

# Taking pay-per-click ads to the next level

**W**ith the new car market continuing to drop year-to-date, many franchised dealers are attempting to shore up profitability and improve the effectiveness of their car sales.

They want to ensure every hot lead counts, and now Cox Automotive UK's digital marketing division, Modix, is providing a service to help put dealers' stock before in-market, relevant buyers at the right time and place.

Modix Adbox connects dealers with car buyers at a local level. It creates dynamic Google adverts based on a client's inventory, so that when a car buyer enters a make and model into Google search, Adbox serves these relevant adverts at the right time and place to reach that person.

"You're getting more relevant tracks to the page. You have a higher probability of creating leads off the back of that," said Julian McClung, head of product at Modix, which is a Google Premier Partner.

He said traditional pay-per-click (PPC) advertising doesn't provide such data-driven insights.

Adbox is an automated tool and will run once dealers have determined their monthly budget, the duration and radius of the campaign, and which stock they wish to include (from a single model to all their inventory). However, dealers only pay when their advert is clicked. And once a car has been sold, the system automatically stops serving adverts for that vehicle, reducing wastage.

Darren Sinclair, Modix UK's managing director, said: "It drives a really competitive cost per click, because you're providing hyper-relevant content. It's the localised nature that makes a difference."

Someone searching Google for a make and model, near a dealer who uses Adbox when the dealer has that model in stock, will see exactly what they are looking for, the volume of those in stock and the price range.

"The fact that we're using the dealer's live stock to deliver the vehicle adverts in an automated way is something we don't believe anyone else can do, certainly in the UK and



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**DARREN SINCLAIR, MODIX UK**

probably in Europe. Normally, whenever agencies are asked to create a make, model, derivative-specific PPC campaign for dealers, that is a very manual process. With automation, the cost to serve is reduced," said Sinclair.

McClung said the industry incurs a typical cost of about £4 per click depending on the keyword a campaign is competing for. With Modix's system, due to the relevancy of the search through Adbox, he said the average could be as low as £0.48-£0.90.

"Affordability is one of the key motivators for customers, and that's why we developed it," added McClung.

Sinclair said: "It enables our clients to spend more of their PPC budget directly with Google rather than through a third party. They're getting a higher return because the system works in an automated way."

McClung said he wants Adbox to become part of every stage of the car-buying journey, reaching customers in the information-

gathering stage, the consideration stage, and when they have decided which model they want. From next year, Modix wants to expand into more ways to reach car buyers, including display advertising and wholesale stock.

"Adbox will expand and become that true dealer advertising offering," said McClung.

Dealers who adopt Adbox benefit from data and insights, he said, as well as support from a team of account managers in the field, who conduct regular reviews of its effectiveness.

In the UK, almost 400 dealers are using Adbox. However, it has been in use by dealers and manufacturers in Germany, Spain, Portugal and Belgium for two years, and Sinclair described this as an ideal testing ground.

"When you look on a pan-European basis, the European markets outside the UK have been much more advanced in their PPC development. Here, we're behind the curve, probably driven by the dominant classified



players in the UK, because from the retailer perspective there has not been as much of a need to market their stock directly through their own resources. In Europe, that's not the case."

"There's an expectation of this product in the UK -- given the size of the UK market, and indications from Google -- that the UK industry is not on a par with spends across

the rest of Europe. That's something we'd like to change."

Once a consumer has come to a dealer's website, it is vital for the dealer to ensure their stock is depicted as attractively and professionally as possible, in order to pique their interest.

Since 2017, Modix has used a 360-degree imaging system, brought to the UK under licence from US technology firm Spincar.

The Modix 360 system allows a consumer to move the car and look at it from any angle, and to zoom in on any detail.

Sinclair said digital marketing is moving on from video, and will continue to do so as manufacturers and dealers retail online: "I think it's critical to how consumers get more confidence from a click-to-buy perspective. One of the key things to overcome for consumers is having the confidence that the car they are looking at online will look as good when they see it in the flesh."

Static images on a website are no longer

going to fulfil the need for the consumer, he said, adding: "It is about making a more engaging, interactive experience for the consumer, and that's why I believe something like 360 is going to be the solution that gives the consumer confidence."

Sinclair said dealers who have seen the system are impressed with the technology. Their challenge is how they get consistency of the 360 imagery, and Modix has been working with dealers to tackle this. It trains the operator responsible for imaging (often the sales manager or a valet) on using the mobile app, including its in-app guidance lines to ensure the best angles are taken, and offers a quality checking process before the images go live online.

Sinclair said the system uploads automatically to help make dealers more efficient -- data from Spincar in the US shows it can reduce the time the dealership takes to capture its images to between three and four minutes on average.