

# Maximizing the Value of Manufacturer Promotions

Follow these steps to attract new customers and grow revenue and profitability

BY DAVE SCHLETEWITZ, AUTOMOTIVE INSTALLED MARKETING MANAGER, CHEVRON LUBRICANTS AND KIM TULLY-SUTTON, LEAD MARKETING SPECIALIST, CHEVRON LUBRICANTS



**Manufacturer promotions are a proven technique** for driving trial, rewarding customer loyalty to a shop, and—if advertised off-site locally—attracting new customers. In our experience, promotions are most successful when the owner/operator and the shop employees are all aware, engaged and committed to the marketing efforts needed to execute effectively. If you've experienced promotion results differently than you expected, then it's worth stopping to reflect on what you might have done differently and how you can improve next time around.

Like anything, taking a disciplined approach can increase your chances of an effective promotion. Here is a specific checklist of steps and activities that are key to successful promotion execution.

**Plan your advertising and marketing efforts.** Everyone wants to attract new customers, and the way to do that is with off-site advertising. We recommend leading with key word search (which assumes you have a mobile-responsive website for your business) to reach your target audience who are always connected to their smartphone. If your business is not coming up in their 'oil change near me' Google search, your shop is invisible to them. Advertising commitments should be made 6-8 weeks ahead of the promotion go live date.

**Take advantage of the manufacturer's marketing assets.** Most likely, manufacturers provide free customizable off-site and on-site promotion assets for you to use in your advertising efforts for your website, email, social media, review sites, Google search and other electronic media. If you want to reach younger consumers who prefer to get information and offers online or on their phones, the best way to do that is through search.

**Make sure all employees are aware of the promotion.** Hold a kickoff meeting to ensure that all of your staff understands the promotion and your expectation that every customer will be made aware of the promotion. Make sure you have an ample supply of the qualifying products/packages being promoted to accommodate the sales lift.

**Establish incentives, expectations, and goals.** Run contests to get your employees engaged and excited. Set realistic sales targets and rewards for meeting them. Top performing sites offer their employees incentives.

**Inform all customers of the promotion.** Make sure every customer is made aware of the promotion at the greeting (this gets back to setting your expectations). If you execute this consistently throughout promotion period, then you will increase conversion on the promoted products.

**Measure and report progress against goals.** Don't wait until the promotion is over to figure out how you did. Check regularly, review and discuss results with your team.

**Encourage customers to go online and file their rebate claims.** Make sure your staff staples the claim form to the customer's invoice. Explain to the customer what they need to do and when they can expect their rebate from the manufacturer.

**Thank every customer.** This should be a standard practice, of course, but it's especially important when you're trying to drive participation in a promotion.

Allen Furr, manager of East Albemarle Xpress Lube, a Havoline xpress lube® in Albemarle, N.C., says that promotion execution at the shop level is the key to their success.

"The greeter ensures every customer is aware of the promotion. Then, our cashiers staple the claim to the customer's invoice and encourage the customers to go online and file their claim." Furr says. "We say to our customers that it takes less than two minutes of their time to get money off their next oil change—it is that easy."

Disciplined execution is what differentiates top performers with manufacturer promotions. Following these steps will increase your chances of realizing the benefits—attracting new customers, younger customers, moving customers up the product line to grow revenue and profitability for your business. Advance planning and effective communication with employees, customers and external audiences through advertising are the key ingredients to achieving better results with manufacturer promotions.

*Dave Schletewitz has been with Chevron for more than 30 years and is currently the automotive installed marketing manager. You can reach him at [DAPS@chevron.com](mailto:DAPS@chevron.com). Kim Tully-Sutton has been with Chevron for more than 12 years and is currently the lead marketing specialist. You can reach her at [Kimberly.Sutton@chevron.com](mailto:Kimberly.Sutton@chevron.com).*