

5 ESSENTIAL STEPS TO INCORPORATING A SUCCESSFUL MARKETING STRATEGY



The Midwest Carwash Association provides its members with an array of marketing materials and other services for its members. To learn about member benefits and join the MCA, visit midwestcarwash.com.

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Many of us joined the car wash industry because it's been our family's business for generations, we enjoy providing great customer service or for a wide variety of other reasons. We aren't necessarily marketing wizards or social media gurus; however, marketing using digital tools has become an essential part of our business operations.

The right marketing strategy can help new customers reach your business and become familiar, loyal customers, which in turn fuels sales and growth. But, first, it's important to understand what's behind every successful marketing strategy.

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1 ALWAYS START WITH A PLAN.

The best strategies always start with a plan. It's impossible to try everything at once, so first narrow your focus — taking into account your company's mission and vision — and then build your strategy.

This should start with what you want people to know about your business. What are your core values? Why should customers visit your car wash? Use the answers to these questions to develop key messaging around your business that can be used on your website, across your social media presence and even when talking to customers.

Next, identify the tactics you want to use, and that you're able to use consistently. This can be identifying the social media platforms your customers use, keeping your website up-to-date, or starting an email list for customers to highlight promotions and other news.

Finally, when you've locked down messaging and your tactics, create some specific, measurable goals you can use to check in on how your strategy is working.

2 SHOW, DON'T TELL.

It's important that you identify your core values and mission as a company because it gives endless opportunities to show potential customers how you're living these values. Clear, consistent messaging can be used to tell your business' unique story.

Take some time to create a marketing toolkit for your business and template out materials in your marketing strategy, like a monthly social media calendar or email newsletter. These strategies offer you the opportunity to spread the word on how your business is enacting its stated values and give you what you need to create consistent messaging over time.

Try to make sure what you're showing in your materials accurately reflects your business. It's a good idea to hire a local photographer to capture the operations of your business, take photos of leadership and other aspects of your car wash. These photos can be used on social media, on your website, in advertisements and through customer emails. It also helps ensure customers know what to expect when they visit.

3 GET FAMILIAR WITH USING SOCIAL MEDIA.

Social media platforms aren't only places to rant and rave about the issues of the day. They are also a place where real growth can happen for your business if you can employ the right strategy.

Facebook remains the largest social media platform, with more than 3 billion active monthly users. The messaging you've created about your business is a great place to start for posting on social media. You can also share promotions, tout charitable giving, discuss the sustainable practices you use, highlight community involvement, and more.

The benefit of having your own social channels means you can create your

own narrative about your business and directly show customers the great services you provide.

4 DON'T BREAK THE BANK.

Paid advertising can be expensive, but there are other cost-effective ways to reach customers. Using social media to deploy a clear, consistent message is free. There are other free tools available, like Mailchimp, that you can use to send e-newsletters to customers who sign up for your email list.

You can also use your local news outlets to highlight amazing stories from your business, like promotions for teachers or health care workers, milestones in your family business, innovations and more. Mine your business for good stories that you can share widely on your own platforms and pitch to local media outlets.

5 BE FLEXIBLE AND INNOVATIVE.

It would be a waste to spend a lot of time executing a marketing strategy without measuring the impact it's having on your business. Using the goals you've set, test your tactics for a month or two and look back at what worked or could be improved. There's no shame in admitting the strategy you set out to use just isn't the best one for you and your business. Be ready to adjust accordingly, get flexible and try something new.

Marketing is both an art and a science, and it takes testing multiple tactics in order to see what works to grow your customer base. By taking these initial first steps, you can be well prepared to create new, loyal customers. ●