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Coupon Microsites: A SMART AND EASY MARKETING STRATEGY FOR SERVICE OFFERS

Try posting your deals to the same external site, to simplify searches and track hits accurately.

BY PETER MARTIN

If your dealership doesn't already have one, it needs to consider a dedicated coupon microsite to get the best online search exposure, better engagement with customers and trackable ROI.

Eighty-three percent of consumers say they search online for vehicle service and repair information, before taking their car in for service, according to C+R Research. Does your dealership offer any coupons from

its website to make those customers favor your store over the other choices they'll find online?

Maybe your dealership does post coupons for a \$19.99 oil change and for a free tire rotation. But, have they expired already? How do they look when they're pulled up on a smart phone; can the customer view the entire offer? And, how do your deals stack up with those from the independent repair shop a mile down the road?

Now, what exactly is a "coupon microsite"? It's an external landing page used to host your dealership's coupon offers, and for no other purpose. It is maintained separately from your dealership's website, and is easy to navigate if the creator did his job correctly. There should be no need for click-arounds or time-consuming searches for the customer to find exactly what he or she needs on the microsite.

We all know that coupons are an integral part of dealership service department marketing and have been for decades. They represent a simple marketing technique to get new customers in your door and give your service drive a chance to earn their repeat businesses.

COUPONS DESERVE MORE PLANNING

However, whether in a circular or on a microsite, coupons are often the least-thought-through marketing channel because they are one of the easiest to implement. Sure, you know your dealership and its service drive must offer coupons to compete – but, have you put substantial thought into the specifics of that offer or just looked at your competition's coupon page and marked down every discount by a few percentage points?

Here are a few pointers I recommend as a dealership reviews its coupons or microsite:

1 Don't limit your reach.

One of the biggest mistakes I see is dealerships offering coupons only for their manufacturer. As a Toyota store, you may be more interested in earning business from Toyota owners, but a hard line and make-specific coupons cuts out most of the market.

A consumer may not buy a vehicle from your dealership but still be perfectly willing to use your service department for maintenance work. Make that customer happy with the service work, and he or she is more likely to come back to the dealership when it is time to buy the next new vehicle. Offering coupons covering all makes and models ensures you maximize your appeal to potential service customers.

2 Keep the offer relevant.

I also often see dealers fail to regularly update their coupons. A reduced price on snow tires does not make much sense in April. Neither does a complementary air conditioning check in December.

Take a look at all the coupons on your page now. Would all of those offers appeal to you as a consumer, right now? Would any of them? Keep the coupons fresh and relevant, and consider an expiration date that is no more than a few months after the offer debuts. Doing this forces you to update offers but also creates a sense of urgency with customers who routinely check your site.

Seasonal offers are a great way to build customers' trust and keep up with their vehicles' needs. On a coupon microsite, it is easy to swap out specials and keep them seasonally relevant. For example, in the fall start pumping your winter special offers on snow tires, tune-ups and fluid exchanges. This will help keep your dealership top-of-mind with those customers.

Make sure your expiration dates are relevant to the offer. Seasonal specials are a great way to reactivate customers who might not have been in the dealership for several months. That means needed service work has piled up, so the average returning repair order runs about \$500.

3 Don't cut the list price too much.

Always remember: A coupon's real purpose is always to up-sell the customer, not just to have him or her come in for the discounted service. So, offering coupons with steep discounts can create the impression that your list price is not a good deal. Instead, try to imagine how a reasonable consumer would respond and make sure your discounts are not so substantial that they make your regular prices seem high.

4 Strategize for smart phone searches.

A coupon microsite is proven to rank higher on search engines. A coupon or specials page may get buried among other pages within your website, but a coupon microsite turns up in searches about service coupons thanks to its unique domain and tags. Our clients' coupon microsities consistently show up on Page One of Google, improving their exposure and the dealership's reputation.

When you construct your coupon microsite, make sure that the coupons render properly on a mobile device. After all, most of your consumers are going to want to show the coupon on their smart phone or tablet. Mobile-responsive design attracts a wider share of the market.

5 Coupons should be in every marketing campaign.

And, promote your coupon microsite in all of your existing digital marketing channels. Coupons can easily be shared and linked to through e-mail marketing campaigns, Facebook advertising and website promotions. Since the microsite acts as a stand-alone landing page, it is easy to track engagement and ROI.

Monitor your page's analytics when various coupons are up, and see which offers garnering the most responses. This will help your dealership tailor service work offers to best fit your audience. And, track which coupons ultimately are redeemed at your dealership.

LOOK AT OTHERS' MICROSITES

For reference, below I give the links to three dealerships' coupon microsities, so you can familiarize yourself with their basic and simple features. They are for Jerry's Toyota in Baltimore; Rockland Chrysler-Jeep-Dodge-RAM in Nanuet, N.Y.; and Springfield Ford Lincoln in Springfield, Pa.

➔ www.coupons4autos.com/Jerrys-Toyota/

➔ www.coupons4autos.com/Rockland-CDJR/

➔ www.coupons4autos.com/Springfield-Lincoln/

In sum, a coupon microsite should be a quick and easy task for your current web development team or a fairly inexpensive outsourced job. If you want to boost service revenue, earn repeat business and track your service drive's results, I recommend investing in a coupon microsite today. **SD**

“Take a look at all the coupons on your page now. Would all of those offers appeal to you as a consumer, right now? Would any of them?”



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Peter is a technology correspondent and digital marketing expert for the automotive industry, and particularly works with e-mail marketing, mobile-enabled e-mails, conquest e-mail marketing and selling to women. He is a frequent speaker at industry events such as NADA Digital Dealer, AutoCon and RVDA.