

New Customers Will Pick Your Shop Like I Picked My Pineapple

By: John Dalton



Your first thought when reading that was probably, “Huh?” But I can explain. It has to do with my cell phone, the Internet, and, I promise, it relates to your shop too. So, briefly, my pineapple:

I was at the grocery store and they had a nice display of pineapples. I wasn't expecting to get a pineapple when I went, but they looked good and suddenly I wanted one. Suddenly, I was a customer with a “need.”

BUT, which pineapple should I buy? I hardly ever eat pineapple, and I don't

really know anything about them. I have, on the other hand, bought plenty of fruits and vegetables, so I knew that there was probably some trick to picking a good one out of the bunch. Had there been a produce manager handy, I would have asked him or her, but, in the age of cutbacks and marginal service at many stores, there wasn't anyone around. So, I did what 79% of consumers do these days¹: I whipped out my smartphone to see what other people had to say.

When I typed in “how to choose a pineapple,” a whole universe of

information opened up to me. I found tips on how to pick one; I found recipes and dessert ideas; and I found lots of reviews and comments of the different pineapple types from cooks, companies and consumers—turns out there is a type of pineapple called “Maui Gold” that is really amazing. You can have them shipped straight to your house from Hawaii. Who knew?

Now I do.

Just like pineapples, not all shops

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Looking to Simplify Your Life? Automatic Payments Can Help

CustomerLink can take at least one small task off your to-do list every month. Paying your bill can be put on autopilot with automatic payments, by either credit card or electronic funds transfer (EFT). Automatic payments save you time and money. No checks. No stamps. No hassle.

“But What About Security?”

Automatic payments are safe! We keep your information encrypted and totally secure. In fact, over 82% of our customers use these easy payment options and love the convenience.

“But I Want to See My Bill Before I Pay!”

We don't blame you; most people do. Auto-pay customers can view their invoice amount via WebLink. Customers using EFT get five full days to review their invoices. And if you ever anticipate a problem, you can always call us. The payments may be processed by machines, but we're still human.

“Okay, So How Does It Work?”

Signing up only takes a few minutes. With some basic information we can get you enrolled. We accept all major payment methods: Visa, MasterCard, American Express, Discover, or direct debit from your checking or savings account.

If you have enough to do and electronic payment sounds convenient to you, call our billing department at 888-942-5448 x 136 or email billing@customerlink.com. **(Sign up by 9/30/2011 and get 100 free pieces added to your next order.)**



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are the same. Some are great. Some are bristly and sour. That's the kind of stuff consumers talk about online. And, just like I did when I had a "need" for pineapple, people who need auto service look online to find those conversations, the reviews and comments, that help them decide where they are going to take their vehicle.

Google's Managing Director of U.S. Sales & Service, Jim Lecinski, wrote in his e-book, *ZMOT Winning the Zero Moment of Truth*, "For the first time in human history, word of mouth is a digitally archived medium." Think about that. Word of mouth is the age-old golden goose of new customers. How many times have you heard someone say, "Word of mouth advertising is the best kind?" A million? Two million? Yeah, me too. That's because it's true. And now, finally, after something like 200,000 years of human speech, word of mouth is finally permanent; it lives forever in "a digitally archived medium." And 79% of the consumers out there are accessing that medium when they need it, wherever they need it, through their smartphones.

Which means, the point of all this pineapple stuff is to make it

glaringly clear that managing your online reputation is absolutely and completely vital to doing business in the modern world. There can't be too many shops out there that can afford to ignore 79% of consumers.



So, unless yours is one that can, make sure your online presence is a good one. Get reviews up, get profiles filled out on the major directory and review sites, and encourage your best customers to write nice things about you. We can help.

This new online reality is why we think the Internet marketing services (smrt 2.0™) we offer are essential. We believe it's critical that shops

populate key review sites with lots of reviews to help them stand out and be noticed, especially with recent changes to Google Places. (The recent changes are still new, but they may matter a great deal in coming months and years.)

