



**THE M-WORD:**

**FULLBAY'S  
GUIDE TO  
MARKETING  
YOUR  
HEAVY-DUTY  
SHOP**

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# INTRODUCTION

## How do you feel about The M-Word?

If you've downloaded this book, odds are your thoughts about marketing range from "I don't think about it" to "No. Just no."

But every heavy-duty repair shop needs marketing to survive. Even yours.

Here at Fullbay, we feel pretty passionately about marketing—what's more, you probably think it's more of a necessary evil than feel passionate about it as we do. Or you're just not sure where to start. That's why we spent the last few months of 2019 working out exactly what a heavy-duty repair shop needs to do to get ahead and successfully market their businesses. We've crunched the numbers so you don't have to—and we've put together this awesome ebook.

"But Fullbay," we can hear you say, "marketing is insanely complicated and expensive. I don't have the budget to take out huge billboards or get on TV."

We've got good news. You don't need to do any of that. We're not even going to cover that stuff.

Sure, if you have a million-dollar marketing budget, then by all means spend away! But the tactics we're suggesting are going to be a lot less expensive. They're strategies you can test on your own, without hiring extra help or shelling out all your hard-earned money.

Marketing can seem pretty intimidating, but it doesn't have to.

Ready to take the dive? **Let's get started.**



# BUDGET

## We've all heard the phrase "You've gotta spend money to make money."

But marketing budgets are for executives and creative agencies, right?

No...not exactly.

We're just gonna say it: Marketing is a critical component of your repair shop's business. You may attract a few customers just by existing, but if you want to generate more income and expand your business, you need to get the word out. That's how we hope you look at marketing—as getting the word out, rather than some strange (and expensive) magic you need to perform under a full moon.

Once you decide you're ready to get the word out, another question comes up: how much should you be spending on your marketing? You may immediately assume you need to fork over a lot of money on glossy ads, huge billboards, and TV spots. This is false—actually, it's one of many falsehoods we bust in [our awesome marketing webinar](#).

You don't need a huge budget to develop an [effective marketing plan](#). But you do need a marketing budget for your shop, and that's what we're going to help you figure out.

## What is my marketing budget being spent on?

You can determine your actual marketing needs before or after determining your budget. We've put together some ideas on how you can spend some of those dollars, which we've listed below. But as you consider the following, remember that some marketing channels will take more time, effort, and money than others. Social media advertising, for example, can be cheap and not particularly time-consuming; in contrast, hosting an event at your shop will require you to...well, plan an event.

### Traditional marketing

- Direct mail – postcards and fliers
- TV/radio spots
- Ads on Pandora and Spotify
- Print ads – magazines and newspaper advertisements

### Other forms of marketing

- Events – shop open houses, truck care workshops
- Digital content – how-to videos and blogs
- Social media advertising – Facebook, Twitter, YouTube
- Sponsorships – Charity or industry-related events

## What have I tried in the past?

Unless you opened your doors and simply never told a soul you had a commercial shop, you've done some sort of marketing in your recent past. You told a few friends or family (word of mouth), you ran a small ad in the local paper (print), or maybe you just posted something on your shop's Facebook page (social media).

Did any of those efforts yield results? If you don't currently ask customers how they heard of you, ***start!*** We even put that word in bold and italicized it so you know how important it is. Finding out where your current customers are learning about you and why they've decided to pay you a visit is one of the best ways to broaden your marketing plan.

## Who am I up against?

Here's a secret: the industry bar is set pretty low at the moment. So many repair shops do very little or nothing at all in the way of advertising; as a result, the simplest marketing campaign can get you a lot of attention. If we can only convince you of one thing in this entire book, it's that you need to do *something*.

Start out by taking a look at your location and your competition. If you're the only heavy-duty repair shop within 150 miles, your marketing has an automatic edge. No one wants to drive a long distance for an important repair or even a basic service, so you may be able to do more with fewer marketing dollars.

If you're one of three shops within 20 miles, though, you may have your work cut out for you. That means you need to stake out the marketing tactics of your competitors and see what they're doing right and where they fall short. If they're reaching all of their customers via TV spot, for instance, they may leave a void in Facebook ads that you can fill.

Scoping out the competition serves an additional purpose. If you haven't been tracking your own early marketing efforts—or if they've fallen flat—you can see what's working for other shops and adapt them to work for you.

## How much money should I spend on marketing?

Ready to sort out how much of your shop's revenue you should contribute to marketing? We've broken it into three steps.

### Step 1: Estimate your gross sales

Get out the calculator and any necessary documentation and determine your shop's gross yearly revenue—the total of all sales you have throughout the year. If you're using accounting software, pull your annual Profit & Loss report from it. Typically you can perform this once a year and adjust your marketing budget as necessary, but if your shop is newer, or if you see a great deal of fluctuation in overall income, you may need to estimate this more frequently.

Not sure you're up to all that math? Fullbay has a [Diesel Shop ROI Calculator](#) that shows you where to plug in the numbers and then does most of the math for you. We even wrote a blog [breaking down diesel repair](#) profits.

### Step 2: Determine what you want your gross sales to be

If you intend to grow and generate more profit, then your current sales aren't going to be the final number you settle on. How much do you want to make in the next year?

Be warned: this is the spot where you'll likely have to take a hard look at your numbers, your shop, and your techs, and decide from there how much of a jump you can make. Generally speaking, your income will be determined by how many techs you've got on staff. Do you want to jump from gross sales of \$250,000 to \$350,000? You may need to hire another [productive tech or two](#). Sounds great, but are you ready to take on the costs associated with hiring more staff?

### Step 3: Pick your marketing budget

[Bob Cooper at Elite Worldwide](#) suggests determining your marketing budget from your desired income, not your actual income. If you want to make \$750,000, then base your budget off that number.

What percentage of your income do you want to devote to your marketing efforts? That's up to you. Bob recommends 4-5% of your targeted sales (so if you want to make \$350,000, you base your marketing budget off the \$350,000).

We've seen that number echoed across numerous studies. [Mark Claypool at BodyShop Business](#) goes a little further, indicating that about 5% of your income spent on marketing brings in solid rewards, while *cutting* a marketing budget can lead to a slump in sales. He's talking about the car industry in this case, but the same case can be made for heavy-duty truck shops.

### But which is for me?

Remember all that stuff we told you to take into account up above? You can use that to figure out your marketing budget.

While you're doing that, look into how your competition is advertising themselves and what they're spending on it – if they are at all. Can you take any inspiration from their efforts? If not, here are some questions to ask yourself while you work out what you want to spend on your own marketing:

- What marketing has worked for you in the past, if any?
- How can you make use of your location?
- How much do you want to make in the next year?
- What marketing channels do you want to use?

Ultimately the only person who can decide how much money to spend on marketing is you. But you can make an informed decision based on your shop's current revenue and where you want that revenue to be. Set aside the money, craft a plan, and get your marketing firing on all cylinders.

### Do I need help?

You can handle most simple forms of marketing on your own. But if you're looking for some extra input, head for your local [Small Business Development Center](#). It's partially funded by the [Small Business Association](#), and they're here to help new and small businesses find their way.

There are over 1,000 locations around the country, so you're likely to have one near you. They often have people with marketing and sales backgrounds on staff, and the service is completely free.



# WEBSITE

## Part I: Why you need a website

"Build it and they will come."

You've probably heard that line from *Field of Dreams* quoted over and over again. You've already put a ton of work into opening your shop and hiring your techs. Open the doors and you'll get business, right?

Wrong.

The digital era has opened up a lot of opportunities, but only to those who are willing to play on its terms. The old ways of finding information are rapidly fading into the background; people aren't picking up the phone book anymore, and they're

skipping advertisements on TV and the radio. They are, however, connected to the internet at all times, which means they can stumble across your site at any time of the day—if you've got an attractive, functional *website* that they can find, that is.

