



BUSINESSSTRATEGY 

Social media smarts for bodyshops

If your bodyshop is not yet on Facebook it needs to be

Gone are the days of one or two social media platforms – today there are dozens which makes it difficult to know where to focus your time as a business. Facebook has been around for almost two decades and it's still going strong especially for bodyshops and reaching that all-important retail customer.

You have to be in it to win it, though, and there are still some bodyshops that either don't use the platform at all or aren't utilising it to its fullest potential.

Marketing and social media in particular doesn't have to be hard or costly, it just needs to be done right.

MotorClaimGuru founder Tim Kelly told us how the days of locally-targeted marketing are long gone: "In the past, I would have advised bodyshops to do local marketing, local papers, billboards, backs of buses, supermarkets, etc, but they have all died a death and I would not do any of them now.

"The biggest lead generator at the moment for bodyshops is Facebook, but there are tricks to it. If I was a bodyshop, in my company name, I would be joining as many 'local' buy-and-sell, community groups as possible. I would be sharing posts via a blog or vlog off my website to Facebook, then sharing off my company page on Facebook to those groups. It's also beneficial to 'boost' these posts. You hammer it out, so to speak, to create an audience that likes, follows, and shares to then create active sharers of your content. Then you can focus on boosting the post via paid advertising, if the budget is there.

"Facebook is great for dealing with the general public and retail customers. LinkedIn is another great social media portal to commercial and B2B customers such as your possible fleet clients, etc."

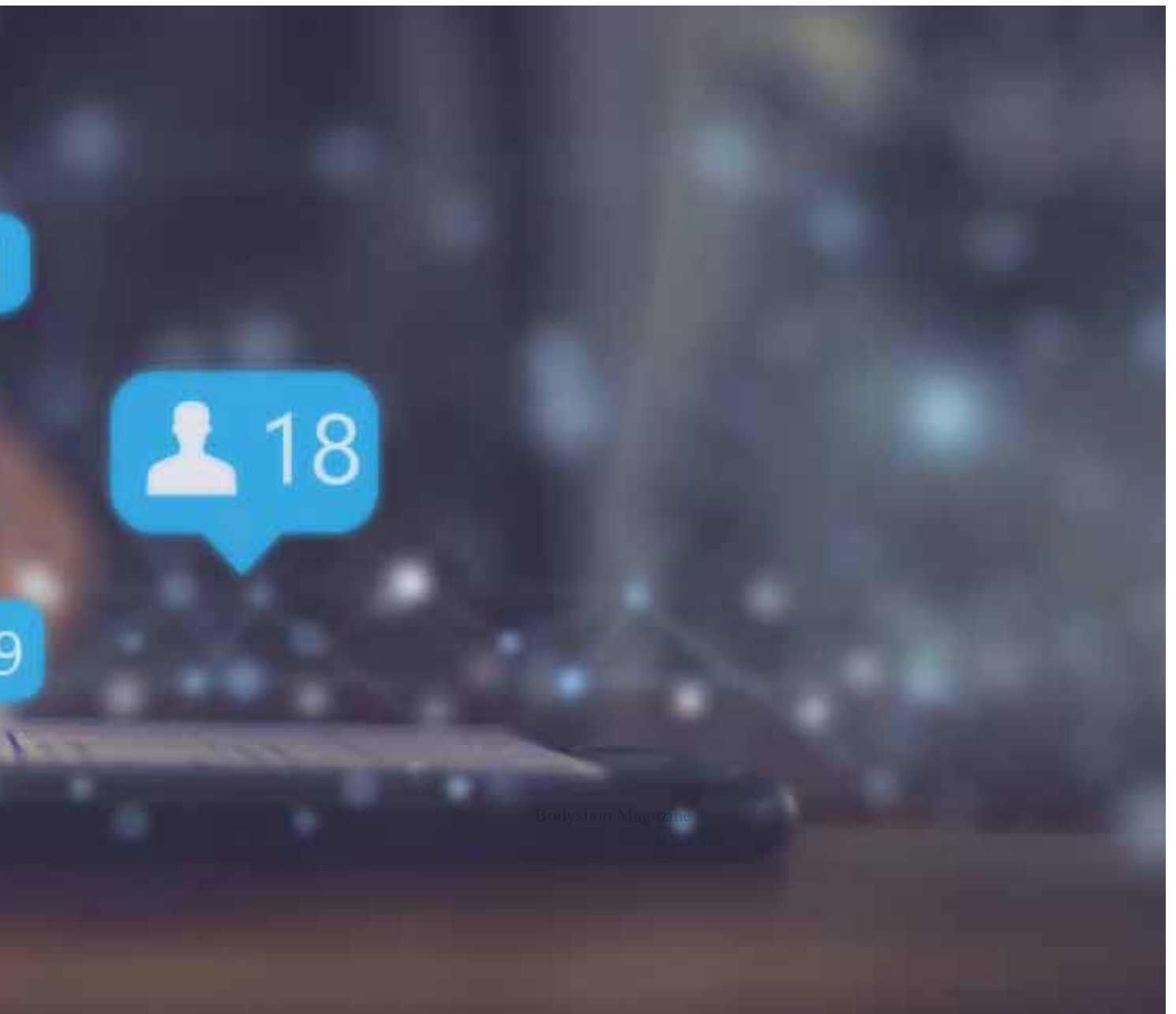
Kelly says that if you're set on print advertising rather than the digital route of social media then you'll need to do some

