date. A quick reminder helps the customer remember their appointment and get there on time.

Why It Works:

Automotive appointment reminders help to reduce no-shows who forget about their appointment date. No-shows are common, and can reduce the daily revenue of an automotive dealership. A timely reminder can mean the difference between revenue gained and revenue lost.

5 Maintenance Updates

While a customer's vehicle is in the shop, you may discover that there is a previously unknown issue. With a quick text message or email, you can let the customer know about the problem and they can decide if they want you to fix it or book a later appointment. Customers can also be automatically updated when an ordered part has come in. Once the part is recorded in your inventory, the customer will receive a message letting them know that the part has arrived so they can book the appointment.

Why It Works:

In both of these cases, the messages provide important information to your customers and also help to drive business. The customer knows right away what is happening and can make a decision about what they want to do.



6 Customer Survey

After a customer has made a purchase, had an appointment, or interacted with your customer service staff in some way, you can send a survey. The survey should ask the customer about their experience, concerns, needs and so on. Questions should be straightforward and easy to understand and answer. You can use multiple choice questions, questions which require customers to type out an answer, rating questions or whatever question type best suits what you are asking. If you want to get a wider range of participants, you can send the survey out to all your current customers.

Why It Works:

A customer survey is one of the most effective ways to gain real, useful feedback from your customers. You can then use this feedback to improve your products and services. Sending a survey allows customers to express their opinions easily and conveniently. A customer who may not want to call your dealership may be more than happy to provide their feedback on a simple survey. Customers will feel that you take their feedback seriously and this type of two-way communication will help create a sense of trust in your dealership.

Safety and Maintenance Tips

Some businesses send out tips to help customers and provide useful information. These messages are optional, and customers can decide if they want to receive them. Automotive tips would include things like how to properly clean windshield wipers, when to have your tires changed and so on.

Why It Works:

Regular messages help you to stay engaged with your customers throughout the year, keeping your dealership in the front of customers' minds. The messages also let customers know you have their best interests at heart and you are always thinking about their safety.

Example

"It's always better to spot a potential problem in advance than realizing it when you are driving. Perform a weekly check on your vehicle to ensure that all your lights and signals are working, your doors and trunk close properly and your tires are not losing air. Record anything suspicious that you want to ask your service technician about."

Conclusion

Automated messages can be used for many more purposes, yet these seven essential ways allow your dealership to effectively connect with customers and provide important information. They help to build trust and create a consistent, recognizable brand.

If customers do not wish to receive any messages, they can opt out with the click of a button. Many customers, however, will appreciate the interactive messages and the personal connection.

Select the automated communication solution that is right for your dealership and start sending relevant, personalized messages to each of your customers without adding to your daily workload.

About Shawn Ryder

Shawn Ryder works with the Automotive Industry to automatically send communication to customers based on their individual preferences and unique dates, vehicle type, service requirements or other available information. With thousands of organizations using Dealer Engage to automate email, survey, event, text message, Twitter, fax and marketing needs, they now have the power to effectively reach customers on their preferred mode of communication.

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