

# Converting Car Owners to Customers

## How Automotive Repair Shops Can Leverage Online Marketing Services to Promote Their Services

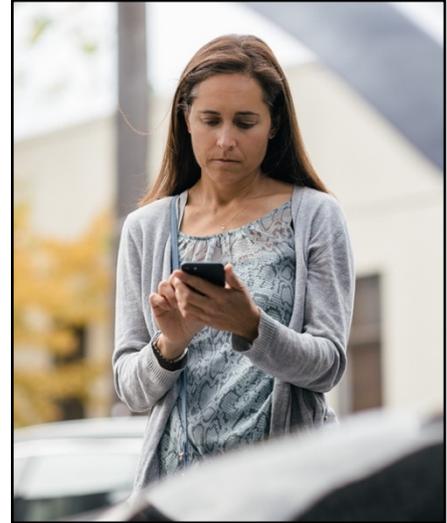
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Many shop owners know a lot about their business. They invest in tools that show them conversion rates for incoming leads—primarily through phone and email—they know which customers are likely to come back, and they keep track of how often their average customer visits in a year and what they need.

But these days, more drivers are starting their search for a repair shop online. On their home computers and mobile phones, consumers are researching repair and service options and making decisions about which shops to engage with.

This is a quiet process. How can a shop best position itself for success online? And beyond that, how can it turn those who do engage into regular customers?



[RepairPal.com](https://www.repairpal.com) has millions of unique visitors every month. We are continuously running web tests, creating opportunities to learn more about these visitors and how they behave. This helps us position the shops in our network—selected based on repair quality, fair pricing and customer service—to acquire new customers.

This white paper summarizes some of the knowledge we have accumulated about how these online consumers make auto repair decisions and how shops can capitalize on it.

### Online Messaging and Advertising

Online trends come and go, and search terms change over time. Consistently, though, there are messages that appeal to consumers. Ready for the shocking truth? The best-converting internet advertisements and pages focus on pricing.

### Prices

Automotive repair is one of today's biggest necessary expenses—it can throw a consumer's budget into a tailspin. How important is a focus on price? Ads and sites that focus on price deliver 6 to 7 times better results than those that don't.

Phrases that pay include:

- Straightforward and transparent pricing
- Upfront pricing
- We never overcharge
- Happy to provide a good estimate

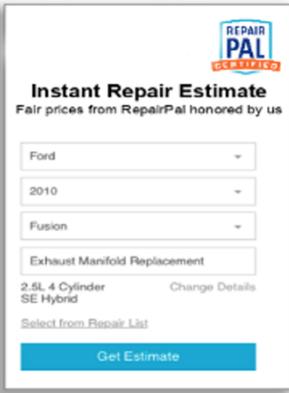
*Automotive repair is one of today's biggest necessary expenses—it can throw a consumer's budget into a tailspin. How important is a focus on price? Ads and sites that focus on price deliver 6 to 7 times better results than those that don't.*

## CHARGING A FAIR PRICE



When asked how they assess quality, consumers chose previous experience as the top criteria for assessing quality.

### Improve Conversion



One important benefit RepairPal offers is our Fair Price Estimator. We offer a widget that allows shops place this estimator right on their website.

The message here is: consumers have better access to information than ever before... and they are checking prices. They really matter.

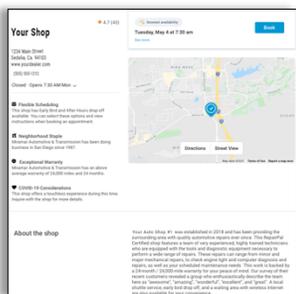
Most consumers on RepairPal.com (77%) are checking prices for themselves or their spouse, but 10% defer to a more knowledgeable friend or family member to do the checking for them. (The remainder of searchers on our site are industry professionals.)

Acknowledging that price is important, showing compassion for consumers who are worried that they won't be able to afford a repair, and offering payment options such as an installment plan are all ways that shops can earn consumer trust—and more business.

Including a third-party fair price estimator tool on a shop's website creates these benefits:

- It clears up pricing and focuses the conversation on quality instead.
- It provides a range based on the prices at many high-quality repair shops and helps educate consumers about what's involved in the repair.
- It can bring shops more online traffic and a higher ranking by Google. This maximizes results for both brand recognition and new customer growth.

### Shop Profile



RepairPal Certified shops have a profile on our site that lists the details and benefits that consumers are searching for.

