



5 Rules for Successfully Marketing your Diesel Repair Shop

A Highway & Heavy Parts White Paper



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Rule #1: Create a Great Brand for your Repair Shop

Company branding is the marketing practice of creating a unique name, logo, sales proposition, and messaging that identifies and differentiates your business, products, and services from others.

An effective brand strategy sets you apart from other diesel repair shops and gives you a competitive edge in the market. Essentially, your brand is the promise you make to your customers. It tells them how they can benefit from doing business with your repair shop, and distinguishes your products and services from your competitors. Your brand is based on who you are, who you aspire to be, and who people perceive you to be.

To a certain degree, who you are should be based on who your primary target customers want you to be and need you to be. You can't be everything to everyone. So your branding strategy should focus on communicating the unique characteristics of your diesel repair shop, both visually and verbally, that resonate with your most profitable customers.

Consumers like to connect themselves to a brand that identifies with, and relates to them socially, economically, culturally, and emotionally. Are you the lowest price in town? Do you provide the fastest repair service? Do you stock more parts than your competitors? Is your fleet service program better than the industry standard? Do you have a 24/7/365 mobile diesel truck repair service? Do you have a better guarantee? Do your parts come with a manufacturers warranty? Are your customer service representatives the smartest, friendliest, or most responsive? Are your technicians certified in more areas than your competitors? Do you have the highest reputation for quality? Are you more conveniently located? These are just a few examples of unique characteristics of diesel repair shops. The idea is to build your brand around the most important ones – the ones that set you apart, give you a competitive edge, and generate the most business for your repair shop. By doing this, your customers will come to know you by those characteristics – the ones most important to them. That's how they will identify with the value of your brand, and continue to bring you their business. As a result, you will create strong brand equity and brand loyalty, thus taking price out of the equation.

Communicating and executing your brand consistently is vital to your success. You must provide your customers with a consistent message, consistent quality, consistent service, and a consistent experience every time they do business with your repair shop. This is the brand strategy behind all successful franchises. Take McDonald's, for instance. You always know what to expect from them, because their products and services are delivered consistently, no matter which store you visit. This is due to the fact that their branding strategy is based on implementing systems that create a predictable experience for their customers. Every employee, in every store, follows the same system, thus achieving the same quality product and timely service – they don't just rely on their menu, taste, or price to sell their food. Deviation from your branding system causes disappointed customers.



Your company logo is the foundation of your brand. It is the single most important element of your branding strategy, because it is the symbol by which you are recognized by your customers. The most effective logo design incorporates a simplified graphic image that is visually striking and easily recognizable. It should attempt to convey at least one of the following: what your company does; what your product or service is; what benefits you provide your customers; or even your company philosophy. For that reason, your logo should be designed after you have established your company's mission; your product/service features and benefits; your unique sales proposition; and your competitive advantages. These are all branding components that must be taken into consideration when designing an effective logo for your diesel repair shop. Keep in mind that your logo can be a literal or a conceptual representation of your branding strategy, and should not be overly complicated. Your logo must be included in all of your marketing, advertising, promotional materials, and signage.



How, what, where, when and to whom you plan on communicating and delivering on your brand messages should be included in your band strategy. Determining where you advertise and which channels you utilize for advertising must be considered carefully. The objective is to advertise in geographic markets where your target customers are located, using channels and tactics that will reach them and get your message noticed. For instance, consider billboard advertising along freeway trucking routes, or restaurant placemat advertising at truck stops near your repair shop. Print advertising in publications your customers read and online advertising are also opportunities that should be explored.

In order to accurately define your brand, you must look deep within your company. Think of it as embarking on a mission of self-discovery. It can be difficult, time-consuming and uncomfortable. It requires, at the very least, that you answer these questions:

- What is your company's mission?
- What are the features and benefits of your products or services?
- What makes your company unique in your industry?
- What are your competitive advantages?
- What are your strengths and weaknesses?
- What do your customers and prospects really think of you?
- What qualities do you want them to associate with you?
- Are you getting the type of customers required to grow your business?
- Are you getting repeat business from profitable customers?
- Are you getting quality referrals from current customers?