Note that we didn't just say a website. Quality matters. If your site looks like it was put together in the early 2000s, it's not doing you any favors. If it doesn't respond to being displayed on different-sized screens like cell phones and tablets as well as computers, it's not doing you any favors. Here's why you need a modern, responsive website for your shop.

## Why is a shop website so important?

Think of your shop website as a storefront that stays open 24/7 and can potentially reach hundreds of thousands of customers. It's a critical part of [your shop's marketing plan](#)—a place where potential clients can go to learn about your shop and the repairs you offer, as well as numerous other pieces of information that may factor in their decision to bring their truck (or trucks!) to you.

When your ideal customer needs to bring in their truck, odds are they're going to run a Google search. If they can't find your shop mentioned in the results, guess what? They'll go to someone who *is* listed.

In short, they'll go to your competitor.

That's a domino effect of lost business for you: that one customer went elsewhere, and if they had a good experience at your competitor, they will tell friends and colleagues about that competitor instead of your shop. That's business and money that you'll be hard-pressed to recoup. If only your shop had a website. Then that customer would have found you instead, and passed your name on to their colleagues and friends.

Why take the chance? Build yourself a nice website and [make it easy for your customers to find you](#). Anything less is pushing business away.

## Elements of a successful website

Good websites don't just appear without some forethought. Once you've decided to create a site for your shop, start thinking about what elements it needs to include.

### Basic necessities

We don't recommend sitting down at your computer and creating a site without doing any research. Set aside some time to browse the web and look at other websites. Get a feel for how they're laid out and what makes them stick out from the rest. If you end up hiring a developer to help you create your site, you can even make a list of features you admire on other sites, and they can go about implementing those features if they're the right fit.

As far as how it should look, your website doesn't need to be a crazy riot of colors and videos. In fact, we'd suggest that simple is better, especially if this is your first attempt at creating a site.

Even the most basic shop website needs the following things displayed prominently on the main page:

- Shop name
- Shop address
- Phone number
- Email address

For extra visibility, you may also want to put these items in a header or footer that runs across each page. If potential customers are clicking through your site, or land on something besides the homepage, they'll still be able to easily contact you.

At a minimum, your site needs to be pleasing to the eye, easy to navigate, and contain the SEO elements necessary to gain the attention of search engines. SEO, by the way, means "Search Engine Optimization" and that's precisely what it does for your site. We cover this later on in the book, so read on if you're burning for more SEO knowledge.

## Site design and construction

You've got a lot of options when it comes to actually putting the site together. WordPress is a fairly common website builder, and even design novices can pick it up after some studying.

You can also turn to several services that will do all the heavy lifting for you. Sites like Wix and Squarespace are great choices if you want to get your site up and running quickly. They don't require any coding or design know-how at all; instead, they provide templates and display options that you can change on the fly. Most of their templates are already optimized for computers, tablets, and cell phones, which is an added bonus for anyone who wants to get their website up fast.

## 5 Great Sites for Templates

You don't need to know a ton of coding to build a website anymore -- actually, you don't need to code at all! Several websites are basically plug-and-play, providing an attractive, responsive theme (better known as a template or layout) for your site without you lifting a finger. All you have to do is plug in the information you want to share and press "Update" and you can consider your site up and functioning. If you want to get a little more adventurous, you can try a Wordpress-based site, as these are easier to customize. We've provided five places to get plug-and-play and Wordpress themes below. All of them offer free or inexpensive versions.

### Wix

You've probably seen Wix's [advertisements](#) by now, and the site does exactly what it claims. You can create a basic website quickly using its templates -- no need for you to figure out any codes. It also offers a variety of other features like online scheduling and blogs.

### Squarespace

Like Wix, Squarespace provides templates for busy shop owners to use on the fly. Different plans provide additional features, like website analytics, gift cards, and the ability to offer discounts.

### GoDaddy

GoDaddy is well-known for its hosting abilities, but it also provides a selection of templates that let you put together a gorgeous website in a minimal amount of time. Their templates are tailored to your business type, and they even have an [automotive section](#).

### Weebly

Weebly provides templates for those who want to construct a site quickly. Want to build it from your phone? Yup, you can do that too.

### Themeforest

If your site is built using Wordpress, you're sure to find something you like on Themeforest. Themes start at \$2 and come in a variety of styles. Each theme is vetted by a staffer to confirm functionality, so you know you're getting something good.

If you'd like additional help putting your site together, think about hiring a writer, an SEO specialist, or a website developer through sites like Fiverr and Upwork. They're often inexpensive and quite skilled at their craft.

## Make your site customer-centric

A basic website is an important part of your marketing plan, but these days that's considered the bare minimum.

Think about your customers—those that exist, and those that you haven't yet won—and consider what they expect from a heavy-duty repair shop like yours. BodyShopBusiness.com broke down a [2019 report from Yodle](#) that explored what customers want to see from their local businesses.

### Some key takeaways:

- 57% of consumers say discounts or specials for returning customers set a business apart
- 67% of customers want new or better websites from their local businesses
- 33% felt that being able to book an appointment online was a feature they expected

There's a lot of information to digest in that report—any small business should read it—but the takeaway is that customers want more communication across the board from the shops they interact with. If you don't have some sort of presence on the web, you're actively hurting your business.

So what else can you do to make sure your shop's website has a fighting chance at standing out from its competition? Look at the bullets above and consider what your shop can offer visitors. Do you provide any sort of loyalty incentives like discounts for returning customers? If not, consider it; if so, splash that good news across your main page!

Some additional features you can add to your website—provided you offer them—that will draw attention and keep customers coming back for more:

- **List of your services.** Let your customers see right away what you do and don't do. [Jonny's Towing & Recovery](#) in Lombard, Illinois, displays the services they offer right on their landing page.
- **Get a quote online.** If you charge a flat rate for certain services (like tire rotations or oil changes), let customers plug in their truck's details and find out what the service will cost them without ever having to get on the phone.
- **Book service online.** This is slightly more complicated than getting a quote and can involve the installation of additional software, but giving your customers a portal to sign up for basic services or repairs lets them do one more thing without reaching for the phone. If you're interested in adding online booking to your offerings, Fullbay does offer this.
- **Mobile-friendly.** We can't stress this last bullet enough. A website that is designed to [look gorgeous on a browser](#) is not necessarily going to look good on a phone—and you need it to look good on a phone. Think about it: if you're motoring along and your truck is acting up, you aren't going to be able to rush to the nearest computer to find a shop website. You'll be on your phone, searching for "heavy-duty repair shops near me." Your website won't do you much good if the people who need you most can't read it comfortably on their phone.

## Additional perks of having a website

Your site is essentially your online storefront, and there's a lot to be said for establishing a solid presence online. But if you're really interested in separating yourself from the rest of the pack, consider adding some of the suggestions below.

- **Biographies of your staff.** What certifications have they earned? Do they have any specializations? How long have they been working in the field? You hired your staff because they're the best at what they do—show them off to potential customers!
- **A shop calendar.** Are you closed for two weeks in July? Do you host open houses where locals can pour a cold one and spend time with their local mechanics? Put your schedule and any upcoming events in a place where people can see them.
- **Shop amenities.** Do you offer free coffee to all your customers? Do you have Netflix, Hulu, or some premium channels available in the waiting room? Maybe you provide a free ride to their home or office if they've got a long wait ahead of them. If you've provided some perks that go above and beyond what other shops offer, let potential customers know.
- **Maintenance tips.** When's the best time to rotate your tires? Should you be paying attention to engine hours? How can you prep your fleet for icy winters or hot and dry summers? You can format these tips however you like; think about creating blogs around them, or short videos. We particularly like the blog posts on Inland Truck Parts & Service, which include topics like "Heavy-Duty Truck Classifications Explained" and "Safe Winter Driving Tips for Truck Drivers."

A website is your repair shop's home on the world wide web. It's your strongest, best piece of marketing, and a way to attract customers who are searching for the services you offer. Don't let the competition leave you behind.

## Part II: Make the search engines notice you

You've done it: You've created a website for your shop! Now all you've got to do is sit back and wait for business to motor in, right?

