



ZENDER FORD ENGAGING THE COMMUNITY

At Zender Ford they're doing things different.

The local business has been under the Zender name in Spruce Grove since 1984.

Two years ago Ken Zender passed the torch to his son Chad and the business is still thriving in the tri-area, finding new and innovative ways to reach out to their customers and engage with them.

It's not just people in the community who notice, either; Twitter itself is taking a look at how the local business engages with other Twitter users in the area.

The social media giant is studying the way Zender uses Twitter through its @ZenderFord account to get a better idea of how businesses can thrive on their medium.

The Automotive News, one of the largest automotive publications in the world, took notice as well, publishing a story on their social media successes.

Ryan Holtz started at Zender Ford in December 2012. The dealership's marketing manager has spurred on their social media use to reach out to a wider audience.

"We just try to build value," said Holtz. "I call it five jabs and a right hook, which means you give five times more than you actually ask for.

"Out of 100 tweets, maybe 10 are sales focused. But the other 90 have nothing to do with the automotive industry, it's all about you."

To build off of that, Zender Ford purchased a marketing tool called a promoted tweet from Twitter. According to Twitter, this uses geo-targeting to ensure the company's target audience — Albertans in this case — sees the tweet.

As a result of this particular promoted tweet, Zender made three sales totalling \$57,000.

But while they've had success in the online community, it's the tri-area community as a whole — Parkland County, Stony Plain, and of course Spruce Grove — that helps foster an environment where that success is possible, and Zender Ford is making sure they give back in spades.

Having recently sponsored the Poker Run as part of the three-day Grove

Cruise, Zender Ford is trying to get its name out into the community the best way possible — by supporting community events and showing that they aren't just a business, they're members of the community themselves.

"You name it, we do various different things for the community," said Holtz, listing sponsoring sports teams and a program at the TransAlta Tri Leisure Centre among some of their community initiatives. "It shows that you're giving back, but once again we've taken it a step further than just writing a cheque.

"We definitely want to put a huge community drive and encourage other people to take part in different things."

And it doesn't stop there, Zender Ford is welcoming groups into their brand new showroom, hosting events for groups that may not have the space to do so or the money to rent a facility.

"We're just trying to do different things, i.e. opening up our showroom," said Holtz. "If you want to do our fundraiser event, feel free to use our showroom for it. We'll even help you promote it, if it's for a good cause, we would like to get behind it.

"The community supports the dealership, we wouldn't be here without them. We want to help them in whatever ventures they have too.

"If you've got a local event going on and you want to do a fundraiser or you want to do a business group meetup, our show room is free of charge for your to use. We'll move out the cars, it's fully ready to rock, we've got the MC system, whatever you need."

Spruce Grove Mayor Stuart Houston has taken notice, as well, saying that he's proud to have Zender Ford as part of the city's business community.

"It's always great to see businesses looking for new ways to communicate with their customers and I'd like to commend Zender Ford for their social-media based approach using Twitter to generate buzz about their dealership and, by extension, our community," said Houston.