very extensive research in order for it to become profitable.

"Take my local publication Lancashire Life, as an example. It's an 'exclusive' magazine aimed at the upper classes with high disposable income. If I was repairing newer upmarket cars, I would be hunting down the local journalists and inviting them down – probably detailing their car while they were there and explaining how amazing my customer service is while performing stunning repairs in exchange for some free exposure in the next mag. I could then follow this editorial up with advertising separately in the magazine as well.

"Creating awareness of your brand is the very first step to any marketing strategy and it's a powerful one at that. Hence my comments about Facebook; if you just advertise, it can take a long time to get any traction. Build the audience first, then do it," Kelly added.

John Thompson, bodyshop marketer,



Bodyshop Magazine

added that the most important thing about marketing, and certainly social media, is posting the right content. “Firstly, identifying your demographic will allow you to know what platform to focus on – Facebook works particularly well at bringing in retail, but LinkedIn is the one for fleets and accident management. Knowing what to post, though, is the key. Before and after pictures of collision repair, in particular, tend to work very well,” he said.

Director at Small Torque – a dedicated social media agency for bodyshops – Gary Chew agrees that Facebook is the number one choice for bodyshops. “The two key factors to consider with social media in general is content and followers. Firstly, your content needs to be fresh, varied and engaging; a mix of photos, video and articles that educate, advise and entertain your audience. Equally, if not more important than posting regular content, is the number of followers you

have on your pages, as the more people that engage with your posts the further your messages will reach.

“For bodyshops looking to generate new B2C retail opportunities in their local area, Facebook is the number one choice. Reaching more than 60% of all internet users, Facebook is still the leading and most-used social media platform. It has a dedicated company page facility that allows you to build your brand and promote your services to followers, along with giving people the ability to leave reviews, like and share content, send direct messages and search for local companies and content – much like a modern-day Yellow Pages. You can also create targeted advertising campaigns to promote your business to certain demographics in your local area – should your budget allow – with access to full analytics to monitor performance.

“LinkedIn is also a great platform for peer-to-peer engagement and to promote

your services to more of a B2B audience. The very first thing to do on LinkedIn is build your connections – focus on insurers, fleets, and dealerships and build your online reputation among other like-minded businesses within the sector.

“Social media should be also integrated at every touch point within your business; including your website, email signatures and marketing literature, plus encouraging family, friends, colleagues, and customers to follow your pages is a great way to aid growth. Sharing posts in local community groups and running targeted advertising campaigns are also great ways to build your followers,” Chew added.

Kelly concluded: “The most important thing I would say is that you need to test and measure your success and, if you’re spending money to do so, with advertising and boosting posts, then, more importantly, you need to identify your return on investment.”