Well, no. Not exactly.

Unfortunately, your work doesn't end just because you put a site together. Your website is a big portion of [your marketing plan](#), but it's not going to do the job by itself. Think of your shop's site as your truck. Your vehicle is fine on its own, but you still need to put some diesel in it to make it actually go, which in this case equates to being seen by Google. Yes, there are other search engines out there, but let's be blunt: Google rules the roost, and other search engines are looking toward it for guidance. When you optimize for Google, you're optimizing for everyone.

Your website is nothing but dead weight if no one can find it, and the easiest way to ensure someone finds it is to make sure Google puts it on the first page of search results. The coveted #1 spot on Google is how you can absolutely ensure your shop gets in front of a lot of eyes.

So how do you do that?

We're glad you asked!

First of all, let's be realistic. You don't need to be Google's #1 squeeze to do well in marketing. There are hundreds of factors that go into determining how a site ranks—and a lot of those factors Google keeps close to the vest. But you want to aim high, because each rank that you slip is another missed click, another customer choosing your competition instead of you.

Reaching for that #1 spot always involves playing a bit of a guessing game, but the tips we provide here generally work well.

Ready to ramp up your search game? Here we go.

## Part 1: Google and How it Works

To understand what sort of work you need to do to get your shop to the #1 spot, you need to understand a bit about how the Google search monster works when someone is looking for your shop. In the case of a service-based site, something called Local Search is your best friend.

As an example, let's look at what happens when someone types in "truck repair near me." Arizona-based SEO expert Aaron Treguboff explains:

"If you have your location tracking turned on, Google is going to check it, and then it will search for the shops near you. It starts to order those shops by reviews, local citations (people who are linking to them who are also local), backlinks to the website, and things like user experience."

That's the backbone of a "near me" search, though Aaron cautions that there are a lot of other factors that play into a site's ranking.

Now that you know a bit about how the back end works, let's get into how to get your shop into play.

The overall process of getting your site to rank on Google—both overall and in the "near me" searches—is called Search Engine Optimization, better known as SEO. This means priming your site for Google to look at and rank. There are several moving parts to this that you can adjust on your own, essentially giving your site its best chance at ranking on Google. We'll go into them in more detail below, but they include relevant content, perceived authority, and keywords that Google can identify as relevant to your business.

You're basically creating a cocktail and sliding it down the bar. If Google finds it to its liking, it will display your shop's site when someone near you is searching for your services. If it doesn't, then it will let that drink slide right on by—past paying customers.

## Part 2: Getting Your Shop in Order

Now that you have some context about how Google works, you're ready to start adding the ingredients to make your site rank.

### Your Site

Google likes content. It likes content so much, it's likely to push your site closer to the top of its rankings if you update frequently.

There's a lot of discussion around how often Google crawls (layman's term for "notices") a site. When your shop site first goes live, Google will eventually index it, which is what makes it appear in the search results. We turned to Aaron again to find out his opinion on how often active sites get noticed, and he said, "I usually tell people [who own smaller sites] that Google will look at their site once every few days."

Here's some of the content Google notices on its sweeps:

Your name, address, and phone number (you've seen this as NAP) need to be current. Make sure they're up to date on your site and anywhere your shop may have a presence, like Facebook or review sites.

A clean, attractive website that displays on big screens, small screens, and mobile screens. Like we said in the previous chapter, a lot of folks will be searching for a shop on their phone. You don't want to miss them!

Post reviews and testimonials from real customers. Yes, the general review sites have this at least partially covered, but praise and thanks on a website are an easy way to sway potential customers.

Blog posts, articles, or coupons that are updated on a regular basis. This is where you can really help your site get noticed during Google's crawls, particularly if you're providing content that is truly useful to your audience. Here Aaron cautions moderation. "Be consistent and realistic for content," he says. "A lot of people try to do too much and can't manage it. I like to tell people to start with one blog post a month, and make sure it comes out at the same time each month." In other words, don't create an overly ambitious calendar of 30 long blog posts a month when you're brand-new to blogging; that's a quick road to burnout. You also need to ensure that your content is different

from what everyone else is putting up. "Don't write about how to change a tire if you're going to give the same advice as everyone else!" By the way, fresh content is a double reward. Not only does Google notice you more, but creating useful content prompts visitors to share that content. And Google loves links.

Pages with correct titles: Aaron says if he could give one tip to every shop owner, it would be this. "Make sure you think carefully about titles. Don't just use the defaults that come with a lot of sites—use titles that describe your shop and where you are. If you are a heavy-duty shop in Phoenix, don't make your homepage title for Google be: 'Home | Shop Name.' Instead, make sure it is 'Heavy-Duty Repair Shop in Phoenix, Arizona | Shop Name.'"

## Your Social Media

No, Google isn't reading your Facebook or Twitter (or so they say), but maintaining active social media accounts goes a long way in boosting your site's visibility. When you share something on your site, people look at it. Google may not be reading every word of your social media, but it is noticing all those people and sites passing around your blog posts, coupons, and tips. If you're getting a lot of links shared, then your site is building authority, which also helps improve your Google ranking.

If you're curious about how social media and Google play together, [this Hootsuite article](#) offers a more in-depth approach, and we're going to cover specific social media tactics you can use when marketing your shop in a later chapter.

## Google My Business

Google actually wants to help your shop get noticed. Not because it particularly wants you to succeed or fail, but because pointing people toward products and services that make them happy works in its best interest. If Google recommends your shop, and customers visit you and like you, then they'll trust Google's recommendations and go back for more.

An easy way to further this winning partnership is through Google My Business, which lets you create a snapshot of your shopfront that Google can show around to customers looking for shops like yours.

When you search for a business name on Google and it appears in a box on the right side of your screen with information like shop hours, phone number, reviews, and its position on the map, that's entirely due to [Google My Business](#). People searching for a repair shop on their phones may even come across a Google My Business result before looking at the top-ranked pages, so you definitely want to get in there. Today's Local

Media describes some elements that automotive shops should consider when updating their profile, many of which are applicable to heavy-duty repair shops.

To fully control it, you'll have to create a profile or find an existing profile (if your shop has been around for a while, it's likely a profile already exists) This is another place where you can update your NAP, as well as your shop's hours. You can also upload photos of your shop, your waiting area, and any certifications you or your techs may have.

## Part 3: Local SEO and How it Works

Local SEO is the best friend you've got when it comes to getting your shop ranked #1 on Google.

In the last few years, keywords with add-ons like “near me” have increased in usage. A report by [Hedges & Company covers its steady rise in this article](#) (which is geared toward the automotive industry but remains applicable in other fields). In short, adding “near me” to any search string signals intent to Google.

If you search for “diesel gas,” you will come up with all kinds of information about diesel gas—which is great, if that's what you're looking for. Google treats that sort of query as fact-finding. If you modify that phrase to “diesel gas near me,” then Google decides you're probably looking to fill up the tank on your diesel truck. It will zero in on your location and show you some diesel gas stations within a limited radius.

You definitely want to appear in people's “near me” searches.

Since your shop is in a fixed location, you want to attract/make yourself known to potential customers in the surrounding area. By setting up your GMB and making sure your NAP is consistent across your site and social media, you're signaling your exact location to Google, which in turn can project it out to your best customers.

The screenshot shows a Google search for "truck repair near me". The results are categorized into three sections:

- ADS:** Two advertisements from internetwebsite.com. The first is "Service Locator | Fix Your Trucks When You Need It Most" and the second is "Truck Repair Finder | Search Our Database Today".
- GOOGLE LOCAL:** A map showing the location of several truck repair shops. Below the map, three local results are listed:
  - Lefty's Truck Repair:** 4.9 stars, (20) reviews, 100 Main St, 500-555-1948, Closed, Opens 7AM Mon.
  - Treguboff Heavy Duty:** 4.9 stars, (20) reviews, 150 McDonald Dr, 500-555-4738, Closed, Opens 7AM Mon.
  - Truck and Auto Repair:** 4.9 stars, (20) reviews, 72 9th St, 500-555-4882.
- ORGANIC RESULTS:** A list of organic search results, including:
  - THE BEST 10 Commercial Truck Repair in Lawrence, KS**
  - Mobile Truck Repair in Lawrence, KS**
  - Best 23 Semi Truck Repair in Lawrence, KS with Reviews**
  - Terry's Deisel Review**
  - THE BEST 10 Commercial Truck Repair in Lawrence, KS**

BrightLocal has an excellent breakdown of just [how to make use of local SEO here](#), but the easiest way for you to control it is to make use of Google My Business. If you've got it set up correctly, your shop will appear when someone near you is searching for "heavy-duty repair near me."