## Shop Benefits

Secondary messages that are high converting include:

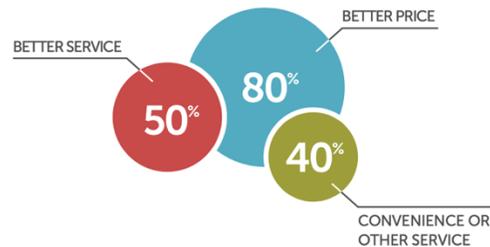
- Years of experience—if the number is high.
- Details about a shop's warranty, including the length of the warranty and what specifically will be done if the part fails, or the repair isn't done right the first time.

The length of the warranty does matter. In fact, 46% of consumers said they would pay more for a two-year warranty as opposed to a one-year warranty. And 66% of consumers say the length of the warranty is more important than it being nationwide, unless they're in the military or some other highly mobile field.

## Quality and Convenience

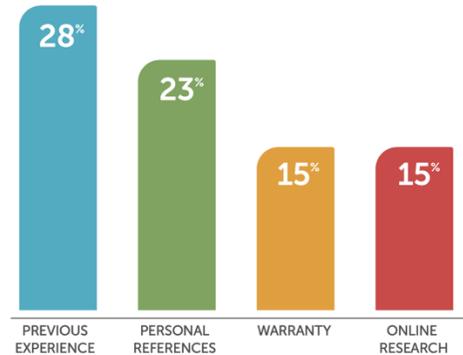
Using a 5-point scale, we asked consumers about the importance of price. 50% of consumers rated prices as a 5 – highly important. However, 75% rated quality as a 5. Consumers want a high-quality repair but may not know how to properly vet shops ahead of time.

### WHY PEOPLE CHANGE MECHANICS



We asked respondents what would entice them to switch from their current mechanic or shop to a new one. These were the results (consumers could select more than one answer).

### ASSESSING QUALITY

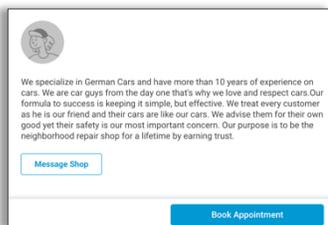


When asked how they assess quality, consumers chose previous experience as the top criteria for assessing quality.

Convenience is also key. In order of importance, consumers prefer shops located close to their home or places of business, service options that make their experience more convenient, and, lastly, the appearance and general comfort of the shop and waiting area.

In particular, younger consumers (“millennials”) are intensely driven by price and convenience.

### Highlight Shop Strengths



Shops can highlight important facts about their shops and make it easy for consumers on our site to book with them.

Shops will win by being easy to find, and by providing clear directions to their front door. Consumers also heavily value the ability to communicate via text, shops that are open on weekends and late hours, clean bathrooms, and loaner cars (which is a more attractive feature than rental cars or shuttles). Coffee, snacks and other waiting room amenities are least important; most consumers don't intend to wait.

### Get Customers in the Door

Getting a consumer's attention is great, but it doesn't always seal the deal. A shop's website should have a clear, friendly, call to action. For example: Call Us Today! Or: Stop By, Now!

Reviews from a third-party site or reviewer can also persuade people to trust you.

### Pictures

Pictures of a shop and staff can also draw customers in—just make sure they're good ones.

For any shop with a web presence, pictures are very important. This is how potential customers first visually engage with a shop.

We ran some tests and learned that the single most important picture a shop can provide is a really good, high-quality photo of the front of their shop, as it appears from the street. When someone is visiting for the first time, they need to know when they have arrived.



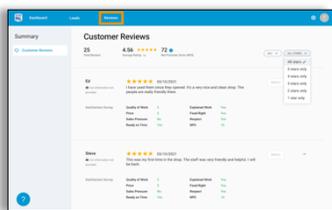
Good examples of photos featuring shop and staff

Beyond that, taking a customer on a journey to meet some of the people they'll encounter at the shop, the lobby and the other customer areas is also helpful, but these are secondary to the very practical "here is how to recognize us" photo.



Good examples of repair shop exteriors

## Ongoing Reviews



RepairPal provides verified customer reviews. Reviews are moderated for appropriate language and content but are not filtered.

## Ratings and Reviews

Consumers indicate that the top thing they rely on when selecting a new mechanic or shop are their friends and family members. Apps like Nextdoor that allow you to interact with your neighbors are full of requests for referrals to businesses.

Beyond that, consumers trust reviews, especially when they are verified reviews from members of their own community. But when reviews are all unilaterally good, it causes consumers to be suspicious, especially in a service-focused industry.

A negative review is a great opportunity for shops to showcase their excellent customer service skills by replying honestly with civility about what happened. If a mistake was made, a customer will appreciate for a shop to own it and talk about what they did or will do to make it right.

## Retention

When we asked consumers on our site how long they had been with their current mechanic, a third said they've been with their mechanic for five years or longer, and a third said one month or less.

