

Jeff Smit takes a look at the vvGarage app



Today's long service intervals make it a constant challenge to stay connected to customers. That's why more and more businesses use a mobile app as an effective way to attract and retain them.

Apps are very much a daily habit for Australians. On average, we now use more than 10 different apps each day to organise our lives and stay informed.

As any marketer will tell you, you need to be where your customers are, so it's time to think about how a mobile presence can keep you connected to your customers.

We recently took a look at vvGarage from Service Programs, a mobile app designed specifically for the auto-repair industry, to see just how effective an app could be.

Why should you consider a mobile app?

■ **They're faster:** The functions of an app are, on average, five times faster than mobile websites. Because they're quicker and easier to navigate than websites, it's quicker and easier for customers to book services, making them more likely to respond to your service reminders.

■ **Direct communication:** Push notifications via apps are proving to be more effective at engaging customer interest than traditional communication methods such as SMS, email and mail.

■ **Builds customer loyalty:** The best mobile apps are branded to your business. Regularly interacting with your

brand through their smartphone increases customer engagement and builds long-term loyalty.

■ **Quick and easy to personalise:** Most apps have a control portal from where you can add and edit personalised content for your app. You can even change the colour scheme and layout of your app in minutes if you decide to change your business branding.

■ **Reduces marketing costs:** Mobile apps help you expand your audience reach in a very short time while reducing marketing costs. Apps replace many more traditional forms of advertising and promotion, and you know that your marketing spend is reaching its intended target audience.

■ **Increases efficiency and productivity:** Anything that used to be done manually but can now be done digitally, from appointment booking to marketing and communication, saves time and increases efficiency.

How vvGarage works

There are two elements to the vvGarage app.

■ **A mobile app for customers to download and use on their smartphones (Apple and Android):** Downloads are free and unlimited regardless of how many customers you have. Each vvGarage app is individually branded, so every time a customer uses the app they're connecting with your business. This is an important factor in maintaining customer loyalty.

■ **Web portal at vvgarage.com:** A unique login allows businesses to use

the web portal to communicate with customers, create and send marketing and promotional notifications through the app and add useful information to the app such as frequently-asked questions (FAQs).

Key features

■ **Appointment booking:**

Customers can conveniently make a booking any time of the day or night using the app and confirmation of the booking is sent back to them through the app. The list of services offered by the app is set up by the workshop using the web portal and any optional extras can be included, such as loan cars or collection and delivery.

■ **Offers and promotions:** Service offers and seasonal promotions such as a/c checks can be sent to customers through the app and then be booked direct from the offer code in the notification.

■ **Warning-light library:** Customers often become overly worried by the appearance of a warning light. The warning-light library in vvGarage explains the system that the warning light relates to, offering some peace of mind.

■ **Manufacturer recalls, state registration checks and weather:** The app contains a whole host of informative tools to make using your app a feature of customers' lives, even when they don't need a service or repair. Many of these can be customised to services specific to your local area or business.

■ **Uber-style customer feedback:** Customers can receive an invitation to rate your service using the app, giving satisfied customers the chance to say thank you. It can also identify those who may not have returned, giving you the chance to correct the situation and retain the customer for the future.

vvGarage can be pre-populated with your combined customer and vehicle database and used either as a fully stand-alone platform or integrated with the booking diaries of both Workshop Software and SAM.

The benefits of mobile apps for both workshops and customers make them a win-win.

As we move our businesses further into the digital age, we must think about the convenience of our customers. The easier we make it to engage and do business with us, the longer they will remain with us.

For more information visit www.serviceprograms.com.au