You've put your blood, sweat, and tears into your shop—you've worked too hard not to give yourself every effort to succeed. A functioning website and good SEO tactics go a long way in making your shop website rank high on Google, and that high rank—that visibility—can be the difference between a trickle of customers and the steady business you need for success.

A photograph of two men in a workshop. One man, wearing glasses and a dark t-shirt, is gesturing with his hands while talking to another man. The second man, wearing a blue button-down shirt and green gloves, is listening. They are standing next to a red truck. The background shows a well-lit workshop with various tools and equipment.

# SOCIAL MEDIA + CUSTOMER REVIEWS

If you're about to roll your eyes and skip this section, stop! Social media networks aren't just about your little cousin posting pictures of her pets, or your buddy Joe describing his last cup of coffee.

A lot of people are on social media. A lot. We doubt there are exact numbers, but [this study](#) suggests 3.5 billion people are using social media in some capacity.

That's 3.5 billion people that you can reach with your social media advertising.

Even if there aren't 3.5 billion truck owners amongst them, you can bet there are still millions of potential customers out there.

So stop bashing Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook for a little while, and read what we've got to say about them. They have their issues, but they're powerful tools in your marketing arsenal.

First off, we have two steps we want you to take before you start interacting with your adoring fans on social media.

### **Step 1: Make sure your branding is on-point**

Think of your home pages on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram as your shop's storefront on those particular platforms. Anyone can see them – customers, potential customers, and rivals – so make sure you're presenting your best face to the world. If you have logos, display them prominently on the page. For your cover photo, you might consider a picture of the front of your shop, or a picture of your bays full of big rigs under repair. You don't want your page to look like you just slapped it together in five minutes, even if you did.

Make sure your shop name is in all your handles, and that you've posted your shop website in your bio.

### **Step 2: Link your website to your social pages**

Plop your social media icons right on your shop website in a space where visitors can't miss them. If you've constructed your site properly, you can send a good amount of the traffic you receive to your social media, giving you another method of communication. They'll click these icons and arrive on your various social media platforms, and if they like what they see, they'll follow you.

### **Step 3: Post regularly**

Posting every other month isn't going to land you any sort of social following. Determine a regular cadence, whether that's three times a week, once a week, or some other number – one that works for you.

### **Step 4: Don't post the same stuff to each platform**

Treat social media like big movie franchises: An occasional crossover can be a good thing, but too much of it and the novelty wears off. We'll discuss what type of audience you can expect in the individual platform sections of the ebook, but overall, you need to be posting different things to different platforms. Your Facebook crowd is looking for one type of content; those following you on Instagram want something else.

Variety is your friend.

Got your pages and your icons set up? Then let's go over a few basic tactics from each platform. You'll be a social media marketing whiz in no time! Part I: Book it

## Part I: Book it

We aren't going to tell you how to make a Facebook account; odds are you already have one, and Facebook itself provides pretty decent instructions when it comes to getting your shop's page set up.

We do want to take a moment to describe to you what people browsing Facebook want to see. They're all about the human touch. Yes, you should definitely post about your shop's services and the great repair job you just did, but think about the site's name: Facebook. In this age of high-tech gizmos and robot vacuums, most folks still connect more to a real live person (with a face, in case we needed to clarify that). You would do well to post about your techs and life at your shop, providing a "behind-the-scenes" look at how things work. Tell a story and let your visitors join in.

### Show them who you are

People on Facebook are looking to connect and see what's going on in your life -- or at your shop. Are you having an open house or a party? Did a tech just gain a new certification? Are you testing out an awesome new coffee machine?

These things seem small -- and maybe that coffee machine has little to do with your actual repair work -- but it's exactly the sort of imagery people want to see on a shop Facebook page. They want to see the people at your shop and learn more about them. If coffee is a big part of your shop's culture, well, you post as much as you want about that coffee.

### Show them what you do

If you have mobile techs, post a picture of your mobile units. Did you just ramp up a new diagnostic machine? Name it and post its picture.

Your images and words should show excitement about what you are doing in your shop and how your service will better help your customers.

### Show them you care

If people comment on your page, respond to them! Nothing turns a potential customer off faster than a static page that has been seemingly abandoned by the owner. The entire point of Facebook is to make connections and talk to people -- existing and potential customers alike.

Here's a quick rundown of the type of commentary you might get, and some potential responses you can offer.

**"Thanks for the great repair work!"**

"You're welcome! We can't wait to see you again!"

**"Where are you located?"**

"Our address is 325 Sunday Lane. Please call or send a message if you need further assistance!"

**"Do you guys handle this kind of repair?"**

"Yes, we do -- come on in!" or "No, we don't, but our friends at Second Shop do! Here's their contact info."

**"This sucks! My truck fell apart!"**

"Oh no! Please contact us and we can discuss how to make things right."

**"I really like that coffee brand you guys drink."**

"Thanks! It's basically rocket fuel!"

You'll also want to be standing by to respond to any private messages you receive from individuals. Facebook indicates on your main page how often you respond, and you want to keep that indicator favorable. That means engaging with those who message you and being as helpful as you can.

## **Show them you know your stuff**

Post information your visitors will find useful. How can they prepare their truck for a cold snap? Was there a recent recall on a particular part? What diagnostics should they run?

These types of posts indicate that you're an authority in the field.

### **BONUS**

If there are events going on in your community -- from local business announcements to the garage sale down the street -- post about them! The more entwined you are with the people around you, the less likely they are to see you as just some repair place down the street. Instead, you're the neighborhood truck shop.

## Part II: Gram It

Ah, Instagram. If you know any teenagers, they're probably on it constantly. This picture-based platform is more compact than Facebook, and those who browse it tend to want the story told in a single picture (or the occasional short video). That picture needs to say a lot: it needs to tell a complete story, or convey a feeling, or inspire something in the viewer.

"But wait," you're saying, "I'm a mechanic, not a photographer."

Your Instagram followers don't expect you to be churning out images of trucks rolling across a foggy landscape (though if you want to mess around in Photoshop, please send us the results!). They want a snapshot of what's going on in your shop, and they want you to inspire something in them.

This is not a platform you want to ignore. At last count, there were more than [1 billion](#) active monthly users on Instagram. They appreciate content that keeps them engaged with the businesses they support. As a free marketing tool and a growing network of customers, Instagram is a great place to gain exposure and connect with other people in the trucking industry.

### Show them you get them...bit by bit

Focus on building a deeper connection with your specific audience. You aren't going to be all things to all people, so don't try to appeal to every single trucker in the world just yet. Shop marketing on Instagram is far more effective if you have a smaller, engaged audience rather than a large disengaged group of followers.

Set up a little Instagram strategy that will cover three months and appeal to three groups in the trucking world. Here's an example:

- Month 1: Volvo. Post pictures of Volvos with the appropriate hashtag (read on for more about those). Use the limited caption space to ask Volvo drivers and owners how they feel about these particular trucks.
- Month 2: Peterbilt. Follow the same method you used with the Volvo to drum up interest amongst the Hino folks.
- Month 3: Aim for the long-distance crowd by posting pictures of some of the wear and tear that can occur on long-haul vehicles, as well as what you can do about it.

### Show them your hashtags

Say hello to the hashtag, formerly known as the pound sign. They are a way to link your content with other pages that have posted similar content. Building off the Volvo example we just used, think about hashtags like “#volvotrucks” or “#volvotrucking.”

