



CustomerLink

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Product News

Your competitors aren't wasting any time getting started with their holiday promotions. So why should you?

Sending a holiday greeting is an excellent way for you to stay connected with your customers, and NOW is the time to take action.

Thanksgiving cards: Order your Thanksgiving cards by October 22, 2010 for standard class mailing.

Holiday cards: Order holiday cards by November 19, 2010 for standard class mail. Ordering later does not mean you can't get your messages there, but First Class mail costs more, so why wait?

Don't Fall for Fairytale Marketing

By Jim Bonfield



Once upon a time (yesterday) I spent some time with a shop owner who left us 7-8 months ago to sign a 12-month agreement with a dental marketing company that now does automotive marketing. These "dental folks" (we'll call them "DF" for short) spun up a good tale of

why what worked for dentists should work for auto repair shops too.

That shop owner is now back with us. Well, kind of. He still is locked in to the balance of the

12-month contract he was forced to sign with DF, so, he is now paying us AND DF because they just could not deliver a 100% solution.

This is not the only shop I have heard this story from. Let me explain:

DF sells a \$300 per month, email service and appointment reminder program. They add some cool features with customer reviews via email and then publish those reviews—good AND bad—to a Fa-

cebook page and to Google. Sounds fantastic, a real prince of a program, and in some ways it is.

However, it's a fairytale package for most shop owners because most can only reach about 20% of their customers by email. What about the other 80%?

That's a big problem for DF. It's an even bigger problem for shops hoping for a happy ending to this story. Because, in the real world, email alone just doesn't cut it yet, regardless of how cool the Google and Facebook review tools are. It's a big

impressive story but it turns out that the prince of a program is really more of a frog when it comes to charming everyone in your database with the messages you send.

"But wait," the DF company said months after launching for auto, "We now do postcards. We can contact the rest of your customers now too!"

Knowing where to find the information and how to use it

— That's the secret of success. — Albert Einstein

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Don't Forget to Decorate: Cash in on the Holiday Gift Season with the Right Displays

With the holiday season comes holiday opportunities for the shop that thinks like a gift-seller in addition to being an automotive repair facility. Remember, your customers may be coming into your business to get their vehicles worked on, but in the back of their minds, they know they have gifts to give again this year.

SO... make sure your showroom is a RETAIL DISPLAY area that makes it obvious to them that spending money with you is a great way to get excellent gifts to give. SHOW them they have options they might not have considered before. Put up some displays and let them KNOW your business sells things that people want and need.

- Floor Displays
- Wiper blades
- Wheels and tires
- Tire chain kits
- Dash covers
- Jumper cables
- Vehicle safety kits (flashlights, jumper cables, first-aid kit, etc.)
- Counter Displays
- Gift certificates

Gift certificates are easy to display and have HUGE potential for your business. Find a template online, print them and fill some samples out, then put them on a cardboard display or in a Plexiglas stand (you probably have some old ones from parts vendors lying around that you can cover with wrapping paper and re-purpose without spending an extra dime).

Make the sample offers CLEAR. You can go with straight dollar amounts like \$10, \$20, \$100 etc., but make sure some of your samples are specific services like: "One Free Oil Change" or "Dad bought you a set of tires."

Setting up a gift certificate display like that will give people ideas. They will see the gift possibilities, and you will see the light go on as they realize they can actually give really cool and practical gifts.

Put your shop on the gift-giving map with a few well-placed displays. See if your parts house won't put up a display for you on consignment to help both businesses sell more. And don't forget to point out that your shop is a source for gift ideas when you are billing your customers out—start doing that right now. Get a jump on the holidays, talk it up, and get your shop its fair share of the gift-giving season's retail revenues.



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Which is great. Except they only give 50 postcards with their base package. And the post cards are tiny, generic and just not very well done.

So the shop owner says, "I have 1,250 other current customers. I need to communicate with ALL of them. Using email and 50 postcards isn't going to get it done. I need a 100% solution, not this partial one."

"Ok," DF says, "That will be \$600 per month for our base email reminder package plus an additional 300 postcards at about a buck a piece."

Ouch. (I think I just heard a frog croaking somewhere.)

On top of all of that, they can't tell a shop owner ANYTHING about who their customers

are, where they come from or which are the most valuable because they don't have anything like our smrt system. So they can't even help the shop decide which customers are better prospects than others in order to help them grow their base. They simply don't have the technology.

