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Selling 2.0: How you can use your smartphone to help increase sales

Some apps and phone features can assist with running a successful business

Technology should make our lives easier, right?

If you're like me, it's hard to find the time to learn the technology that promises to save us time. But when I do learn it, I'm usually delighted. I especially like smartphone apps.

As a tool dealer, your smartphone can either be a time saver or a time suck. So, how can you use your smartphone and apps wisely? Read on...

Q. How are tool dealers using their smartphones to be more productive?

A. To answer this I turned to Don Russell, digital marketing manager at Cornwell Quality Tools. Russell has his finger on the digital pulse of tool dealers and technicians.

What's one of the top smartphone apps he is seeing dealers use in the field?

"Facebook," he told me.

Facebook? Really? Not Twitter or Pinterest or Periscope or anything hip like that?

No. Facebook.

The reason the "King of Social Media" is also the "King of Tool Marketing" is that most customers use Facebook in their personal lives. It doesn't matter how hot Snapchat is or how clever Instagram is; if your customers aren't using them you won't make a connection.

And talking to yourself is a waste of time.

Most dealers find Facebook a better choice than emailing or texting customers, says Russell. It's easier for a dealer to ask a customer to "friend" them on Facebook than it is to gather and input email addresses and create regular emails. Another bonus is it's free – unlike monthly subscription emailing services.

Facebook's simplicity makes posting product photos and videos fast and painless. Video seems to be the most productive use of Facebook, Russell says.

"If a picture is worth a thousand words, then video is worth 30,000 words a second," he says.

Facebook video uses technology to multiply your customer face time.

"You only see your customer face-to-face once a week and have just a few minutes of their undivided attention," Russell says.

A three- to five-minute video viewed by 100 customers is like adding an extra five to eight hours to your workweek. (Double that if you post two videos a week.)

Q. How can I use social media without wasting a lot of time every week?

A. First, the most important thing is to understand why you're using

social media.

If "Facebooking" isn't saving you time or making you money, then any time you spend is wasted. But, if your Facebook time builds relationships and sells product, then it's just a matter of budgeting your time so you aren't wasting it.

Again, video is great for dealers. Recording on your phone is quick. Just relax and talk to the camera naturally. There's no need to spend time worrying about grammar or spelling. And the Facebook app makes posting video fast and easy.

Cornwell dealer Brad "Hippy" White has been effectively using Facebook to connect with customers and push product since he became a dealer about five years ago (after 26 years as a technician). White lives in North Adams, Michigan and serves south-central Michigan and northwestern Ohio.

His videos generate a lot of buzz among his customers, and White has a lot of fun creating them. (Check out his Facebook page at <http://fbl.me/bwhite>.)

"It's a blast," White says. He tries to make each video fun and informative. He's not just pitching product, he is giving viewers something worth watching. "I try to put a little bit of humor in there – I don't know if it always comes across as such, but I try."

One video called "What I Learned While I Was Gone," got a lot of White's customers

Go online to read the full article

Contributing writer Phil Sasso answers the following questions:

- What other smartphone apps are dealers using -- other than social media?
- I still have a flip phone. Anything I can do with my "dumb phone?"

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talking when he returned from the Cornwell Tools Dealer Rally this year. He also posted other videos, including one from the floor of the Rally promoting featured products.

Q. How long does it take to make a Facebook video?

A. For White, production takes about five or 10 minutes from beginning to end.

White's high school sweetheart and wife of almost 28 years is his camera operator. His Galaxy S4 is his production studio. He shoots his weekly three-to five-minute video in one take, with no editing. If something goes wrong he starts over from the beginning.

White usually posts his videos and photos between 6 to 6:30 a.m. to reach customers checking Facebook before leaving for work.

Q. How do I get customers to send a "Friend" request, or "Like" my page?

A. Letting customers know that you have Facebook-only specials can make it worth "Friending" you. (White uses a personal Facebook account for his business, not a company page. Although he uses the personal Facebook account only for business.)

He also gives a Cornwell-branded T-shirt to anyone who sends a "Friend" request.

White promotes his Facebook page at the bottom of his receipts to remind customers to look for him.

In White's case, technicians hear his customers talk about the videos. They want to see what all the fuss is about and they also "Friend" him.

Only once has White had to "Unfriend" someone who made inappropriate remarks.

"I didn't want any part of that," he says.



Cornwell dealer Brad White generates business by promoting toolboxes on Facebook (see an example post above), and by using a digital picture frame in his truck to share photos of customer purchases.

Q. How do I know if Facebook is working? "Likes" don't pay the bills.

A. You know it's working when you get calls, texts, emails or personal requests to buy product.

"I actually sold a couple used toolboxes within a couple hours of posting them on Facebook," White says.

Instead of video, White uses photos to promote used boxes. He also posts photos of customers with new toolboxes on Facebook and on the digital picture frame on his truck. This often inspires other customers to upgrade their boxes.

White also has plans to run several Facebook-only specials this year.

Q. So, are dealers just using Facebook to push products?

A. White also uses Facebook for general customer communications.

When running a drawing, he uses

Facebook. He'll ask a customer to pull a winner's name from the container. He then posts the video on Facebook. He feels it adds excitement and proves the drawing is on the up-and-up.

During the holidays, White supports an annual canned food drive. He posts pictures of Santa delivering the canned goods so customers can see the results of their donations.

"If I have a change in my schedule, like truck's broke down, sick day or any other reason I will not be on my regular time or day, I text at least one guy in every shop and post it on Facebook," White says.

While he's always thinking of new things he can post, he steers clear of politics and his personal life. He feels customers can get to know his personality without getting too personal.

Q. A video seems like a lot of work. How can White do it all in just 10 minutes?

A. White spends a day or two thinking between stops about what he wants to say in his video. By the time he shoots, he knows his key points.

Here's some other advice from White for tool dealers new to video:

- **Wear at least a branded hat or T-shirt.** You're online to promote your business.
- **Have fun.** If you're having fun, the viewer will have fun watching you.
- **Be sure the background is clean and simple.** You don't want to distract viewers.
- **Have an outline.** White's not scripted, but he tells his camera operator his plan.
- **Keep it loose.** You're not going for an Oscar. You're trying to be real.

White has generated all his own ideas to date. He has just started asking other dealers and customers for input and ideas for his videos. **PD**