People browsing Instagram searching for those hashtags will see your posts, and if they like them, they'll probably follow you.

It's a powerful and quick way to get your content into the hands of the people you want to reach, so don't disregard the little hashtag. If you need some help constructing them, try [www.hashtagify.me](http://www.hashtagify.me) or [www.all-hashtag.com](http://www.all-hashtag.com) for some guidance.

### Show them no links

Don't try to post links to Instagram. Really, just don't.

The platform lets you post a link in exactly one place: your profile page. Elsewhere, you're out of luck. This actually contributes to the affection for the platform; the lack of “click here!” or “go here!” makes it seem less like it's trying to sell you something.

We suggest linking your shop website in your profile and leaving it at that.

### Show them emojis

Yeah, we know...we're a little iffy on the emoji situation, too. On one hand, some of them are pretty entertaining and they can add a little flair to your captions. On the other hand...emojis.

But bear with us. [People seem to like emojis](#). Use them sparingly -- don't jam them between every other word -- and appropriately. There are emojis for trucks, cars, and

automotive parts, along with the usual smileys, crying faces, and hearts, so pick out a few you like and put them to work for you.

### **Show them you know the industry**

Volvo is on Instagram. So is Kenworth. Take some time after you first set up your account to find and follow people and companies in the trucking industry. These are ultimately your people -- the ones you want to reach and potentially turn into customers. Think of it as showing up at a dinner party and heading toward your own group of friends.

## Part III: Get your tweet on

Twitter has evolved quite a bit from the days when your Cousin Larry would share pictures of his sandwiches (we get it, Larry, you like cheese). There are over [300 million daily users](#), which means a lot of people for you to reach if you plan your tweets right.

Twitter is a little easier to use than the other platforms we discussed, and you can share a thought in seconds -- just type it in and post.

### Show them your lists

Twitter allows you to build out specific lists of people you're following. Think "Heavy Truck Brands" and "Heavy-Duty Repair Shops." This allows you to view those groups -- and address them, if you want -- separately, without trying to sort through a giant list of individuals. If you want Volvo drivers to know that you're running a special on Volvo oil changes, you can send a tweet out to that particular list.

Unless you make your account private, people can see your lists, and you can see the lists of others.

### Show them your personality

It's much easier to hold a conversation with lots of people on Twitter than on Facebook or Instagram. For example, set aside an hour or so one afternoon, sit down with your phone or your computer, and post that you're a repair shop and are here to answer questions. Create a hashtag -- if we were hosting one, for example, we'd call it #AskFullbay -- and see if anyone has questions.

This type of conversation is often quick and straightforward, but it gives you a chance to show off what you know. If you've got a sense of humor, use it! Much like Facebook, people on Twitter are eager to know the person behind the handle.

### Show them you're paying attention

We aren't saying spy on the competition...but you can do that a little bit on Twitter. There's nothing wrong with seeing what other repair shops are up to; they might have some tactics or strategies you can adapt for your own shop.

Are they running a lot of giveaways? Maybe you should look into that. Do they host chats every month with potential customers? Give it a try.

Social media marketing is always changing, and often Twitter sees the first evidence of those changes. Hang out there, pay attention, and you'll be able to keep up with the shifting landscape.

## Part IV: The Art of Cultivating Online Reviews

The rumors are true: customers can review you online whenever they like.

Potential customers read these reviews.

Surveys say [90 percent of consumers consult online reviews](#) before choosing a business, and 92 percent of shoppers report favoring local businesses with a 4-star rating or higher. That means online reviews can increase your shop's visibility on the web and in the real world. They can also give you a chance to connect with existing customers and attract new ones.

### Putting reviews to work for you

There are lots of review sites out there, many of which are excheppelt – but Yelp remains a heavyweight in the genre. [Research](#) has found that a rating improvement of just one star on Yelp can result in an increase in sales of up to 9 percent. That means if you have zero reviews or just a few, a handful of positive reviews can boost your customer base. Even if you've got some negative reviews in the mix, positive reviews will increase your overall rating and lead to an increase in customers.

Here's something you might not have considered: online reviews can help shops rank higher on search engines. [Google looks at data from review sites](#) when it builds search results. Consequently, a collection of 4 and 5-star reviews on sites like Yelp and Foursquare can get your shop listed "above the fold" when a potential customer Googles "best heavy-duty repair shop in town."

Even if a link to your shop's website doesn't come up, a good rating on Yelp will earn your shop's name a place on the Yelp link that comes up, where users can read reviews from happy customers.

And there's more. We've compiled a few additional benefits of online reviews:

- **Trust:** [72 percent of consumers](#) say they tend to trust local businesses with positive reviews
- **Reputation:** Good reviews and high search engine rankings make people see you as the authority in heavy-duty repair
- **Communication:** Marketing is all about communication, and reviews (even bad ones) provide a setting for interacting with customers

## Making online reviews work for you

Online reviews aren't a one-way street. Companies that interact with customers through online review sites get more reviews in general. That's why you can and should respond to all of them, even the ones that sting.

Trust us, you want to do this. Responding to comments in a timely manner leads to even [more reviews and improved ratings](#).

And, yes, we did say respond to all reviews—the good and the bad. Good reviews are an opportunity to thank customers, invite them back, and remind them of specials or promotions.

Bad reviews give you a chance to step up and be accountable.

Respond to bad reviews quickly—even faster than the good ones. Acknowledge the problem and offer a solution. The customer isn't always right, but avoid being accusatory. You should be professional and polite, even if they aren't.

Your proactive, constructive response to a negative review will shine a positive light on your shop that will tend to make prospective customers overlook bad feedback.

## Turn customers into review machines

Although the majority of consumers rely on reviews when looking for goods and services, they aren't always planning on posting reviews themselves.

That's why you need to ask them to do it.

Lots of happy customers will be equally happy to post a review about you if you just remind them to do so. Here are a few methods we've tried that have worked for us:

- **Ask in Person:** If you're wrapping up with a happy customer and they're telling you how happy they are with the repair your shop did, ask them to go online and tell others about it. This can also apply to phone conversations, so don't think that method of communication is off-limits.
- **Ask via Business Cards:** Print the review sites that list your shop on your business cards along with a brief request for a review. Something like, "Thanks for your business! You can post a review on Facebook, Google, or other sites!" will do the trick.
- **Ask in an Email:** if you're already email marketing, including a review request at the end of every email you send out is a simple way to get more reviews. The beauty of the email ask is that you can embed a link to the different review sites into the

body of your message. A customer can click that link and instantly sing your shop's praises on the review site of their choice.

- **Ask on Your Website:** Most websites have a "testimonials" page where people can read about the experiences of happy customers. Using the email trick, you can embed links on the testimonial page with an invitation for customers to leave a review on whatever site they like: "We want to hear about your experience at our shop!" Registration with review websites typically comes with permission to use that site's logo in your marketing. Have your webmaster add the logos to your testimonial page along with the links to easily direct customers to the right place to leave a review.

## Get registered

Yeah, yeah, we know. "Everyone's a critic," especially on the Internet.

Well, it's true. But you can put those critics to work for you by registering with the platforms they use and taking control of your shop's image on those platforms.

Some sites focus on specific types of businesses (think TripAdvisor for the travel world), but you'll want to target the [sites that post reviews](#) for any type of business. These are the heavyweights in the online review world:

- Google
- Facebook
- Yelp

People can leave reviews on any of these sites even if your business isn't registered with them, so claim a listing for your shop as soon as you can. You need to be registered with each site if you want to interact with customers and respond to their feedback.

You may not always have time to respond to every review on every site, and that's okay. On days you only have five minutes for dealing with reviews, concentrate on the sites with the most clout: Yelp and Google. If you can only set aside one minute, then focus on Google.

## Learn the rules

Make sure you understand each site's guidelines. For instance, it's never okay to pay for reviews or even offer discounts or any kind of reward for a review. Some sites may have a ban on vulgar language. If an irate customer leaves an over-the-top review filled with offensive words, you can usually flag it and have it removed rather than try to respond to it.

