

Guiding Web Visitor Behavior

Having Effective Calls To Action On Your Site

If you have ever purchased something online, or signed up for an online newsletter or some free service, you did so as a result of your online behavior while you were browsing the site you were on, being guided to do so. You responded, most likely, to something like “Buy Now”, “Join Now”, “Sign Up”, “Learn More”, “Try It For Free”, “30-Day Free Trial”, “Subscribe”, “Join Today” or some similar phraseology. These are titled “Calls To Action”, or CTA’s. Any website, to be as effective as possible, must have a Call To Action because they work. You wouldn’t find the satisfaction you get from locating the product or service you seek if you had to work hard to figure out how to purchase it. For this reason, your body shop website needs an effective CTA on the home page, up front and center, easy to see.

The term “call to action” has been used in marketing since long before Al Gore invented the Internet. CTA’s have given the public instruction and guidance on the steps to take to fulfill their needs for as long as there has been an exchange of something of value for something else of value. That’s a long time. For body shops, however, after having analyzed thousands of collision repair websites over the past 12 years, I am surprised by the lack of effective CTA’s on a large portion of the sites I have looked at.

What is an effective CTA for a body shop? There are many you can consider having, and a couple are significantly more important than any of the others. Let’s take a look at some possible CTA’s that could, or should, be on a body shop website:

- Request An Estimate (most important)
- Get a Free Estimate
- Request/Schedule An Appointment
- Call Us
- Get Directions
- Find Us
- Contact Us (Second most important)
- Find A Location
- Text Us Now
- Get Started
- Learn More
- See What Others Are Saying
- See Our Certifications
- Leave A Review
- Our Community Outreach

This is by no means every CTA you might have, but the most important ones for sure. Your CTA’s should help guide your site visitor to do something you want them to do. Ultimately you want them to bring you their car, right? You want them to give you the keys, sign your authorization to repair form. So, you should make it as easy for them as possible to do just that. And while this is important for all age and

demographic groups, it is especially crucial for your younger audience that simply expects things to be easy... or else. Or else what? Or else they will lose patience and find what they need elsewhere. If someone leaves your site because they are frustrated by the lack of an effective CTA they likely will never come back.

On a website a CTA can be found on a button, a banner, a slider or some other graphic or text that captures the visitor's attention, catches their eye and entices them to follow through with an action, i.e. a click. We use what is called "heat mapping" to graphically see whether a call to action is actually doing the job of capturing attention and generating those all-important clicks. We move buttons and banners as necessary if things aren't generating the kind of results we'd like to see. We measure everything and can see the impact of moving things around within a month. We also put navigation buttons across the top in a left to right layout based on the importance of those buttons. Since we read left to right, we always put the most important CTA navigation button all the way to the left, followed by the next most important, and so on. As a result of this epiphany we had years ago, we have seen a 30% increase in clicks to our most important CTA buttons. That translates into cars to fix for our clients.

A quick word about the "Request An Estimate" button, what we consider to be the most important CTA of all. Clearly, whatever someone submits on a request an estimate form online won't enable us to give them an accurate estimate. That's not the point. The point is to gather their pertinent information and then have well-trained people, who are skilled over the phone, follow up and ultimately ask for the opportunity to take a look at the car in house and close the sale.

Check your own site. Do you have effective CTA's?