inertia
marketing + design

White Paper Example

Case Study: Sudz Car Wash' Craig Gilham Saddles Up With Everwash To Grow Membership, Revenues For His Gonzales, Tx Iba

Content is for portfolio use only. Not for reproduction without expressed permission from Inertia and Client.

Content is for portfolio use only. Not for reproduction without expressed permission from Inertia and Client.

Case Study: Sudz Car Wash' Craig Gilham Saddles Up With Everwash To Grow Membership, Revenues For His Gonzales, Tx Iba

Gonzalez, Texas, is the birthplace of Texas Independence. Its flag bears the motto, 'Come And Take It,' perfectly summarizing the self-sufficiency attitude instilled in the surrounding Texas Hill Country since its founding.

It's fitting that Gonzales should attract an independent Australian named Craig Gilham, who soon emigrated to Texas with the dream of becoming a cowboy and compete in rodeos. Over the next few years, Craig achieved his goals and decided to plant his roots in Gonzales.

Five years ago, he saw it was time to set a new goal of launching a successful business. He became a partner in the ownership of one of Gonzales' two car washes, Sudz Car Wash.

"The location was great since quite a bit of traffic goes down to the coast from Austin and through Gonzales. Also, Austin's rapid growth is driving residential growth here," Craig notes. "I knew nothing about car washes, but it looked like a good opportunity."

His partner later departed, but Craig persevered and learned about every facet of the car wash business: "I had to figure out all the technical things about the wash. While I'm a diesel mechanic by trade and knew that side of the business, I had to learn about technology, IP addresses, credit card merchant accounts, and so on.

"While we had a website, I couldn't get anyone to go to the website. The whole issue of branding, generating new business, and differentiating Sudz was a challenge. I committed to learning all I could, and the more I read, the more I learned about growing a car wash business. Memberships and unlimited programs seemed to be the keys to success.

I looked at ID tags and other alternatives, but everything looked expensive to get started with a questionable return on the investment."

Gilham Finds a No-Risk Solution in EverWash

Craig came across EverWash at an industry convention, like the team, and thought its program made sense: "Looking into the future, everyone has a phone with them or some technical device. So, I reached out to them, and although its prior experience at that early stage in their program had been with tunnels, we agreed that the advantages of their system could work with an IBA."

Together, Craig and EverWash had to integrate the existing POS system that used one-time use codes with the EverWash mobile app.

"I took the initiative of reaching out to the POS vendor, but the EverWash team was fantastic in taking it from there. Scott Caplan, EverWash's president, and John Cassady, the company's founder, personally got involved, along with other EverWash experts, to solve the problem. We found a way to make it work, creating a system that let us use the QR scanner and operate or activate the wash.

"They set me up with advertising and marketing support, specifically for my wash, and we were in business. Of course, the business had to ramp up, and we chipped away at it with social media, advertising, local sponsorships. Today, we also can take advantage of our CRM database. But, we were able to create some word-of-mouth buzz, and Sudz realized organic growth over the next few weeks and months."

Content is for portfolio use only. Not for reproduction without expressed permission from Inertia and Client.

Membership Fits Gonzales' Car Culture

Looking back, Craig reports that the difference from when he first bought the car wash to today is amazing: "When I bought the car wash, it was rundown. Few visited the wash because it always seemed to be out of service. I had to change people's mentality of the car wash. As a touchless car wash, people had to be confident that it would deliver a great wash.

Craig feels that Sudz's membership program with EverWash is a perfect match for his customers. Conscientious car owners know that a car every six months is unacceptable if you take pride in how a car looks. They want to wash a vehicle regularly. The idea of unlimited washes for a set price is one they appreciate.

"I found that people loved our monthly deals and the ability to wash more often. They told their friends, and gradually we created a new thought process among more and more car owners in Gonzalez, says Craig. "They wanted to pay us a visit rather than wash the car themselves!"

Sudz's growth led to the hiring of some employees. Craig credits the combination of a wash that consistently operates well, signage that stands out in promoting membership, ongoing marketing support, and the membership program's clear value all contributed to a busy operation, often operating at peak capacity.

"I now have an EverWash support manager to keep the membership program going," note Craig. "We are constantly evolving, improving, and developing new ways to keep our members engaged and enthused about our program.

Sudz Keeps Adding Value

"I make full use of the data the EverWash program gives me, too. I go in daily and can check out somebody if there's a problem. I can see if their account's active or frozen. I can check feedback from the surveys to spot trends, fix concerns, and come up with new ideas."

"I just want to keep adding value for our members," says Craig. "I've added special membership perks like free self-serve wash bay access in case they can't wait for the automatic in-bay wash. Members can just scan their code at the self-serve bay and wash their car themselves, and they can do the same with our vacuums."

I recently bought a detail operation which operated in the rear of our premises. I am using the EverWash membership program as an incentive to get more people to the detail service by offering a "20% off" offer to members. And, when we get non-members interested in a detail, it also is an excellent opening for our employee to sell membership!"

While we don't have as many chances as a tunnel wash to sell the membership program, we are always looking to find creative ways to sell EverWash memberships. In the detail area, for example, we have an employee prepping vehicles before they go in, giving us yet another sales opportunity."

Quantifiable Success and Future Growth

Craig is pleased to report that all of his hard work has helped the wash grow in the past few years: "Our wash membership growth has been 60% in the past 12-month period. We now stand at 600 members. And, revenues similarly have grown!

"But, I want to find new ways to grow and take full advantage of the membership program. I mentioned

Content is for portfolio use only. Not for reproduction
without expressed permission from Inertia and Client.

the new detailing part of our business, and I have an employee that preps vehicles before they go in. So, it was another opportunity to strike up a conversation with the customer and talk about membership.

"I'm still learning as I go, but I now can count on expert help, marketing ideas and tools, and overall support with EverWash. It has been a great partnership from the start. I can call up anybody, and I've been able to contact the owners from day one. My relationship manager, Dave Anderson, is an essential resource for me.

Over the past few years running Sudz Car Wash, I have had many opportunities to speak about the EverWash partnership. When I talk to other wash owners, the first thing I ask is, 'What have you got to lose? It doesn't cost you anything to get started!

"As country music singer Paul Overstreet said about the rodeo, "Some days it's a battle just to stay up in the saddle.' When it comes to a car wash, it's good to have a partner like EverWash to help me stay in the saddle!"