

Enthusiasts Drive Your Business

Improve customer loyalty and generate more referrals with enthusiastic customers



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Ever been to a NASCAR race? If you have, then you know those are special events well-attended by a special breed of people.

Having partaken in a couple NASCAR race-day events, I can testify that racing is alive and well, and New Hampshire is certainly not alone in attracting the masses to its local NASCAR events.

The first thing a novice attendee (like me) notices is just how far away from the track you have to park – so far removed that I couldn't even remotely see the track from our parking spot. So you need good walking shoes.

As you trek the five or so miles to the track, the next revelation is the sheer magnitude of campers you encounter along the way. I lost count at 1,271 or thereabouts. And the fascinating thing is almost all of the campers are not locals. Taking in the license plates, you realize the whole country is here and accounted for, from as nearby as the New England states to the South, West, and everywhere in between.

Who are these people? And, more importantly, why did they travel all this way for this?

The answer is they're enthusiasts, and, like NASCAR, your tire and auto service business is dependent on them to grow and prosper.

At a NASCAR event, these enthusiasts are loyal, devoted, committed followers who happily march the miles (and pay the fees) to attend each event – essentially, doing business with NASCAR as often as possible.

What a concept!

I also learned that there are not only NASCAR race enthusiasts, but more

often than not, NASCAR race driver enthusiasts. Case in point: As I was sitting there watching the cars warm up before the flag dropped, the clearly southern gentleman next to me



screamed at me, "Who ya here to see?" I wasn't there to see anyone in particular, but using my keen powers of perception, I noticed he had a Jimmie Johnson hat, shirt and banner so I shouted, "I like Jimmie Johnson."

The guy turned to his pals and screamed, "He's here to see Jimmie!" I was now part of the club, an insider enthusiast among true insider enthusiasts. Coincidentally, Jimmie Johnson went on to win the championship that season, a fact that likely earned me 'fortune-teller' status with my new friends.

A Winning Team

People love winners. Which brings me back to you and your business.

Have you created a winning team at your tire/auto service business? As I wrote in my article "Great Eight Practices for Creating a Winning Team Culture" in the July 2012 issue, your bus-

iness must live "winning team" every day with leadership consistently demonstrating, communicating and reinforcing the company's commitment to excellence.

Above all else, enthusiasts are enthusiastic. Winning teams are much the same in that they look like winners and act like winners. There's an old saying in sales: "success breeds success." The same is true for business.

Have a look at your store and staff. Are they communicating success or distress? Success looks a certain way. It has a good mood, stands tall, looks people in the eye, is attentive, confident and engaging.

Conversely, failure has an unmistak-

able look all its own. Disengaged, depressed, foot dragging, off-putting. If your business is the only one in town, a monopoly, none of this matters. I bet that is not the case. Given that consumers have many choices for their tire/auto service, yours better convey "winning team."

Buying is primarily an emotional experience. Customer loyalty is driven by emotional engagement. You need only be at a NASCAR event for 10 minutes to realize there is a very high level of emotional engagement there. It would take the Hulk to pry the typical fan away from the track.

Emotional engagement and creating enthusiasts is all about how customers feel when they do business with you. How they feel effects the stories they tell when they leave.

Enthusiasts' feel good about doing business with you and take it upon themselves to promote your business at every opportunity.

Always Impress

When a Lexus customer leaves their vehicle at the dealership for service, a

service manager will typically provide a loaner vehicle that is at least one model class above what the customer is currently driving. So, as an example, if the customer leaves their ES350 they will normally receive a GS350 or an LS460 as a loaner.

Why does Lexus give customers this special treatment? The on-the-surface part of the answer is Lexus is the premium division of Toyota and this special treatment is very much in line with their brand image. The underlying reason is Lexus understands the correlation between customer satisfaction and brand loyalty, and this practice ensures that customers feel better, not the same or worse, when they leave their vehicle for service.

Think about it...You're a Lexus customer and you drop off your ES350 and the service manager assigns you a GS350 to go about your business while your vehicle is serviced.

Driving around in an even more premium luxury vehicle doesn't make you feel the same and it certainly doesn't make you feel worse. You feel better.

Oh, and conveniently, you're taking

a test drive in a more expensive vehicle your dealer would love to see you own.

Now take the same scenario, but this time when you drop off your ES350 the service manager gives you 1983 Oldsmobile Delta 88 with rusted quarter panels, a grubby interior and all the luxury of a Sherman Tank. Now you don't feel the same either. You feel worse, much worse.

This is the hallmark of creating enthusiasts.

Always make the customer feel better doing business with your dealership than if they took their vehicle elsewhere for service or tires.

Always impress. And the best way to do that is to be an enthusiast yourself. ■

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