

Thoroughly modern marketing

The motor retail industry has accepted low conversion rates as the norm for too long, failing to better understand and act upon some of the root causes. However, forward-thinking dealer groups that are implementing well-planned and well-executed digital marketing campaigns recognise their ability to produce measurable change that helps to increase sales conversion and service retention.

In our 'always on' connected age, the ways in which businesses can interact with consumers are more numerous and more direct than ever, which means that car dealers have a wide range of options when it comes to their digital marketing. That said, while the possibilities for communication have broadened, dealers must be shrewd in selecting the right method for each prospect and circumstance.

In this respect, bespoke programmes that can better connect dealerships with their customers are essential.

Marketing Delivery adapts and automates these programmes to make use of the technology favoured by those customers – which means our contributions typically secure higher engagement rates as a result.

Our digital campaigns deliver a programmatic schedule of communications in the sales and aftersales cycles for our clients, without removing the element of personality from the dealership experience.

Hold the phone

Successful follow-up on new car sales, or prospecting for aftersales work, should not rely on staff making a high number of speculative phone calls. In fact, too heavy a focus on telemarketing could prove to be a hindrance to effective lead management.

Bespoke research commissioned by Marketing Delivery found significant variances in consumers'

preferences for communication, depending on the purpose of the message and which party was instigating the contact.

Email was by far the most favoured method of inbound communication (i.e. from a dealer) for consumers, both for car sales (47.6%) and aftersales (48.3%). Only 24.5% of respondents said they would prefer telephone contact regarding a new car purchase, and just 19.7% favoured receiving a call to discuss service and MOT work.

These numbers should not be that surprising to dealership staff – a customer will often ignore a phone call during their working day, instead preferring to respond to an email in their own time while relaxing at home.

The findings highlight not only the rationale for using email as the default method in these circumstances, but also the need to ensure an email address is on file for the customer in the first place. When we analysed more than 200,000 records held by dealerships across the country last year, we found that an email address was absent for an average of 16% of customers. This data deficit is undoubtedly a limiting factor in the efficacy of many dealers' outbound communications.

It is worth noting that despite consumers' clear preference for email when it comes to

receiving communications from dealers, the telephone becomes a much more popular choice when it comes to them instigating the contact. In these instances, there is usually a greater sense of urgency – for example, to get a service booked in for a particular date, or to chase information about a new car purchase – and so the immediacy of a phone is favoured.

Therefore, while a focus on email for outbound communications should prove more effective, dealer groups still benefit from well-trained contact centres to handle the inbound communication from customers in response.

A silent salesperson

One of the most common reasons for a lead not to progress to a purchase is that a dealer's stock doesn't match the

customer's desired specification. Therefore, making customers better aware of an evolving stock situation should be an essential pillar of your digital marketing. Fortunately, automating this process is relatively easy and very cost-effective to address, avoiding the need for proactive input from busy sales staff.

Subscribing prospects to tailored stock alerts – which are relevant to their specific enquiry – performs the function of a 'silent salesperson', helping dealers to recapture dormant leads that may otherwise go elsewhere. The return on investment can be significant, with the potential to add dozens of additional used car sales over even just a few months, at a cost-per-sale that is significantly lower than with other digital services.

Social work

When it comes to communicating with consumers, there are times when neither email nor telephone are the optimal approach. Instead, engaging with customers through paid-for campaigns on social media platforms can complement ongoing awareness-building activity and deliver tangible results for the business.

