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Bayou State Tire Dealer News

LOUISIANA INDEPENDENT TIRE DEALERS ASSOCIATION

Inside:

- President's Report
- Industry Briefs
- 2008 Convention & Tradeshow Pictures
- Hall of Fame Winners

2008 Annual Convention and Tradeshow



2008 Convention General Session with Speaker Bob Ulrich from Modern Tire Dealer

VOLUME 3, ISSUE 3
Spring 2008



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Bayou State Tire Dealer News



LOUISIANA INDEPENDENT TIRE DEALERS ASSOCIATION

Bayou State Tire Dealer News is published four times annually by the Louisiana Independent Tire Dealers Association.

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www.litda.org

THE BAYOU STATE TIRE DEALER NEWS

Louisiana Independent Tire Dealers Association

From the President, Chet Simpson

Dear Members,

I am honored to serve as President of the Louisiana Independent Tire Dealers Association for the upcoming year. I would like to thank outgoing President Paul Bernstein and all of the Officers and Board Members for a very successful year.

The LITDA's Annual Convention and Tradeshow was held February 28-March 1, 2008 at the Beau Rivage Resort in Biloxi, MS, and it was a huge success. On behalf of all of the LITDA members, I would like to thank the dealers and vendors for their participation. Without their support, we would not be able to offer a quality program to our membership. I would also like to thank The Tatman Group for doing a fantastic job planning and organizing the event. They are a huge asset to our association.

As your Incoming President, my objectives for the coming year will be as stated in the LITDA By-Laws:

- To promote standards of ethics of its members and the tire industry
- To promote harmony, goodwill, and understanding among its members
- To encourage an exchange of ideas, technical knowledge, and retailing/wholesaling procedures
- To improve the quality of standards of the products in the new tire and automotive industry

The key to success of the association is continuing education and a strong membership base. These are essential in our ever-changing industry, and I will work hard to provide quality educational programs for our members. I would also like to ask for your help to recruit new members to our association, because strength is in numbers.

I look forward to promoting the tire industry and LITDA, as well and working closely with all of the members of our great organization. Please do not hesitate to call me with your ideas and suggestions. I can be reached at Simpson's Service Center, Inc. (225) 344-9586 or email chet@simpsonsservicecenter.com

Sincerely,



Chet Simpson
LITDA President

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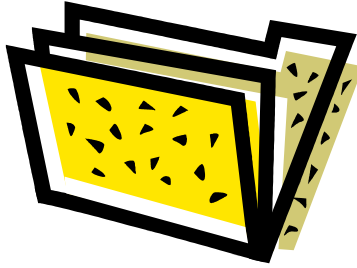
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Tire Jobs continues to bring employers, job seekers together

The TireJobs Co., a tire industry-specific service for employers and job seekers, is celebrating its eighth year in business.

"Employment trends have changed drastically in the 21st century," says TireJobs President Carl Koester. "Free job listings and only paying when you hire has allowed many companies to search for talent... when the job seeker is looking." The service can be accessed at www.tirejobs.com. "It's no charge to post an ad on the site," says Koester. "And you can run an ad as long as you want." Employers only pay a fee "if they make a hire." TireJobs is a division of TAF Management Inc., a consulting and project management company that helps commercial tire dealers with sales promotions and other services.

**Goodyear reacts to decrease in truck tire demand**

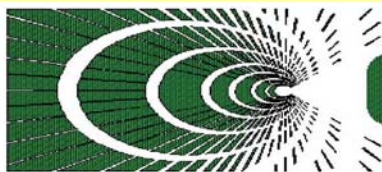
Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co. will stop medium radial truck tire production at three domestic plants for approximately a week each this month "to match production levels with customer requirements," says Amy Brei, manager of manufacturing communications. Two of the three plants will not be shut down completely. Only medium radial truck tire production will be stopped at Goodyear's Danville, Va., and Topeka, Kan., plants. In Danville, aircraft tire production will continue, while in Topeka, light truck and OTR tire production will continue. Goodyear's Buffalo, N.Y., plant will shut down all its consumer and commercial tire production in order to perform routine plant maintenance. The three plants have the capacity to produce 18,450 truck tire units a day.

