



Customer referrals don't just happen.

Top tips on gaining customer testimonials

The value of customer recommendations

How many customers have been pleased with the service your bodyshop has offered?

How many of those customers comments were captured and promoted?

Capturing these good comments could help bring more customers to your bodyshop!

Utilising customer recommendations and encouraging your customers to recommend your bodyshop can be hugely powerful.

The value of customer recommendations

Word of mouth is the most influential and cheapest advertising method your bodyshop will use and can be more effective than advertising; reading a carefully crafted advertisement has nowhere near the power of a real person saying, “I used X bodyshop for my car repair needs, and they did a great job.”

Customer testimonials and referrals are a great way to bring new business to your bodyshop for a number of reasons:

- **Referrals convert at about 50% or better**
- **The referral process builds stronger customer relationships**
- **It is a nearly free marketing channel**
- **The potential customer requires less selling time as they already have the trust and believability in your bodyshop**

It is important to remember positive word of mouth is not just achieved by simply providing good service and a high quality repair to customers. It is more involved than that. Your bodyshop should have a structured plan from providing good service, capturing the customer’s feedback and promoting that to new potential customers. Each element is key.

So how do I get customer testimonials?

Engage people, get them talking

Nothing gets referrals easier and faster than “small talk.” If you can get people chatting about personal stuff when they bring in their car for repair you are going to build trust and confidence in you. This ‘friendship development’ will put you at the forefront of their mind when their contacts have a need for car repair.

Ask for a testimonial - Prospective customers like to see testimonials from people with whom they can identify. Ask satisfied customers to provide a testimonial expressing the reasons why they are glad they did business with you. You can even offer to write it for them, and then let them review and make changes before signing. Don't be afraid to ask!

Develop a "satisfied customer" file - Set up a customer database and make a point to add one "satisfied customer story" every week. Write up their stories, including their names, addresses, phone numbers and e-mail addresses. Ask each one, in advance, for permission to use his or her name as a reference. Then, when you're trying to win over a tough prospect, scan your file, identify a success story that most closely matches the prospect's situation and show them the positive comments.

Hand out pre-printed referral cards - Don't be shy. Asking for referrals should be a natural part of your interaction with customers.

So how do I get customer testimonials?

Publish the testimonial - Once you have great testimonials don't forget to use them. Enthusiastic endorsements do little good as a personal thank you. You need to turn those into web content, brochures, and editorials in the local newspaper. Use them on your bodyshops website or display testimonials in the bodyshop reception area. Of course, always have copies on hand to supply to potential customers.

Offer rewards for referrals - Some companies offer cash rewards for referrals that lead to sales. If you feel uncomfortable offering cash, reward customers with small gifts for their cars like a full valet upon a successful referral.

Keep in touch with customers - Word of mouth is part of customer relationship marketing in which you keep in touch with customers using multiple techniques. A friendly follow-up phone call, a "thank you" note in the mail or an e-mail have a cumulative positive impact if you don't overdo it.

Start using your customer testimonials to generate new business today!