This shows that while there's a lot of turnover between drivers and mechanics, there's also a good chance of making a long-term customer, if you play your cards right. If you can keep a customer for more than six months—which equates to about two visits— you can likely convert them into a lifer.

*Customers most often leave their current mechanic because of poor work and expensive prices. Together, these two reasons account for 70% of the folks who sought a new mechanic.*

Customers most often leave their current mechanic or shop because of poor work and expensive prices. Together, these two reasons account for 70% of the folks who sought a new mechanic. Bad experiences are often unforgivable. Consumers have low loyalty to any shop that damages their trust; most make a repeat business decision based on the quality of their last experience with a shop.

## Considered Purchase

Consumers who need a repair that isn't an emergency will typically take time—often up to two weeks or more—to consider their options. When they call around during their research, it's important that your shop is memorable. Great phone skills are key, but showing additional value is also important.

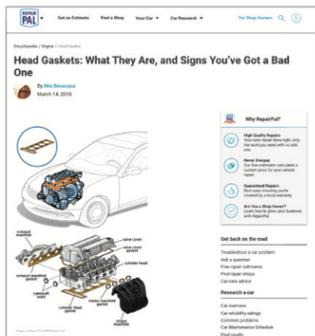
Collecting the consumer's email address or cell phone number will allow for a shop to email or text them more information about their repair or diagnostic needs and provides an additional opportunity to highlight what makes that shop special.

## Invoice

The invoice and estimate process can help create a repeat customer. Both should be clear, with services, labor time and other fees spelled out in line-item detail so they can be clearly understood.

Shops should have a variety of options for providing this to the consumer, including paper, email and link via text.

## Helpful Content



RepairPal offers both text and guided experiences for consumers who are looking to learn more about specific kinds of repairs. Our aim is to educate them so that they arrive at a shop feeling confident about their choice to have a professional complete the repair.

When a repair estimate is complex or when multiple repairs are required, grouping repairs into categories by urgency—such as “immediate,” “soon” and “you can wait”— allows consumers some freedom of choice, empowering them to take control of a frustrating situation.

## Completed Repairs

If a customer leaves the shop confused about what happened or unsure if they received high-quality work or a fair deal, they probably won't return.

Many shops put a lot of effort into getting the customer in the door but fail to check in as the consumer is leaving the shop. It's crucial to make sure the consumer is fully satisfied, understands what was done and why, and knows why any next steps might be important. Small gestures, like leaving the car clean and tidy, also make a big difference.

## Convincing DIY

Many consumers feel they can do some repairs on their cars themselves. In fact, 40% of the consumers on our site think they may be able to take care of a basic repair. They cite cost savings as their motivation 45% of the time, but 30% of consumers say that the difficulty of the repair would cause them to change their minds.

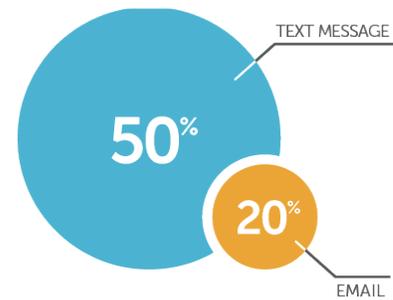
Consumers were least worried about damaging their vehicles or the length of time the repair would take.

Shops can take advantage here by discussing the value of a high-quality repair done by trained mechanics, with the protection and peace of mind offered by a warranty.

## Mobile Trends

People use their mobile phones for just about everything these days, and that includes researching car repair and service. Mobile is an essential platform for reaching consumers in need of car repair. Websites should be mobile friendly, and shops should be willing to communicate with their customers via text and email.

## COMMUNICATION PREFERENCES



Shops that don't use multiple means of communicating with customers are missing out. Research suggests that 50% of consumers appreciate being able to get updates via text, and another 20% prefer email.

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RepairPal offers consumers the option to create online appointments and send messages to shops, in addition to placing phone calls. Being on top of these messages and ensuring good consumer follow-through across multiple channels is one way the most successful shops are converting leads to long-term customers.

## Summary

To maximize their customer count and retention, shops should be doing these things:

- Make it possible for the customer to be loyal—communicate, be transparent, do a great job and don't forget the importance of a smooth exit from the repair experience.
- Coordinate the consumer's online and offline experience.
- Don't sacrifice price, trust or convenience.
- Help the consumer evaluate both their reputation and your price.
- Help the consumer understand pricing and repair decisions and make sense of any pricing differences they may encounter.
- Help the consumer solve their problem and get on with their life as smoothly and hassle-free as possible.

### Resources

- RepairPal Shop Resource Center: <https://shopsuccess.repairpal.com/>
- Fair Price Estimator: <http://repairpal.com/estimator>
- Related Interview: [remarkableresults.biz/e156/](http://remarkableresults.biz/e156/)



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