Michelin will raise commercial tire prices

Michelin North America Inc. will raise prices on its Michelin and BFGoodrich brand commercial truck tires up to 8% on April 1. Price hikes will cover replacement tires sold in the United States and also will apply to Michelin Retread Technologies Inc. retreads. Michelin is raising prices "due to the continued escalation of raw material costs," say Michelin officials.

Advocacy organization declares its support of 'Right to Repair' legislation

RetireSafe, an advocacy organization promoting solutions for older Americans, has declared its support of the Motor Vehicle Owners' Right to Repair Act (HR 2694). Because vehicles are becoming increasingly sophisticated, with virtually every system either monitored or controlled by computers, servicing these vehicle systems to keep them in safe working condition requires ready access to complete and accurate information from the car companies, according to the Automotive Aftermarket Industry Association. The Motor Vehicle Owners' Right to Repair Act was introduced in Congress to ensure that car owners and their trusted repair shops have the same access to safety alerts and repair information as the franchised new car dealer network. "Many older Americans live on a fixed income, and Right to Repair ensures that they can continue to enjoy the affordability and convenience of having their vehicle serviced at the repair shop of their choice," says Michelle Plasari, president of RetireSafe. RetireSafe has nearly 400,000 members.



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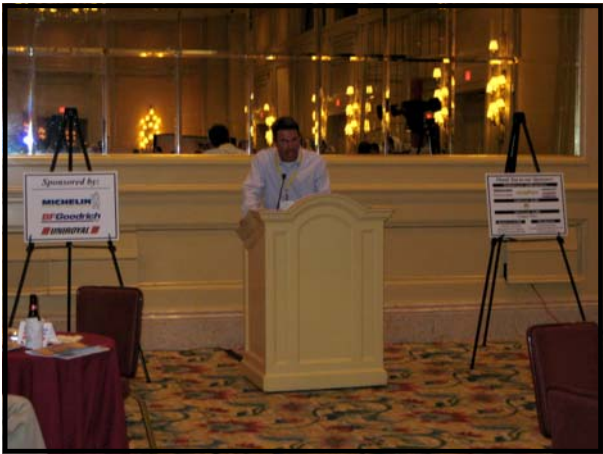
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LITDA CONVENTION

The 2008 Louisiana Independent Tire Dealer's Annual Convention and Tradeshow was larger than previous years with increased participation. LITDA had more than 200 dealers and vendors participate!!

The 2008 Convention & Tradeshow kicked off with the Annual Golf Tournament Sponsored by Goodyear Tire & Rubber, and a Welcome Reception sponsored by Michelin Tire Co.

Paul Bernstein, past President, of LITDA welcomed all dealers, sponsors, and exhibitors to the convention.



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LITDA 2008 Tradeshow

The Louisiana Independent Tire Dealers Association's 2008 Tradeshow kicked off on Saturday, March 1, 2008

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2008 Annual Convention

Hall of Fame Award Winners

Rick Lambert has been an active member of the tire industry for 32 years, and has served as an LITDA Board Member for 16 years. He has been PR/IT Manager of CTO for 8 years , and co-owner of Big River Tire for 20 years. Rick serves as the current LITDA Treasurer, and a Board Member for the FRCC and FRCA.

Emmett Woods is the President of Duckworth Woods Tire Service, and has been a member of the tire industry for 41 years. He has served as Past President of the Louisiana Tire Dealers and Retreaders Association and the Gulf States Tire Dealers Association. He is Past Chairman of the Automotive Excellence Council and served on the DEQ Tire Disposal Committee.

Congratulations to the both of you!