Utilizing online reviews is like injecting word-of-mouth boosting power into your marketing strategy. It helps put your shop on the radar, increases your visibility everywhere, and opens lines of communication with customers. In short, it makes your shop and your techs look awesome—so get on it!



# EMAIL MARKETING

**Word of mouth is one of the most effective, cheapest marketing techniques of all time.**

The words of satisfied customers give your shop street cred that a paid announcer can't. Email marketing is a great way to increase word-of-mouth referrals. It keeps your shop's name on customers' minds, and it doesn't require spending a pile of money.

Staying in touch with customers is a proven retention strategy, and email is a quick, easy, and inexpensive way to do just that. Email marketing can keep customers informed about your business, and it's a useful tool for providing education and value.

Emails encourage customers to take action, whether it's to schedule a service, take advantage of an offer, provide feedback or a testimonial, or even make referrals. It's also a non-aggressive way to turn an occasional customer into one who brings you all his business.

Did we mention it's cheap?

## Types of Emails

Joke of the Day emails and ones with silly memes may be entertaining, but there are better ways to make the most of your email list. Email marketing does its best work when you send out emails that provide value and engage customers like:

- **Welcome Emails:** Welcome new subscribers and thank them for joining your community.
- **Promotional Emails:** Advertise a monthly special or offer a discount coupon.
- **Announcement Emails:** Let your customers know about a new service you're offering or when a new tech comes aboard.
- **Reminder Emails:** Send customers an email when they have PMs coming due or to remind them of scheduled repairs or maintenance.
- **Referral Invitation Emails:** Ask customers to refer you to friends and colleagues in exchange for a freebie or percent off a service.
- **Testimonial Emails:** Pass on kudos other customers have given your shop.

Testimonial emails can serve multiple purposes. If the accolade is about how well your [mobile tech](#) handled a roadside repair, for example, it's a great way of promoting your mobile business, especially if customers aren't aware that you'll come to them. You can also include a link in the testimonial email so other customers can leave feedback. Put that feedback to work on your website and in other testimonial emails and you'll be in great shape.

In contrast, informative emails provide educational value to customers and are especially effective at getting them to engage. You can offer advice on various products or share industry news, such as when there are changes to federal regulations. That kind of topic can get long, so if you see your word count jumping up, post the full article on your website first. Then include a snippet of the post in your email and link back to the article itself.

## Who are you talking to?

It's easier to decide which kinds of emails to send if you [know your audience](#). You own a diesel repair shop, so you service big rigs and fleets. Plus, you've probably been in the heavy duty transport business in one way or another for a while. That means you've got a pretty good handle on what topics your customers find interesting and compelling.

However, understanding your audience requires going a little deeper. You can't simply lump everyone into the same category, because it's unlikely that all your emails will resonate with everyone on your subscriber list. Segmenting your customers into topic-based lists – much like you would on Twitter – will optimize your email marketing efforts and ensure that the majority of what you send out is useful to those who receive it.

The concept is fairly simple and you may already be practicing [customer segmentation](#) for pricing purposes or other reasons. Segmenting your customers means dividing them into groups. New customers, fleet managers, owners/operators, and “I just come in for oil changes” are all potential categories or lists.

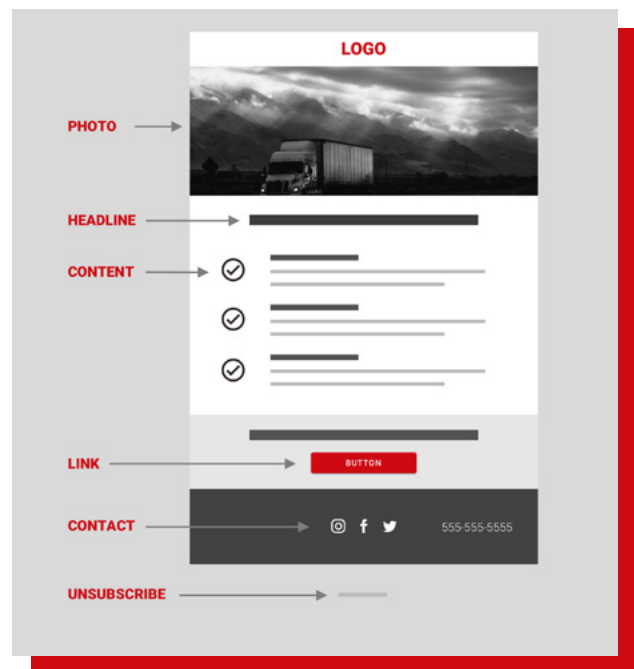
Once you've got your lists in order, you send out emails to different groups containing content that relates to them. For example, you could send reminder emails to the oil change customers when their trucks are due for a service and a newsletter email to fleet managers with a link to an [article on fleet management](#).

## What goes into an effective email?

First, keep it short. Your customers are busy. They don't have time to scroll through lengthy emails to see whether it contains anything that might interest them.

Second, you're usually best-served sticking to one topic per email, but there are always exceptions to the rule. For instance, you could include a coupon at the end of a short announcement-type email. Alternatively, you might have three short, bullet-pointed paragraphs that each link to a different full-length article on your website.

Other must-have elements for marketing emails include your shop's contact information and at least one link to your site, as well as images and graphics. Don't create sensory overload, but include a candid snapshot from the shop, a picture of a product, and your shop's logo at the very least.



Here's a pro tip: Proofread your emails—and proofread them again!—before hitting the “send” button. Awesome content loses its value when it's inaccurate or when readers get sidetracked by typos and other mistakes.

There are plenty of free tools online to help with spelling and grammar. Run your emails through [Grammarly](#) -- the free version picks up typos and will let you know if there's items you need to fix.

## The power of the subject line

Subject lines are another vital part of effective emails. They literally have the power to make or break your email marketing campaign. The subject line hints at what's inside. They're the first thing your subscribers see, and they make readers decide whether to open your email now, come back to it later, or send it directly to the trash without even reading it.

[Great email subject lines](#) are brief and intriguing. They can be a short sentence or even just one word. Their ultimate purpose is to motivate subscribers to read your email right away. You can use humor, a call to action, or ask a question, as long as the subject line relates to what's inside the email. For example, “Is your fleet ready for winter?” would be a good subject line for an email containing a link to an excerpt of your latest blog post on winterizing fleets.

## Your quick and easy guide to subject lines

How many emails do you get per day? Probably a lot. Think about the sheer number of emails that you ignore or delete. Any email that wants to stand out from the crowd needs a subject line that makes the potential reader say, "Wow, I want to know more about that."

Your best bet is to think about who you're trying to reach and address them—and their needs—specifically. An old copywriting trick is to ask them a question about something that matters to them, or lead with the direct benefit to them.

"But Fullbay," you're saying, "I'm not a copywriter."

That's OK! You have the advantage of knowing your audience inside and out. You know what matters to them, and how what you offer them (truck repair) will ultimately benefit them.

You also have technology on your side. There are lots of tools out there you can use to see if your subject lines are up to snuff. Send Check It offers their [Subject Line Tester](#), which even provides you with a score and suggestions on how to improve it. Each tool uses its own scoring methods based around word choice, readability, and other machine magic we won't get into here, so feel free to play around until you find one that you like.

Here are a few headers with scores of 90+ that relate to the repair shop industry:

**Bring your truck in for an oil change** - score of **94** - includes a call to action or an instruction for the reader to follow (bring your truck in to your shop)

**Who's handling your PMs?** - score of **96** - asks a question about something important to the reader (their truck) and possibly makes them think (who is handling their PMs? It could be you!)

**No charge for your next tune-up** - score of **94** - lets readers know they've got something free coming to them.

**Change your AC filter before summer** - score of **92** - another call to action, along with a reminder of seasonal maintenance.

