



# Web Marketing Helps You Keep Customers

BY GRIFFIN DAVIS

When consumers need advice about a company or product, they don't just make assumptions and go with the first contractor to knock at their door. They do some research online, get word-of-mouth referrals and arm themselves with knowledge before they make a hiring decision.

That's why Web marketing can play a major role when it comes to customer retention. Repeat clients are the most reliable source of revenue for established businesses and are generally the most profitable customer segment.

Today, HVACR businesses that want to remain competitive and keep their best customers should consider these three Web marketing suggestions:

## 1. Be easy to find on the Web—especially locally.

When a customer needs your service, you want them to call you. In 1995, if a customer didn't have your phone number memorized, they would grab the Yellow Pages and look you up. In 2012, if a customer doesn't know your number off the top of their head, they are far more likely to look up your company on Google to find your contact info—and increasingly, consumers on-the-go will be Googling you from their smartphone. If you don't have your business name and contact information claimed on Google, your competitor's contact information might be displayed before yours—even if a customer types in your exact business name.

Google has openly stated the importance of local search. Customers are searching for you in their city and if your business isn't coming up on page one of Google's local search listings, you're missing out on a major source of business. If you already claimed your listing, start optimizing it so you show up higher on the search-results list. Of course, some customers will go to great lengths to track you down. But if you can't be found on the Web easily, you may lose short-attention span consumers to your competitors who are only one Web page away.

## 2. Listen to what customers are saying about you.

Whether you are a “just the facts ma'am” or a silent Gary Cooper-type who would rather have a tooth drilled than to ask for feedback, you can still listen to what customers say about you and your employees. Google's business pages contain ratings and reviews sections where customers can give you one to five stars and speak their mind about how well (or how poorly) you

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did your job. Whether or not you regularly listen to what customers have to say, these online reviews are powerful sources of feedback. Some business owners tend to focus just on the one or two negative comments they might read. But smart owners who want to retain their customer base should read everything and determine if there are consistent issues that could be addressed.

Online ratings and reviews also are an excellent way to proactively seek feedback from your best clients. By asking those clients to go online and give an honest assessment of the work you do, you are showing them you care about their opinion, which helps maintain a good customer relationship—this can improve customer retention.

## 3. Maintain a dialogue with your customers using social media.

Social media tools like Facebook and Twitter create an easy and somewhat informal channel for two-way communication with your clients. A Facebook business page can humanize your business and create a more personal connection between staff and customers. Done right, it can build trust and provide meaningful insight about customers who “Like” you. Twitter makes it easy for you to share professional advice and best practices with clients and makes it easy for them to communicate with you about a service issue that, left unaddressed, may fester and ultimately create an opening for a competitor to welcome a new client—potentially yours. ☺

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