The poor shop owner is now stuck for a whole year in a contract that forces him to either:

A) Blow off two thirds of his customers, or

B) Pay an additional \$300 for postcard costs on top of his contracted \$300 email-only reminder program.

But at least he is still getting all the awesome Google reviews right?

Well, not really. Turns out that, in

the eight months with the DF company, the customer I spoke to only captured about 8 reviews to post to Google. Which wouldn't be that bad, but, GET THIS: He had to FIGHT with DF to get them to NOT publish some bad reviews. Who wants the snarling tantrum of some unreasonable customer showing up on Google or Facebook under their shop's name?

Nobody, that's who. The concept, putting reviews up on Google is awesome! But the shop has to have some control. The shop owner in this story didn't know he had options. He does: With smrt 2.0 he (and you) can

get the best of customer reviews AND get some cool new next generation marketing gizmos too. You get the best parts, lose the horrible parts, AND you don't have to spend \$600 per month on a partial solution. Here's how:

Smrt is going Interactive...Online and

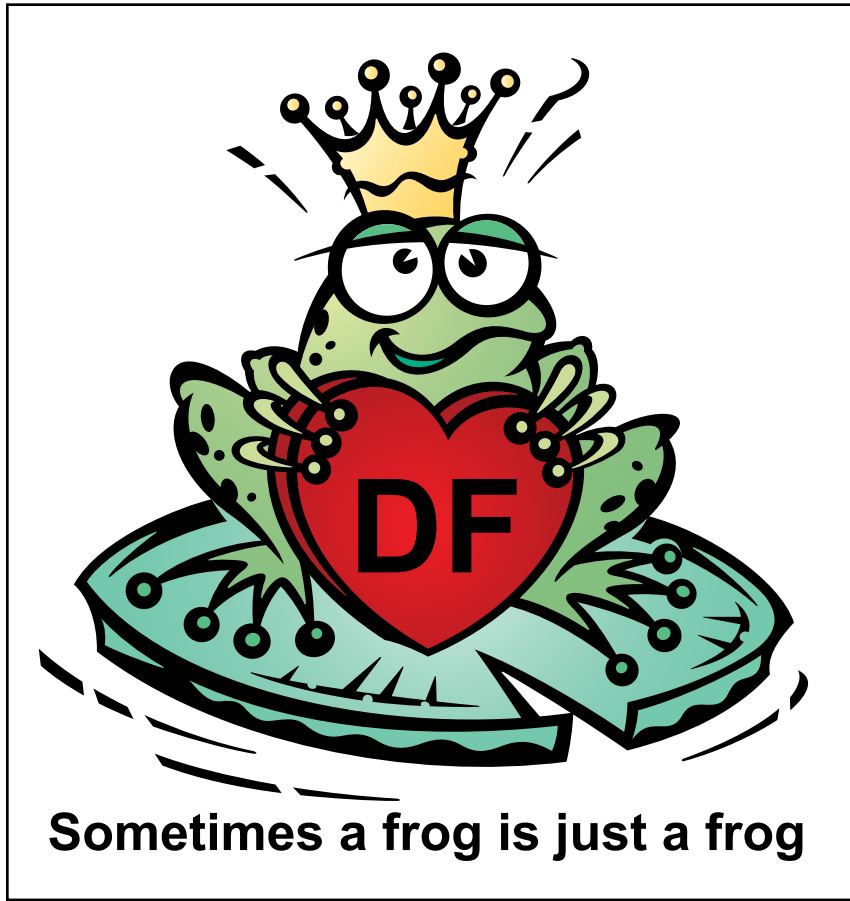
We get that the DF story sounds almost magical; they want you to believe that "email is the fantasyland answer to everything." After all, who wants to spend hard earned money on the big bad wolf of printing and postage? But if you find yourself becoming enchanted by the

DF fairytale, look into the magic mirror of common sense as ask yourself: Is this a good fit for the customer mix I ACTUALLY have today? Will this really work or do I just wish it would? A 100% coverage in emails can happen, but are you actually there? And how fast do you think you can get there in the realm of wicked email SPAM? People don't give out their addresses as often as we might like, and even those that do don't check their junk folders looking for your lost marketing.