To create an effective brand, research is required to learn the needs, desires and purchasing habits of your current and prospective customers. Never rely on assumptions about your customers – you must know what and how they think. This will help you develop a brand identity they can relate to.

Once you've defined your brand, here are a few simple tips to promote it to the world:

- **Write down your brand messages.** What are the key messages you want to communicate about your brand? Every employee should be aware of your brand attributes.
- **Design a great logo.** Place it on everything you have and everywhere your customers will see it.
- **Integrate your brand.** Branding extends to every aspect of your business - how you answer your phones, what you or your employees wear, your e-mail signature, etc.
- **Create a "voice" for your company that reflects your brand.** This voice should be applied to all written communication and incorporated in the visual imagery of all materials, online and off. If your brand is friendly, be conversational. If it is high-end, be more formal.
- **Develop a tagline.** Write a memorable, meaningful and concise statement that captures the essence of your brand.
- **Design templates and create brand standards for your marketing materials.** Use the same color scheme, logo placement, look and feel throughout. You don't need to be fancy, just consistent.
- **Be true to your brand.** Customers won't return to you - or refer you to someone else - if you don't deliver on your brand promise.
- **Be consistent.** This tip involves all the above and is the most important tip on this list. If you can't do this, your attempts at establishing a brand will fail.

Rule #2: Develop Powerful Marketing Messages

Your marketing messages must tell your audience what you do, but also persuade them that you are the best at what you do. Your messages should be attention-grabbing statements, followed by reasons your target audience would want, need, and benefit from doing business with your repair shop.

There are two types of marketing messages you should develop. The first is referred to as a "Unique Sales Proposition". This is essentially a brief statement that summarizes what sets you apart from other repair shops and solidifies your position in the marketplace.

Example USP: Your diesel engine drives your trucking business. When it breaks down, your business breaks down. Heavy Duty Diesel Repair is the area's leading diesel engine repair shop, dedicated to delivering the fastest service, from estimate to repair. No one else has the expertise, flexibility, or capacity to complete repairs as fast as we can.

You can take your USP a step further and condense it into a tagline that your customers will remember and associate with your repair shop whenever they hear your name or see your logo. Your tagline should be short and to the point, and focus on the unique business characteristic or benefit that is most appealing to your target customers. Ideally, your tagline should resonate with your target customers on an emotional level, compelling them to consider using your repair shop over others.

Example Tagline: Back on the Road Before you Know it!



The second type is a more complete marketing message strategy in the form of compelling statements or bullet points that support your Unique Sales Proposition. These statements should make a promise to your customers and provide proof to back it up. They should be used consistently and repetitively in your marketing and advertising materials to drive your message home.

To make your marketing messages more compelling and persuasive, they should meet the following objectives:

- Identify and understand your target customer's problems or concerns.
- Explain why your business is best suited to solve their problems.
- Explain the benefits your customers will receive from your solutions.

Whenever possible, provide case studies or testimonials of how you solved other customer's problems.

Key business characteristics and competitive advantages you should consider promoting in your marketing messages:

Reputation: Do you have a great reputation for doing what you say you will do?

Premium Quality: Do you provide the highest quality products and services, backed by warranties and guarantees?

Delivery: Do you consistently get repairs done on time or faster than the industry standard?

Capabilities: Do you service all diesel engine makes and models? Do you also repair off-road and construction/industrial vehicle types?

Customer Service: Is your staff friendly, knowledgeable and responsive? Do you provide fast, accurate repair estimates?

Knowledge/Expertise: Are your technicians certified in all aspects of diesel engine repair and maintenance? Can your service representatives answer any questions your customers may have?

Branding: Do your customers associate your repair shop with exceptional value, a positive image, and a great experience?

Price/Value: Do you provide a competitive price for your products and services, while still maintaining high quality and excellent service?

Parts Selection: Do you offer alternative brand parts that may be more economical for your customer's budget, but still provide excellent quality and a great warranty? Do you stock more parts than your competitors?

Finance: Do you offer flexible financing terms?

