

Winning The Rebate Game – Mom & Pop Tire Shop

Just like understanding your clients "pain points" and having "handles" on the different areas of your business are vital, so to, is winning the rebate game.

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Without the rebate game, the tire business would be much less lucrative in relationship to the amount of work it requires to run a successful branch. Even when winning the rebate game, the challenges do not necessarily go away. If you live in a city that has the economics, population, and signals the franchisors are looking for, you will likely always experience new pressures from competition.

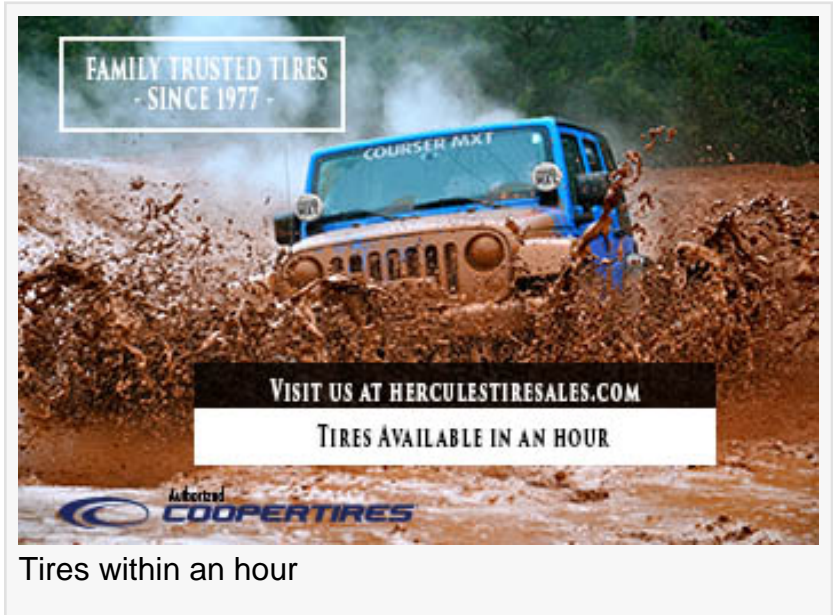
Luckily, it is not low cost, low barrier to enter, unlike say, a [snow cone stand](#), but on the opposite spectrum, those that do have the power to enter, often enter with very deep pockets, and streamlined processes & training, often having economies of scale & scope.

So, as a mom & pop, your only hope is to already be entrenched in a community and to be loved and have loyalty from those clients, or you can kiss your tire shop bye-bye.

Focusing on Few Brands

Anyone that has lived in the tire industry understands that offering all brands, for a mom & pop shop, is not reality. Yes, you can sell all brands. The wholesale industry has moved close enough to nearly all tire shops in the country, that likely, you can get any tire that your shop does not stock. Often within an hour or a day. But the real trick to following the "pay streak" is to "dig in" with a brand or two. These brand programs offer rebates that make your bottom-line make sense; as I said, for the work a tire shop requires to be run successfully (it consumes your life).

The game gets easier when you have the rebate game on lock. Training is the key. Sales representatives have to be incentivized or continually trained to sell the authorized brand. We have only ever felt the success from those rebate programs when our numbers reflected no less than 35% of our retail sales being authorized brands. The game gets easier. Of course, having the ability to do



mechanic work is the icing on top for any tire shop, but the cherry is that rebate program.

Picking the Proper brand to be an authorized dealer, of course, is tricky

The top five brands in the US: Bridgestone, Firestone, Continental, Michelin, & Cooper. It's very difficult to convince the masses to replace their tires with tier 2 OE replacement brands, if the tire manufacturer isn't aggressively marketing their tire lines. The more they market, the smaller their margins are for the tire shop. So it's a huge juggling act for a mom & pop shop -to achieve economies of scale- while maximizing gross profit.

In House Marketing Programs

Even when your rebate program is with one of the top brands, you will have to focus on growing your own brand within the community. That means aggressively using [SEO, SEM, social media, branding, networking](#), and sponsorship's to create your brand awareness. Not only are you building that brand loyalty for your tire & auto repair shop, you're hoping that you can encourage those loyal customers to jump on board with the brand you are aiming to be loyal to.

In an industry dominated by franchises, and acquisitions, and frankly, the complete absence of loyalty, the ticket to success is to keep what you get. If the lifelong value (in visits) of your customer is equal to one visit, you might as well hang up your gloves, because there is no substitute to customer loyalty. If these customers you are gaining are not turning into "vision casters", spreading the good news about your business, and having a lifelong value of 2 to 4, then you won't be able to out-market, out-expand, and outperform, in an ever increasingly competitive landscape.

Keep what you have. Easier said than done, but it is possible if you are pushing a reputable tire manufacturer that matches the needs & demand of your local market. Focus on keeping what you have means your customer loyalty is your competitive edge & your ability to deliver comparable & "better than" customer service is the key, no matter what industry you are in. Hypothetically speaking of course. Some say, the only competition you have, is the company delivering better customer service. If you aren't sniffing out client pain points, then you aren't focused on customer service. How does a mom & pop shop, tire shop thrive in today's competitive landscape? The rebate game... But we could easily make an argument that having leadership, training, ever improving knowledge of client pain points, and "handles" on your output, customer retention, & employees, are all keys to success.

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