We automate the review-gathering process. If you are already using our smrt program and have turned on your smrt 2.0 Internet marketing services, then you are already getting reviews brought in automatically. We have also added a feature that will help you get Google Places reviews from your customers (and Yahoo Local reviews too), which helps your shop make the most out of the recent changes. We've added an automated prompt to the email your customers already get that asks for

a review for your CustomerLink share site. That prompt now invites them to copy that review and put it into Google Places or Yahoo Local (if they have a Google or Yahoo account), and it even opens up an I-frame with the important review fields in it for them, right there on the same screen. It's easy for them, and the best part is you don't have to do anything.

If you haven't turned on your smrt 2.0 Internet marketing services, or if you still haven't gotten your basic smrt program going yet, now is the time. The clock is ticking and technology isn't going to be kind to businesses that fall behind the times. Neither are 79% of consumers.

¹ Lecinski, Jim. *ZMOT Winning the Zero Moment of Truth*. <http://www.zero-momentoftruth.com>. 25 Aug, 2011.

I am hoping, though, that many of them have kids, who, when they have a moment to take a break from their iPods, Internet, or Google, will explain to their parents running the country just how the world is being flattened.

—Thomas Friedman

The Power of Knowing Your Customers Goes Beyond CustomerLink



Did you know that you can use your smrt report data for more than just getting the most out of your CustomerLink program? You can. Here's a few examples:

Cable Television: Some shops like to buy advertising on local cable television. Typically a cable channel sales representative will come and show the owner what shows are getting the highest viewing numbers and will recommend what they feel will get the shop exposed to the highest number of people. And that's fine. The cable rep doesn't have anything else to go on. But YOU do, if you have a smrt report.

For example, let's say your smrt report shows that you have a large quantity of higher-than-average-spending customers who are over forty years old and show interest in outdoor activities like hunting and fishing. Now, let's say the popular show the cable rep suggested is a reality television show popular with a young demographic.

Rather than pay a high price to advertise on a show that is popular with consumer segments that don't have super high value for your shop (the young crowd watching the reality show), you might consider advertising on a hunting and fishing show instead. It might have less total viewers than the popular show, but it might be drawing a much higher number of viewers who

are proven to do well as customers for your shop. You could get better results with less advertising cost. That is the power of information.

Waiting Room Power: Another basic tactical use of your smrt report is simply to figure out the best way to set up your waiting room. Are your most profitable customers auto enthusiasts, or are they soccer moms? Or retired folks? Or career-minded singles? You can treat your V.I.P. customers like the valued guests they are by tailoring your waiting room a little more to their needs than it is now.

A simple shift in how your waiting room looks and feels can make a huge difference. Imagine this: you swap out the *Car and Driver* magazine for something better suited to your top customer types. You change the decorations a little (maybe more kid friendly with a play mat and some toys—maybe wi-fi and work stations—whatever suits your best clientele), and then you start to capitalize. Start a New Customer Finder program that goes after more of those high-value, top-spending customers. Bring them in. They like the experience because the shop caters to them. They come back. They tell their peers... and, well, you see how it works.

Use your smrt report. It's an amazing tool.

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It's Time to Order Holiday Cards!



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Product News

It's Time to Order Holiday Cards – Don't Wait Until It's Too Late

Sending a holiday greeting is an excellent way for you to stay connected with your customers. This year, we have several new cards with fantastic new art and designs added to the collection of proven favorites.

Make sure you order right away. With the news coming out of the U.S. Postal Service sounding grim these days, being ready early will help make sure your messages are on time. Not to mention, if you want to get your Thanksgiving message out, time is already getting close.

Thanksgiving: Order your Thanksgiving cards by October 19, 2011 for standard class mailing. Remind your customers how much they depend on their vehicle to do their shopping, making it to school and community events, and, of course, to the food!

Holiday cards (Christmas, Hanukkah and New Year's): Order holiday cards by November 17, 2011 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?