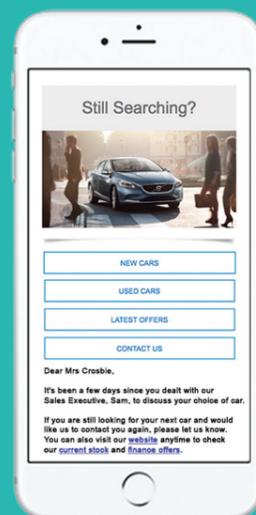
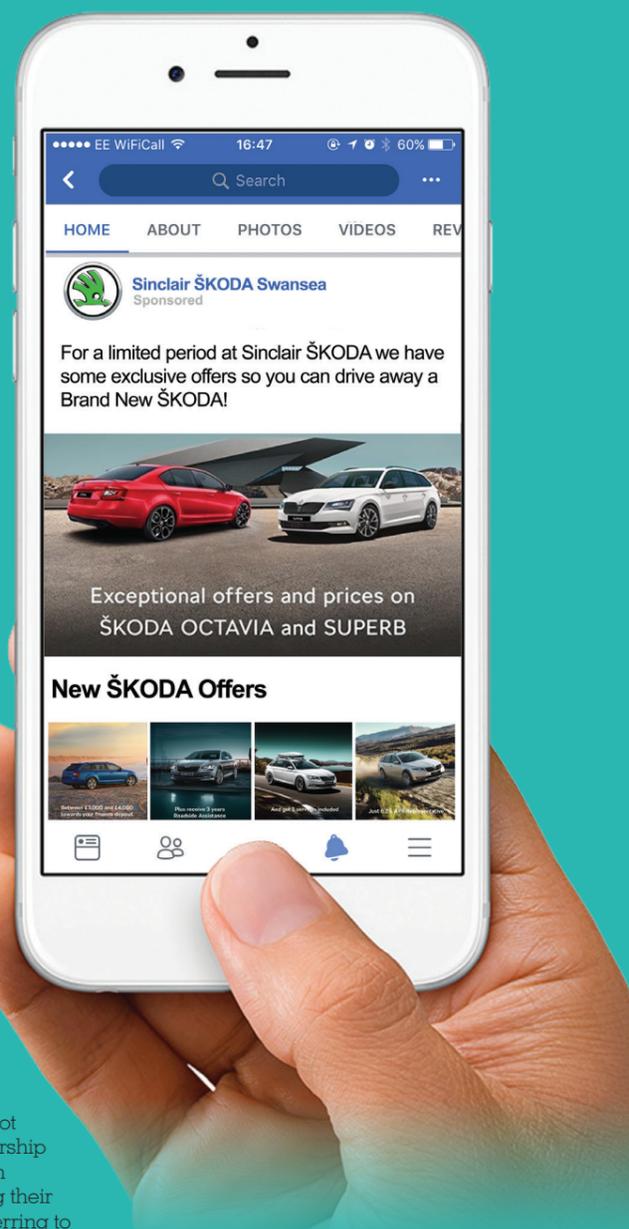
Data-driven marketing on social platforms

can prove to be remarkably fruitful, and no platform is as geared towards supporting marketing programmes as Facebook. In fact, there is no other initiative that can deliver highly qualified leads so cost-effectively or so rapidly.

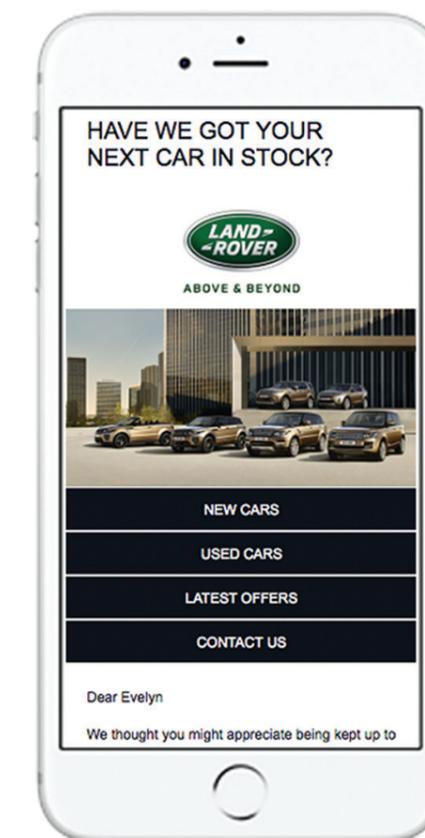
In recent years, Marketing Delivery has developed unrivalled expertise in supporting dealers to make the most of the opportunities provided by Facebook, which is now reflected by our status as an official Facebook Agency Partner – unique in the automotive sector.

Facebook's influence on new car purchases in particular can be seen in two key metrics. Firstly, the age group consuming the most automotive content is 45 to 54 – one of the most relevant age groups for franchised dealerships. Secondly, the highest consumption of automotive content happens on Thursday and Friday, with the lowest on Saturday, supporting the view that Facebook plays a key role as a research platform to prepare for weekend visits to see and test drive cars.

For dealer groups who invest in such programmes, cross-checked customer data enables adverts to be placed in front of known prospects on the social media platform, further increasing the likelihood



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of conversion and a boost in profitability. Going one step further, our LeadBox system places interactive lead generation adverts on social media platforms to reach an even wider audience of likely prospects and enable them to submit a pre-populated enquiry direct to the dealer.

Facebook advertising is proving to be the top source of paid-for traffic for numerous dealers, with up to three times the volume of visitors compared with traffic brought in via Google AdWords. Most of the traffic referred by our programmes is also of a higher quality than from other sources, because the prospects are further down the purchase funnel.

Contacting prospects and customers through their preferred communications channels, whether that is via email, a telephone call, or across a social media platform, is central to exploiting the value of a high-quality database – and ultimately to boosting conversion rates above the typical industry averages.

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DATA DRIVEN MARKETING