Rule #3: Select the Best Marketing Channels

Once you have established a great brand and created compelling marketing messages, it's time to spread the word about your diesel repair shop. With the wide variety of marketing and advertising channels and methods available today, determining where, when, and how to promote your diesel repair shop can be the most difficult aspect of marketing your business.

The objective of Marketing is to send the right message to the right customer, using the best methods to get the best results. This must also be done at an affordable cost to be sure you achieve an adequate return on your investment. Yes, this can seem a bit overwhelming and even intimidating, but if you put in a little effort and perform some due diligence, it can be done.

So where do you begin?

The first thing you must do is to find out where your target customers are. In order to do that, you must ask yourself questions like these:

- Where do they work?
- Where do they live?
- Where do they travel to, and from work?
- Where do they travel while working?
- What are their hobbies or free-time activities?
- Where do they eat, play, shop, or visit?
- What magazines, newspapers, or trade publications do they read?
- What websites do they visit and read?
- What do they search for on the Internet?
- Do they use social media sites?
- Do they use email frequently?
- Which industry tradeshows do they attend?
- Are they members of your local Chamber of Commerce, or other business groups?

Once you have the answers to these questions, it will help you determine which marketing channels and advertising tactics will most effectively reach them.



Effective Marketing Channels and Advertising Tactics:

Direct Mail Marketing: Direct mail is an excellent way to reach your target customers at work, when they are most likely in the purchasing frame of mind. The key to direct mail is to have an attention-getting headline message that compels them to read your postcard or letter. A special offer they can't refuse is always a good place to start.

Billboard Advertising: Billboard advertising is a great way to reach your target customers while they are traveling. When it comes to billboard advertising, placement is critical. You want to advertise along freeway routes where you are confident your customers will see your ad. Consider frequent placement near their business location, on their way to work. This will increase the chance of your brand message being one of the last things they see when they get to work, creating front of mind awareness for your diesel repair shop when it comes time for them to make a purchasing decision.

Community Relations: Sponsoring community events demonstrates your commitment to the well-being of your local community and the people who live there. Everyone likes to see businesses taking part in special events that bring the community together. It increases the chance that they will do business with you, over those businesses that don't participate. If the event is closely related to the trucking industry, or attracts people within the industry, it will also increase your chances of getting business from it. Becoming an active member in your local Chamber of Commerce or other business groups can provide some of these same benefits, as well.

Trade Publications: Thanks to the internet, trucking publication readership may be on a steady decline, but there are a few of them left that have a faithful following with high distribution numbers. Advertising in these publications is an excellent way to reach your core target customer base, at an affordable cost. Just be sure the publication is distributed in your market and you get optimal ad placement for your investment.

Internet Advertising: There are many ways you can advertise your diesel repair shop on the Internet. The most effective method is paid search advertising that reaches those customers searching for your repair services as they need them, or plan to purchase them. Other methods include purchasing ads on industry-related websites that prospective customers might read to get useful information. Publishing a blog on your website is also a good way to increase your search engine optimization and demonstrate your expertise and knowledge by offering helpful diesel engine repair advice to your customers.

Social Media: Obviously, social media sites are the most popular method for sharing information among consumers and businesses. There are many advantages and disadvantages to using social media for marketing and promoting your diesel repair shop. These most often come in the form of positive or negative customer testimonials. To use it effectively, you must develop a comprehensive strategy for posting, sharing and publishing content. You must also take into account how you will handle and address any negative feedback you receive. If done correctly, and given the dedicated time required of it, social media is an excellent marketing tool.

Instructional/Informational Videos: Videos are the most consumed content on the internet. Shooting and posting simple, instructional videos on how to diagnose, and/or solve common problems for your customers is an excellent way to build trust and confidence in your business, and demonstrate the expertise of your repair technicians and customer service staff.

