

Web Presence Opportunities Amidst Coronavirus

COVID-19 has dominated every aspect of our lives. You can't turn on the TV or radio or check social media without seeing something about it. You've probably seen more masks during these times than on Halloween in Las Vegas, and you might have even worn one yourself. You've seen hoarding and panic, and yet you are still here pushing forward. When we come out of this there will be opportunities for your business, that is *IF* you can get through these months that are testing you right to your core. Let's discuss what those opportunities are.

When I want to tap into the pulse of our industry I turn to my friend, industry icon Mike Anderson from CollisionAdvice. I knew Mike would have insights and he didn't disappoint. He said, "Mark, the car count to the door is the new KPI." Anderson explained that shops need to be counting how many cars are coming to the door. They need to truly track referral sources and use their management system's referral or source report. Anderson says you need to educate your customer service reps about this, explaining why this is so important to capture. Anderson believes, as I do, that digital sources are going to be on the rise going forward.

"Digital sources are where shops should be putting a great deal of their focus," Anderson said. "That includes your website and how it is found through organic search, paid search, direct traffic to your site as well as your social media presence. Your prospects will compare the ease and relevance of the experience you provide them online against the best of all industries."

That may not seem fair, but it is reality. Your target audience uses Amazon, Netflix and other top sites all the time. They like how clear things are, how easy sites are to navigate through, how easy it is to search for what they want and place their orders. The experience is simple, clear and gratifying. And then they need a body shop. Does your web presence provide a similar ease of use, and then a gratifying experience at the end of the process?

You need a digital storefront, available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. 36% of consumers need your services outside of normal 9-5 business hours. And your site should make it easy for them to request an estimate. Outstanding photo estimating and appointment booking systems are available from fine companies like Body Shop Booster and CCC. These can be tied directly to your website. We do it all the time for our clients, and the feedback is outstanding. Make it easy and then do killer follow up to close the sale.

Photo estimating, according to Anderson, has additional benefits like helping couples make joint decisions on repair options, alternate transportation, finances and more. Photo estimating reduces claims with local agents. You can use photos to triage and/or schedule your workload, and you can use these photos to get a head start on researching OEM procedures. Winner!

Anderson also points out something we have been saying for years, that online reviews are extremely important as OEM's and insurers are paying attention to them. Google reviews also help your organic ranking potential.

Anderson clearly believes that a lot of shops will fall victim to this virus economically. "Many shops do not have the cash reserves to withstand this," Anderson stated. If you are a survivor on the other end of this there will be opportunities, lots of them, to fix cars. Consider the following from Mike Anderson:

- People are going to have cabin fever and go stir crazy. They WILL be hitting the roads in unprecedented numbers. MORE cars on the road and more Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) =
MORE ACCIDENTS!
- People will return to their fulltime jobs, some people may have to work part-time jobs as well to get caught up on their bills! MORE cars on the road and more VMT =
MORE ACCIDENTS
- People will avoid ride sharing/public transportation due to lingering concerns over coronavirus. More cars on the road and more VMT=
MORE ACCIDENTS
- People will be making up for celebrations, re-scheduled weddings, etc. MORE cars on the road and more VMT =
MORE ACCIDENTS
- People will be drinking more, partying, blowing off steam, and, unfortunately, driving =
MORE ACCIDENTS

All of this means your web presence, overall, must be ready to seize these opportunities and make the experience easy and gratifying. Now is the time to make that happen.