

The logo for National Oil & Lube News features a stylized yellow and red oil drop on the left. To its right, the word "National" is in a smaller red font, and "OIL & LUBE NEWS" is in a large, bold, red font. The ampersand is stylized and yellow.

Lube Websites Give Customers a Reason to Jump Online

by Anjelica Hernandez, NOLN Staff Writer

Due to the increasingly fast-paced life it seems we all lead, many consumers have adopted a “try-it-before-you-buy-it” mentality. Rather than jumping in the car and heading into a retail establishment blind, they opt to do a little research first. And what better way to research a business than taking a spin on the World Wide Web.

Many lube operators and companies have created websites that talk up their business or offer coupons and discounts, but some have gone even further, providing information on specific vehicles and technical issues. Through it all, though, fast lube websites are designed to get customers in the door.

One of the best ways to accomplish that is with the tried-and-true discount method. Offering specials and discounts will help catch the eye of potential customers, but these specials should be clearly labeled and easily accessible, as demonstrated in the website, www.lubepros.com, operated by the Illinois-based LubePro’s fast lube chain. Special offers are featured on a side column on many pages. While using the company’s colors, the website is easy to navigate and an emphasis is placed on the text information.

LubePro’s website pictures and graphics are kept to a minimum, while the information presented focuses on the convenience of its services. The LubePro’s website also highlights the qualifications of their professional technicians, placing extra emphasis on how they have been trained to be fast but thorough. This clarification may help ease customers’ concerns about getting their vehicle serviced quickly.

Having an article briefing the history of the company is a great way for a website visitor to become more familiar with a business. One example, www.promptoil.com, lets readers know that with the opening of the company’s first shop in 1984 in Portland, Maine, Prompto Ten Minute Oil Change became the first quick oil change shop in New England. The company has since expanded to 21 locations in Maine and New Hampshire.

Including photographs of a fast lube shop can add personality to the website and may encourage people to stop by. A visual image will give customers a preview of what to expect before they arrive. On the home page of the website www.victorylane.net, clear photographs show a very clean, organized store. By taking several different angles of the shop, which can be enlarged with a click of a mouse, Michigan-based Victory Lane Quick Oil Change presents a very structured, attractive view of one of their facilities.

When viewers first enter a company’s website, it should be a positive representative of the company. Clear photos, neat organization of the page and careful editing will help the website and business appear more professional. Easy navigation throughout the site will save a web browser’s time, which may prove essential. If browsers find it too difficult to locate the information they are seeking, they may give up and seek another site. Contact information and store locations should be a priority when setting up the page; you want visitors to have easy access to resources and business information.

A great way to let people know exactly what procedures are done during an oil change is to list the work completed, as Arkansas-based Razorback Car Wash & Quik Lube’s website, www.razorbackcarwash.com, does. A bulleted list outlines the work completed, with the price written at the top of the page. The site notes that a free carwash is also included in the price.

To help ease customers’ concerns, it may be necessary to include a warranty section on the web page. The website, www.lubestop.com, clearly outlines the warranty that Ohio-based Lube Stop offers after a vehicle has been serviced. The information clearly states what the shop is and is not responsible for, even offering advice on what to do in case of an emergency breakdown. This warranty can help protect the business, while also letting customers know their rights and protections.

Advertising a company through clothing and other miscellaneous products is a unique marketing concept, and Lube Stop’s website has a Lube eStore that sells items — all printed with the business’ logo — ranging from safety glasses to golf balls. Selling personalized items from the business allows customers to get more involved in the company, and also will provide more exposure for the business.

In order for the media to have more accessibility to a shop, it might be a good idea to have a media section as Georgia-based American LubeFast’s website, www.lubefast.com, does. Among the items listed are press releases, fact sheets, company graphics

and logos, and details about company advertising campaigns. Each link further details the company's accomplishments and describes the community work with which the organization is involved. The structure of the information makes it easily understandable and gives a thorough description of the company.

As opposed to discovering the service prices upon arrival at the shop, customers would most likely appreciate having the ability to view the shop's prices online. The website of Michigan-based Uncle Ed's Oil Shoppe (www.uncleedsoil.com) has a complete service menu not unlike the type you might find at a restaurant. Every service performed by an Uncle Ed's facility is listed, along with the price, meaning consumers will not be surprised when they purchase additional services.

Business hours and shop locations are also listed, letting people know when and where to go if they would like to have their vehicle serviced. (Modern mapping software can even draw consumers a map to a lube shop, making getting to the shop as easy as possible.)

Some customers may not know how often to change their vehicle's oil, wiper blades, brake fluid or other car maintenance requirements. A good example of educating unknowing customers on car care is the website of Oregon-based Oil Can Henry's (www.oilcanhenry.com), which has a special section entitled, "Henry's Hints." Under "Henry's Hints" is a Q&A segment to address frequently asked questions. This abundant information saves customers time by answering their queries before they arrive at the lube facility. Another feature that could prove helpful for customers is providing an e-mail link to allow questions to be submitted.

Besides answering standardized questions, "Henry's Hints" also has a section that answers why customers should choose a fast lube business as opposed to a car dealership or other service provider. This question gives the website an opportunity to explain why a fast lube business is qualified to service vehicles, and why it should be chosen.

Aside from self-promotion, customers will appreciate additional tips, such as preparing their vehicle for a vacation trip. Louisiana-based Speedee Oil Change and Tune-up's website, www.speedeeoil.com, has a "Travel Trip" section that provides a bulletin checklist for inspecting vehicles before leaving for vacation. Complete with the company's logo "driving through" a palm desert with a smiling sun, the page offers more than just car safety tips — it also suggests carrying a flashlight and packing emergency indicators such as flares, reflectors and distress flags.

The layout and presentation of the website is important, as it may be the first and only representative of the company. And one needn't be a giant company to create a great website, as demonstrated in www.villagequiklube.com, the website of Ohio-based Village Quik Lube.

Photographs taken at community events could show the organization's participation in the community. The website of Rapid Lube of Hagerstown (Maryland), www.rapidlubefullservice.com, shows photos taken from a special event hosted by the lube shop. A caption says, "It is not uncommon for Rapid Lube to host special events to show their appreciation for the community," which shows customers that the business values the community as a whole.

In our technologically advanced society, it is important to keep up with the current trends and reach as many consumers as possible. A website can be used for more than self-promotion; it can recruit potential customers while also educating them about the benefits of fast lube service.