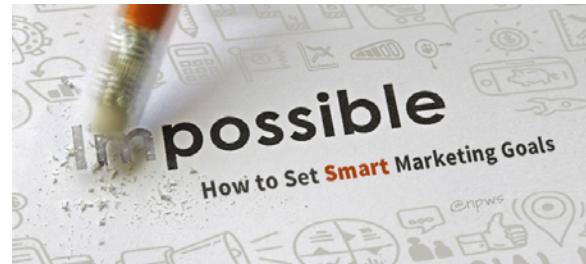
Email Marketing: Email marketing is a very effective and inexpensive way to get your message out to your customers. The key to building an effective email marketing campaign is to offer your customers something that gets them to take action. A special coupon offer is the most popular method to entice consumers to make a purchase. If you plan on using email marketing as part of your marketing strategy, be sure your customer service reps have every customer provide their email address when they fill out a repair estimate, then enter their email address into your customer database.

Industry Trade Shows: Attending industry trade shows provides many benefits for your diesel repair shop. The face-to-face nature of trade shows provides an excellent venue to personally present your capabilities to potential customers. It also allows you the opportunity to reconnect with current or past customers.

Whichever Marketing Channels you choose, it is important to measure the results you get from them. If they don't present any value, in terms of generating new leads, creating more repair estimates or bid opportunities, gaining new customers, or increasing revenue, you should strongly consider trying something different until you get the results you're looking for.

Rule #4: Set SMART Marketing Goals

So, your diesel repair shop has a great brand identity, you've developed compelling marketing messages, and you know where and how to reach your target customers. But, have you determined what you want to get out of all this? Have you established goals and objectives that you must meet to achieve a return on your marketing investment?



Setting goals for your marketing and sales strategy is critical to your success. The key to setting goals is to make sure they meet "S.M.A.R.T." requirements. S.M.A.R.T. is an acronym for Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Time-bound objectives that guide a successful marketing strategy. By examining each aspect of these objectives, you will better understand how to utilize them when developing your strategy:

Specific: Instead of setting vague goals, such as increasing sales, or getting more customers, you should establish more specific objectives. State exactly what you want to achieve, like increasing profits by 25%, or performing 20% more engine overhauls. By doing this, you have clearly set targets for your marketing and sales team to hit.

Here are some specific questions you might ask yourself when setting your goals and objectives:

- What exactly do I want to achieve?
- Where do I want to achieve it?
- How do I want to achieve it?
- When do I want to achieve it?
- Why do I want to reach this goal?
- What are the conditions and limitations to reaching this goal?
- What are all the possible ways to reach this goal?

Measurable: You can't control what you can't measure. Every successful marketing strategy must include goals, objectives and milestones that you can measure. That means determining exactly what you will see, hear and feel when you reach your goals. For example, some measurable aspects of your diesel repair shop can be: the number of new estimates generated; number of engine rebuilds sold; number of new fleet customers acquired; or the increase in total sales revenue. These measurable aspects of your marketing strategy will give you a clear and tangible number, or quantifiable value by which you can measure and analyze your results.

Achievable: Make your marketing goals achievable. Don't set high expectations if you don't have the research or data required to back them up. For instance, if your profit growth is historically 10%, and you set a goal of 30% with no valid data to justify it, then you are setting yourself up for failure. Setting high goals that seem impossible to achieve only lowers the morale and motivation of your employees. But that doesn't mean you can't set lofty goals. If you plan smartly and acquire the necessary data for verification, even a goal that seems unachievable can become a reality.

Realistic: Can you realistically reach your goal, considering the amount of time, resources, talent, and costs required to accomplish it? Will the commitment to the goal negatively impact your current operations, profit, or growth? To make a determination, you must weigh the rewards against the risks. For instance, if your goal is to increase fleet business by 30%, what will that require of your facility and staff? Can you hire a few more mechanics and build another bay, but still get the profit margins you need to succeed? Only research and thorough financial planning will help you answer this question.

Time-bound: Your plan to meet your marketing goals must have a scheduled beginning and ending. This allows you to analyze how well the methods worked to produce the projected results. Create a timeline for each marketing project that includes regular dates for monitoring progress and potentially adjusting the plan. For example, if you have a marketing strategy that is scheduled to last six months, then analyze actual results vs. projected results each month to see if adjustments need to be made to achieve the overall goal of the strategy.