LITDA Membership

We would like to welcome our newest members to LITDA:

<i>New Member</i>	<i>City</i>
Andy Brown's Tire	Gulfport, MS
Approved Auto Repair	Metairie, LA
Dale Ockmond's LLC	Vacherie, LA
Duckwoth Woods Tire Service	Metairie, LA
Jenning's Automotive	New Orleans, LA
Michael's Tire & Repair	Delhi, LA
Midas Auto Service Experts	Lafayette, LA
Tim's Quality Car Care	Metairie, LA
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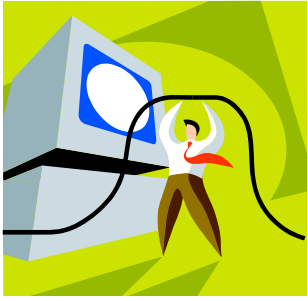
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When focusing on the demand or revenue generation side of business, all retailers are faced with three basic challenges: • retaining existing customers, • improving the profitability of existing customers, and • attracting new customers.

Research has shown that the cost of attracting new customers often takes at least one year to achieve a payback. So businesses have an incentive to retain existing customers in order to, first, recover the cost of recruitment and, second, to increase their profitability over time by helping them capture a larger share of the customers' spending, usually through additional services. As Frederick Reichheld demonstrated in his seminal work, "The Loyalty Effect," decreasing the defection rate of existing customers just 5% can increase an automotive services company's profitability by 30%.¹ Among the leading tools for creating loyal customers is great customer service and personalized experiences.² The Internet allows small firms to provide personalized customer service at relatively low cost, which allows them to compete with much larger firms with far greater budgets. The key to developing an effective Web site is to have a clear goal of what you want to accomplish with your site and to provide online functionality for those activities that will generate a positive response from both prospects and customers. There are many definitions of a Web site, but the most accurate is: A Web site is a software application that automates human activity and is accessible through a browser. When designing a Web site, you need to have a clear vision of what the site should do, both in terms of the activities or functionality it should provide, and the way it looks and "feels." Early on, you should focus on what the site should do and how it should do it, and leave the graphic design to the end-of-the-design process. That functionality is the heart of the customer experience, and that experience should reflect the way you like to treat your customers. As Forrester Research has observed, the four top reasons³ a consumer returns to a site are:

1. high quality content,
2. ease of use,
3. quick to download, and
4. frequently updated.

Since the vision for the Web site will undoubtedly exceed the initial budget, a Web site development partner should help you craft a phased approach that builds out the site over time. You should start with a basic site that provides value to customers and evolves into a powerful customer attraction and retention tool. As noted by Cami Noce, president of Web site development firm Thetawave (www.thetawave.com), and who has worked with several

independent tire dealers around the country, building a Web site is like a dining experience. "You don't get your meal all at once. The appetizer comes first, then the salad then the main course and finally dessert." The site design process should involve an initial strategic planning workshop that is used to outline the site goals and functionality. The involvement of store personnel at this time is fairly high, requiring at least one and usually up to three sometimes lengthy meetings to define the site. Developers will document the outcomes of the meetings and create a scoping document that outlines the site design, usually in graphic form for easy review and recognition. During these sessions, the processes currently used to fulfill key customer service and sales functions will be discussed and mapped. The first and most accessible functions to provide are those involving customer service.

Online customer service

For tire retailers, typical customer service includes answering questions, resolving customer problems, scheduling appointments, providing quotes for tires, and keeping track of routine maintenance records. All of these can be easily addressed in a Web site. The degree of functionality can vary, from simple pages of information and customer submitted forms that the retailer responds to the next business day to online search tools and automated quoting systems. The most important step is to first determine which functions will be provided, and then build a site that is within budget but which can be upgraded on a regular basis as resources permit.

Figure 1 shows a simple site planning diagram focusing on customer service. In addressing the content for each function to be provided, you will need to define what customer service objective that functionality services, how it is handled now, what the first iteration should be like and what the ideal state should be. Typical goals for each of the functions described here include: Company information. This should provide customers with a high level of comfort about who the retailer is and where he can be found. Typical information provided may include key personnel, the company's customer service philosophy, company history, community involvement, store locations, store hours, products and brands carried, and services provided. Answering questions. This function should provide customers with lots of information addressing any questions they may have that will help them choose a retailer. Spending an hour with a counterperson will help the site developer identify the most frequently asked questions a customer will have at any point in the tire retailer selection and purchase decision cycle, from the first phone call to the moment they leave the shop with newly installed tires and a fresh oil change.