### *A Note About "Free"*

It's often advised to stay away from the term "FREE" as it's become equated with spam. With that said, if you have existing customers on your mailing list and they're qualified for a free service, there's no harm in leading with that.

## How to get customer emails

Email marketing only works if you have customers to email. That's why you need to begin building your subscriber list now. The good news is that there are several ways you can get email addresses from current and potential customers.

Start by adding a field for an email address on intake forms. That prompts customers to provide it along with their address and phone number when they bring a truck in or purchase a part at the counter. You can also add an [opt-in](#) form to your website, either as a pop-up or somewhere near the top of each page. Be sure to include an offer, such as a percentage off a service, in exchange for names and email addresses.

Other [ways to build an email](#) list include:

- **Collecting business cards:** Place a box or bowl on the front counter and invite customers to toss their business cards into it. Each week you can pull out one card. The owner of that card will receive a prize (a free oil change or some other perk). Every month, empty out the cards and add the email addresses to your list.
- **Start a club:** Invite people to enroll in an elite customers club by providing their email address. The incentive is the special rewards customers on this list receive.
- **Leverage your snail mail list:** If you have an old-school mailing list, send a postcard to recipients asking them to fill in their email addresses and return the card to you. Of course, you'll also offer a reward for following through.
- **Newsletter swaps:** Exchange email space with a non-competing business. You both get links in each other's newsletters to your opt-in forms.

Here's another tip: Make sure your opt-in form is in all the emails you send out. That way, if anyone forwards your email to someone not on your list, that new person can easily sign up.

## How often should I send emails, anyway?

Email marketing works in roughly the same way as the social media marketing we described above – you need to be consistent, but not spammy. So pick a date or dates where you will send emails each month and stick to them.

Having said that, there's a fine line between emailing enough and becoming a nuisance, and you have to know where that line is. Unfortunately, there's not a one-size-fits-all answer.

(We know -- we'd love an answer, too.)

Sometimes it depends on the audience and sometimes it depends on what you're sending out. Having great content is a plus—the better it is, the more your subscribers will appreciate them. That means you can email often without customers hitting “unsubscribe.” Still, even with ultra-interesting content, an email a day is usually too much. For some folks, even an email a week is pushing it.

The best advice is to experiment to see what works best for your shop. Start with scheduling an email once a month and supplementing it with one or two extra emails, like when you have an announcement to make or if you're running a special. Tweak the frequency based on how your subscribers respond.

## Technology can help

If all this email marketing chatter is making your head spin, don't worry! Once again, technology can help. There are tons of [email marketing programs](#) available that handle the hard stuff like building an email list, putting together a newsletter or campaign, scheduling emails, and most of them even automate it all. You've probably heard of popular ones like MailChimp and Constant Contact, but there are many more out there, including:

- [Aweber](#)
- [Convertkit](#)
- [Drip](#)
- [GetResponse](#)
- [iContact](#)
- [MailerLite](#)

Most offer a free version, which are a good place to start. They give you a chance to test out your email marketing and see what tactics work for you. But you may need to dip into your marketing budget and upgrade fairly quickly – free versions usually cap the size of your email list, and if you do this right, your list will grow quickly.

Email marketing, like most kinds of marketing, is full of experimenting, so don't be afraid to test out new strategies as they come to you. Above all, remember that you're reaching out to past, present, and potential customers and trying to build a connection with them. Keep working at it and see what methods work and what don't, and you'll be off to a great start.



# LOYALTY + REFERRAL PROGRAMS

**Constantly trying to drum up new business is stressful and can be a waste of resources.**

Constantly trying to drum up new business is stressful and can be a waste of resources. Statistics show that acquiring a new customer costs five times more than keeping one you already have. While new business is a good thing, you should zero in on keeping existing customers happy.

Why? Because the sparkling word-of-mouth testimonials from happy customers are the best way to bring in new business.

There are lots of ways to do that, of course; do good work and be professional are two keys to keeping customers. But loyalty programs are another effective method to retain existing clients and inspire them to talk your shop up to others.

It's a strategy that can work for many types of businesses, but there's a right way to implement a program like this for maximum ROI. Let's take a look at what makes your best customer tick.

## Keeping your customers happy

Ever heard of customer relationship management ([CRM](#))? It covers all aspects of connecting with customers. The basic idea is that every interaction with customers is an opportunity to do some PR for your shop. Whether they come in for routine preventive maintenance, to buy a part over the counter, or for an unexpected repair, your crew's goal should be to [provide customers with a positive, memorable experience](#).

Set up a [win-win](#) by offering the products and services they need. If it happens to be something that isn't in your shop's repertoire, go the extra mile to take care of it anyway and do a stellar job. Order in that obscure part or touch up a scratch in the paint. This shows a customer you're willing to do what it takes to become their favorite shop.

Other ways you can wow them with your customer service include:

- **Accessibility:** Make it easy for customers to request services, schedule repairs, and get quotes.
- **Move fast:** Get repairs and services done as quickly as possible without sacrificing quality.
- **Stay in touch:** Reach out to your customers via email or social media.

Let's touch a bit on communication, which in this context is more than just sending out newsletters. It means really engaging with customers every chance you get. Let them know what repairs need to be done and why. Talk to the customer about how your shop will handle their service and how long it will take. Keep them in the loop. [Update them in real-time](#) during a service or repair and let them know ASAP if there's a delay. Email or text customers with appointment reminders or when a service is coming due.

You'll find communication goes a long way in keeping customers happy and loyal.

### Build trust

When a customer knows you have their back and that they can expect a consistently high level of service from you, they're going to trust you. They're also going to relax knowing their trucks and/or fleets are in good hands.

Trusting, relaxed customers are loyal customers.

Building trust takes some time and it's one of those instances when actions speak louder than words. It goes back to seeing every interaction with customers as an opportunity to show you're trustworthy.

Start [building trust with your customers](#) by really listening to them. You'll learn what they want and need. Be honest and transparent, too, even if it means having a difficult conversation. Bad news is still bad news, no matter how much you sugarcoat it.

Accountability is also a component in building trust. Show customers that you can be trusted not to pass the buck or sweep mistakes under the rug. Prove you'll do what it takes to right a wrong. Deliver on promises...and if you can't, notify your customer immediately about the problem and what you're doing to solve it.

If it sounds like we're talking about communication again, that's no accident. Many aspects of relationship-building are linked to strong, open communication, and that includes building customer trust.

## Start a customer loyalty program

Loyalty programs are one of the most cost-effective ways to keep customers happy. It not only rewards them for coming back to your shop, but it's a great way to incentivize the word-of-mouth referrals you're looking for. Let's go over how to start a customer loyalty program for your shop to lock in those happy customers and attract new ones.

### Reward them

When you start a customer loyalty program for your shop, you need to decide what behaviors you're going to reward and what prizes or gifts you're going to offer. Maybe you'll invite every new customer to join the program, or maybe you'll reserve it for "elite" customers. Alternatively, you might want to start a referral club that rewards customers who refer business to you. You could even combine it into one big program if you like. Like we said earlier, marketing is a grand experiment. Try out different things and pick the one that works best for you.

Now, what kind of rewards do you want to offer? Customers can earn coupons, a percentage off a parts purchase, or even a free service. You could also set up the program so that for each actual dollar spent with you, customers accrue points or "shop bucks" that can be used toward the bill on their next purchase or repair after they've accumulated a certain amount.

"Next" is the key term in that sentence. This kind of program incentivizes the customer to visit your shop again.

### Pick a format

You're probably familiar with the traditional punch-card formats for loyalty programs. Usually, customers pay full-price for 10 oil changes, for instance, and the 11th one is free. That old-school format might work well for many shops, but there are other types of "cards" you can offer when you start a customer loyalty program for your heavy-duty shop.

For example, you could hand out a [gift card](#) that can be loaded with the rewards you'll give out, whether it be points or shop bucks or some other reward. Each time the customer buys the reward-related service, spends money at your shop, or refers someone, you can add the reward to their card, kind of like making deposits to their loyalty account.