If you have any questions about any marketing offer you find, please don't

hesitate to call me directly or any one of my experienced team members. We've been at this for close to eleven years now. We offer full-service 100% solutions—no gaps, no contracts. And we're the only company with Segment Marketing Research Technology to tie it all together no matter what new technology comes down the road.

If you have questions and/or comments please call me at 888.942.5448 181, or email me at jbonfield@customerlink.com



Sometimes a frog is just a frog

Social. (More details coming soon)

Don't be fooled by partial solutions, and DON'T get stuck in a contract that you can't get out of, paying more for less. Lots of new companies out there have some great ideas. But a great idea doesn't make them "industry experts" just yet. I'm sure many will begin to learn the industry after a few years and clean up their problems, become real players some day. But until then, they are going to be learning on your dime. For most shops—and I know for the shop who just came back to us—that is not something owners are willing to do.

You DON'T Want Every New Customer You Can Get —By John Daulton

What?

I can hardly believe I just wrote that headline for this article. Everyone probably thinks I'm crazy now. But, I can prove why it's true. Hear me out.

Everyone with a dollar in his or her hand is a prospective customer. Everyone. Which means that if you say you want every customer you can get, you are saying that all customers are the same. That is a very nice idea, and it's very politically correct, but the truth of the matter is: they aren't. Not all customers are the same. Here's what is the same: money.

The dollar in my pocket is the same as the dollar in your pocket and the one in that woman's purse and in the money clip of the guy across the street. All dollars are the same. But not all customers are. And money doesn't spend itself.

One customer might have more money than another, but the customer with less money might actually spend more of that money on his or her car BECAUSE he or she may have less money. Sound impossible? The thought of missing work and losing a job might be more important to that customer than almost anything else and so he or she will be the most meticulous with vehicle maintenance, thus the customer with less money can actually spend more over time.

Another example: two men, both middle aged, both married, have kids, both make \$45,000 a year. On the surface, these two guys might seem to have pretty similar customer traits: same age, same income, same family status. But what if one of them is a total cheapskate, a bargain hunter? He's the kind of guy who likes to prove how clever he is by always getting "the best deal." He'll spend two hours at night online, searching for the best deals before getting his service done. He would rather go to three different shops to get his serpentine belt, his oil change and his brake job done because he can save eight bucks on the belt at the big corporate chain shop down the street, he can get the oil change at the quick lube near his work for \$3 less than your shop or the corporate store, and you happened to have placed a brake service coupon on the paper last weekend, so he's coming to you only for the discounted

brakes. Worse, when it turns out he needs a rotor, he's the kind of guy who will try to go buy it from the parts store himself or, better yet, get one from the wrecking yard, and have you put it on.

As much as it might seem like "get every customer you can get" is a good idea, in my opinion, that last guy isn't that great of a customer. I mean, it's fine, if he shows up, he shows up, maybe you do it for him, maybe you run him off, but why in the name of all things reasonable would you want to spend money marketing to a guy like that? Seriously. Even if a postcard only cost two cents to send, would you really want to mail to that guy? What if you could spend that two cents and mail that same postcard to a customer proven to be the type of consumer who tends to be loyal, the kind of customer who is uncomfortable finding new shops and, if he DOES find one he trusts, would rather just go there and not have to worry about that part of his life anymore?

Unless you have an unlimited budget for marketing and you can spend money with no concern for what kind of customers you are marketing to, the truth is, you don't want "every" customer you can get. Mailing to the cheapskate is a waste of money. What you REALLY want is every GOOD customer you can get. That's different.

And we can do that for you with a smrt New Customer Finder program. We know it's not the fanciest name in the world, but we like the name because it tells you exactly what it does. It finds new customers for you. And, better yet, it finds GOOD customers for you. We know who the good customers are based on the smrt Consumer Segment data and the data from your shop's customer records. We know who comes in more, who spends more, and who responds better to mail you send.

So, if you think your shop could use a few NEW customers, you now have a way to go after the BEST new customers you can get. Give us a call if you are interested in starting a smrt New Customer Finder program. We'll be happy to explain how it works. Get every GOOD customer you can get!

Product Preview

Coming soon: a FULL 100% solution including:

- Automated Customer Reviews
- Facebook and Twitter integration and appointment setting
- Search Engine Reviews
- Publishing
 - Google
 - Yahoo
 - Bing
 - Others
- Online Reputation Report Card
- Internet Only Offers

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