Problem resolution. This function should allow customers to provide feedback to the retailer that can be acted upon to

Continued from page 13

improve each customer's experience. This can be a powerful tool for improving customer service. Conrad's Tire and Total Car Care, a Cleveland, Ohio-based retailer with 26 stores in northeast Ohio, recently implemented just such a tool on its Web site. After receiving service, customers are sent a postcard with a Web address they can visit to rate their service experience. By allowing this less confrontational method for customers to give feedback, Conrad's has found that the system has engaged many more customers in their customer service improvement processes. "You always know the customer you pleased and the customer you haven't, but you don't know the middle of the road customer who wasn't dissatisfied but wasn't completely happy," says General Manager Dominic Umek. "The site has emboldened these customers to communicate how they felt about their experience." Scheduling appointments. This function should allow customers to view the available time slots at the locations most desirable to them and pick a time and date that is most convenient to them.

Providing quotes. This function should allow customers to indicate what kind of vehicle they have and their brand or tire preference and receive a quote. Online price shopping has been one of the biggest innovations of the Internet, and customers today expect to be able to get pricing over the Internet rather than having to make phone calls. An online quote system can be as simple as a form the customer completes and submits to the retailer for a call-back or e-mail the next day, or an online tire selector that can give the customer a price in a few moments. Maintenance tracking. This function would allow customers to maintain and track their vehicles' maintenance records online, allowing them to set up reminders and schedule appointments on their own. The benefits to the customer of online customer service include the ability to obtain service at times convenient to them, to take control of their shopping and vehicle care process, and to do it whether at home or at work. Online customer service frees up time for your sales staff and counterperson; builds a deeper relationship with the customer, and increases the number of customers that can be served without having to hire more people.

Challenges, technology and budgeting

Conrad's Umek, who overhauled the company's site in the last year, says the biggest challenge in implementing the site was upgrading the technology infrastructure of his stores. Noting that the tire industry is behind other industries in taking advantage of the Internet, he observed that "consumers now use the Internet to shop for and buy all kinds of products. It's not foreign to them. Plus, most of our staff is already into computers using home-based PCs themselves." Noce of Thetawave echoes Umek's comments, stating that the biggest challenge for tire retailers is to adopt the technology that the "market already uses in other industries." The cost of implementing a Web site should not be daunting either. Noce says she has put customers into fully functional Web sites "for just a few thousand dollars." In fact, the cost of a quality site should be no more than the cost of "an aggressive direct marketing program," adds Umek.

1 Frederick F. Reichheld, "The Loyalty Effect," 1996, page 36.

2 "Forrester Research Bulletin" on Customer Relationship Management, 2000.

3 Smith, PR and Dave Chaffey, "eMarketing eXcellence," 2nd Edition. Elsevier Butterworth Heinemann. 2005, page 173.

LITDA ELECTS NEW OFFICERS AND BOARD MEMBERS AT THE 2008 ANNUAL CONVENTION

Chet Simpson, Owner of Simpson's Service Center in Baton Rouge, LA was installed as the 2008-2010 LITDA President. Simpson replaced Paul Bernstein with Delta World Tire Co.

The LITDA members voted on a new slate of officers at the convention. Kip Vincent with Colt Inc. in Scott, LA was elected as First Vice president; Troy Matherne with CARQUEST Auto Parts, Baton Rouge, LA was elected as Second Vice President.

Three Board Members were also elected, Ray Mohler, Bumper to Bumper Auto Parts, Monroe, LA; Doug Robinson, Hesselbein Tire Co., Houma, LA; and Eric Roundtree, Chabill's Tire Co., Morgan City, LA.



MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

I hereby apply for membership in the Louisiana Independent Tire Dealers Association. I am an Independent Tire Dealer, Retreader, or Supplier in the industry. I agree that if I am accepted into membership, I will abide by the By-Laws of the Association to the best of my ability; I will strive to improve the industry to which I belong and will insist on my Association doing the same.

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