The overall concept can be implemented using a smartphone app, loyalty cards, or plastic keychain tags. You can also invest in software that records your customers' rewards. Plus, sending out a statement email notifying them of their accrued rewards gives you another reason to stay in contact with them and keep your shop's name on their minds.

### **Talk is cheap...and effective**

You can count on your customers to talk about how great you are, whether they're chatting with their friends and colleagues or leaving a glowing review on Yelp.

But when you start a customer loyalty program for your shop, you'll want to get the word out as quickly and widely as possible. In that case, let's turn to our old friend social media.

Post about your program on Facebook and Twitter. People visiting your page will share those posts, and you can even tie rewards to those platforms. Offer 10 shop bucks, for example, to each customer who tags your shop in a post. They don't even have to be existing customers. A campaign like that could bring new customers through the door, and word of your program will spread to their social media contacts in the process.

Of course, you'll also want to spread the word through all your other marketing channels including newsletters, emails, or even the opt-in forms on your website. Customers could get free enrollment in your loyalty program plus 5 points or shop bucks loaded onto their loyalty card in exchange for their email address. It's an excellent way to offer added value to the customer while building your email list.

Loyalty and referral programs can take a little while to set up, but if your shop generally produces good work, they'll soon be an asset to your business. If nothing else, such programs remind you that your current customers are your heartbeat, and you need to keep them beating for you if you want the work to keep flowing in.



# EXTERNAL SIGNS

## If you've got a shop, you need a sign.

We don't mean an astrological sign, either, which is still the first thing some shop owners offer up when we ask them, "Where's your sign?"

Whether you're a Leo, a Taurus, or a Gemini, your repair shop needs a sign.

We were able to corner Fullbay CEO Jacob Findlay for a few minutes to get his perspective on signs and why they're so important to a shop's marketing plan and overall existence. To kick things off, he told us a scary story...about a store without a sign.

## The Store Without a Sign

"I was driving cross-country with my family," Jacob recalls, "and I knew we were about to pass the shop of a customer."

He remained on the lookout for that shop, eager to see it after corresponding with the owner. He knew he was in the right neighborhood, and on the right street, but there was no sign of the shop. He ended up passing the establishment several times before realizing the shop was there—it just didn't have any sort of signage. There was no way for potential customers to see it from the street, nothing telling them they were in the right place.

The shop was chasing customers away without even realizing it: a [recent FedEx survey](#) found that 60% of potential clients won't go into a shop or store if it doesn't have a sign. Think about it—would you wander into a random building that had no identifying marks? Probably not.

## An Industry-Wide Problem

Unfortunately, the signless store was not a one-off. Poor signage has become a calling card of the heavy-duty repair industry, and it's a calling card Jacob dearly wants to swap out.

He understands why it happens. "The people running the shops are usually former techs," he says, who are probably thinking more about getting the job done than advertising. They focus on the quality of their work and building relationships with their existing customers, who then hopefully spread the word about them when they hit the road.

Techs-turned-owners may also be overwhelmed by the sheer amount of work that it takes to maintain a business—work besides the actual work being done on the trucks. Think invoicing, ordering parts, making appointments, handling payroll. By the time a shop owner has time to breathe, he's going to pour himself a cup of coffee, not worry about whether he has enough walk-in business.

But a sign doesn't just affect your walk-in business. Shop owners may also put a lot of trust into Google Maps, figuring that once a customer inputs the shop address, their phones will guide them the rest of the way.

Jacob points out that Google Maps can only get you so far. If someone knows your shop is there—just like Jacob knew the shop in our opening scary story was there—but they can't find you, they aren't going to spend a lot of time hunting down your entrance. They'll check it out, figure Google Maps was wrong, and leave. Bam, one paying customer lost.

Take it from Jacob: signage is important, so invest in a good one! After all, "You're not making more money by not having signs."

## 5 Do's of Signage

**Do hire one designer for everything.** Matching messaging is one thing. Asking one designer to piggyback off another's work is challenging—so why add that to your To-Do List? There are design stores that will create logos, signs, and more for you for a good rate. Get it all done in one swoop and embrace consistency.

**Do make sure your messaging matches.** If you have a website or any sort of Internet presence, make your signage, colors, and messaging cohesive across your digital and tangible advertising.

**Do create a logo that can be an icon.** A lot of people are going to see your logo from a distance, so make it bold and simple—the more it stands out as an icon or from the road, the better.

**Do make it simple.** People aren't going to slow down to see what your sign says. "You want them to see it, know it, and move along." They'll store the information and remember it when they need to.

**Do make it visible.** Don't hide a beautiful sign behind foliage or on a wall that no one will see. If you've got a sign, put it in the spot where the most people will see it!

## 5 Don'ts of Signage

**Don't pack in too much detail.** If you're driving by a sign, you aren't registering all the information on it. "When I see a sign that says 'Truck Repair' I know immediately who they are and what they do," Jacob says. Don't throw in too much detail or extra language—people can't process it while they're on the move.

**Don't put a price in your name.** "When I was in college, there was a place near me called \$5 Pizza," Jacob recalls. As wonderful as a \$5 pizza was to starving college students, as the years crept by it was no longer feasible to sell an entire pizza for just \$5. What happens if your name is \$1.99 Oil Change and your starting prices are \$10? Angry customers happen.

**Don't get too crazy with art and fonts.** Clear, legible lettering and minimalistic (if any) graphics are the quickest way to ensure a customer sees you and knows what you do. Yes, that calligraphy lettering looks beautiful, but don't make people try to decipher it.

**Don't misuse your real estate.** Jacob recalls seeing a sign on the side of a building that got hit with full sunlight each day. After a few years of this, the once bold, snazzy-looking logo had faded to a pastel wash. Figure out what environmental hazards await your signage and plan their location accordingly.

**Don't expect it to last forever.** Even if your sign is in the perfect spot and impeccably maintained, there will still come a time when it needs repair or replacement. Don't skimp on this. If potential customers see a shabby sign, they're going to assume the rest of your business matches it.



# GO FORTH AND MARKET

**If you've made it to the end of this ebook, congratulations! We know there was a lot to absorb.**

The good news is if you've made it this far, you now have a good starting point to kick off your heavy-duty repair shop's marketing program. The bad news...actually, there isn't any bad news. You can start putting everything in this ebook to good use almost immediately, and if you haven't been doing any marketing, you're bound to see some returns.

We've held off on tooting our own horn so far, but we'll mention here that Fullbay can streamline a

lot of processes in your shop. A more efficient workplace means you've got more time to figure out your marketing plan and try new strategies. Not a Fullbay customer? Contact us here for a demo!

You opened your shop intending to do business. So go on and put the pedal to the metal on your marketing plans -- your shop will thank you.

# ABOUT FULLBAY

Several years ago, Jacob Findlay was barbecuing with a friend who happened to own a repair shop. Through the course of their discussion, he realized heavy-duty shops had fallen somewhat behind on the times—where other industries had long ago switched over to apps or software, repair shops were still heavily dependent on paperwork and antiquated tracking systems.

Jacob thought he could find a way to help, but he needed to learn more. The onetime CFO took a job at a diesel repair shop to better understand what it needed.

Over the course of the year he spent there, Jacob learned where shop owners needed the most help. He saw techs bogged down by slow authorizations, lost paperwork, and haphazard parts management. Every piece of Fullbay is designed to make lives easier for techs and owners.

Together with CTO David Hoover and COO Chris O'Brien, Jacob has grown Fullbay into a powerful piece of software that has assisted countless shops.

## Here's some of what we can offer your shop:

- **Saved time:** No more wasting hours chasing down paperwork or waiting for authorizations
- **More efficient techs:** Track production in real-time and assign jobs on the fly
- **Greater profits:** Speedy invoicing and effective parts management mean less time spent in the red
- **Cloud-based:** You can access it from anywhere – not just the shop
- **Customer portal:** Authorizations and updates are easy

Ready to see what Fullbay can do for your shop? Go ahead and [demo the software](#)—you may just wonder why you waited so long!

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