The key to getting the most out of your marketing and sales strategy is to delegate specific responsibilities to your sales, marketing, customer service, and operations staff. These areas of your business must work together to accomplish your goals. Constant communication and cooperation is required to keep your plan on track and make adjustments as needed to ensure your success. Hold weekly meetings and require your staff to report on their progress toward achieving your repair shop goals.

Rule #5: Measure your Marketing to Ensure Success

Many diesel repair shop owners view marketing as a necessary evil. They do it because they know they need to, seeing it as more of an expense, rather than an investment. This is primarily because they don't measure the results of their marketing efforts, so they don't know what kind of return they are getting on their investment.

Depending on the specific needs of your repair shop, marketing can serve many purposes. It is up to you to decide what you want to achieve, what you will do to achieve it, and how you will measure and track your progress to reaching your goals.



In order to measure the progress of your marketing efforts, you need to establish the Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) that will determine the effectiveness of your marketing strategy. It is tempting to simply say the only KPI you are concerned about is increasing sales. While that may be the desired result of a marketing strategy, it is not the key role of marketing. The key role of marketing is to generate leads for the sales team to convert into customers. So your list of KPI's for a newly implemented marketing strategy will be something like this:

- Number of website visits.
- Number of phone inquiries.
- Number of customers coming into the shop.
- Number of repair estimates requested.
- Number of inquiries regarding a specific promotion.

By establishing baselines for these KPI's and measuring them, you will know whether or not your marketing strategy is working. Obviously, an increase in these numbers indicates that it is, and a decrease, or no change, indicates that it isn't.

If you determine that your marketing strategy isn't working, then you need to try something else. It is important to realize that not all strategies and tactics will work. The key is to plan and budget for that, so you can make adjustments and improvements as needed.

A budget is an educated guess that relates spending, to activity, to revenue. The benefits of developing a marketing budget are:

- To control expenses and improve revenues.
- To help assist in the coordination of marketing activities.
- Sets the standard of performance that keeps marketing focused on results.
- Gives you the ability to track and change your marketing, based on the success or failure of each tactic.
- Understand the value of a customer and the return on investment in acquiring them.

If your marketing strategy is working, by generating more qualified leads for your sales department, then you need to measure your sales KPI's. These are the indicators that determine how well your sales team is doing to support your marketing efforts and meet your revenue goals. These KPI's can include:

- Number of estimates generated.
- Number of estimates sold.
- Number of new customers acquired.
- Average sale per customer.
- Total sales generated.
- Total profits from sales.

Determining your Marketing ROI:

Return is the marginal net worth of a customer, calculated as the average amount of the first sale, less direct costs, plus the number of purchases over the next year.

Example: Customer's first purchase is \$1,000, less \$400 overhead, equals \$600 gross profit. If the customer makes an additional two purchases over the next year of \$200 each, at 50% gross profit, that equals \$200. Then that customer's first year marginal net worth is \$600 plus \$200 equals \$800.

Investment is the cost of marketing to obtain a new customer. A Return On Investment is the gross profit generated from that customer, less the cost of marketing to obtain them.

Return on Investment from the above example is \$800 gross profit, less \$300 cost of marketing, equals \$500. \$500 divided by \$300 is 166% Return On Investment.

Return on Investment is the optimization of marketing spending to measure the profitability of a marketing strategy. The formula for Return on Investment is:

$$\text{ROI} = \frac{\text{Gain from Investment (or Gross Profit)} - \text{Cost of Investment}}{\text{Cost of Investment}}$$

Huge profits can be created by applying long-term ROI thinking. Customer value is profit accumulated over the life of the relationship. Therefore, marketing strategy spending is seen as both an expense and an investment. The expenses are those costs associated with attracting attention, the early lead generation efforts. These expenses are measured in terms of quantity (how many people responded to your message). When you look at marketing as an investment you are looking at the costs from taking a generated lead and then transforming it into a qualified sales lead – a lead ready to be handed to your sales people. This is measured by quality of the lead generated from your marketing system.



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