

# Don't let your customers hit a pothole

## How Marketing Delivery can make the customer journey more rewarding for everybody

Whatever part of the retail or service sectors you're in, you can't have helped but hear the term 'customer journey'. It's everywhere and we're all either on one, from when we go to the supermarket to do the weekly shop, or when we're hoping to engage with a customer to take them on a journey that results in them buying or servicing their car through us.

It used to be referred to as a 'contact cycle', but that was when life and customer communications were simpler.

Gone are the days when people would start their car buying process with a trawl through the local evening papers to look at the ads for their local dealers, visit a few showrooms, arrange a few test drives, scoop up as much literature as they could find, discuss it down the pub with their mates and then commit.

The customer journey nowadays can take the buyer, whether of a new or used vehicle or servicing, down many paths and if the dealer doesn't carefully maintain those paths, customers can hit a pothole and fall by the wayside.

This is where we at Marketing Delivery come in. We help dealerships stay in touch with their customers through using the communications channels that we all use on an everyday basis: email, mobile phone, SMS messaging, websites and social media.

### Building a solid foundation

We use the data held on dealership management, showroom and aftersales systems. This readily available data is rich in opportunities to take a customer on a journey, from issuing service reminders to lost sale follow-up. What we've

found over the years, however, is the amazing level of inaccuracies that can devalue a database over time.

Part of what we do is to assess and improve the quality of a dealership's data, which is the best place to start any customer journey. Our research shows that the ability to connect with a customer at the right time, in the right way, with the right message communicating the right information, pays handsome dividends.

It's a process that increases response levels, generates more engagement with the dealership, enhances sales levels and, so long as staff members deal with the customer in a professional and courteous manner when face-to-face, means they will become ambassadors for the dealership by recommending family and friends to use them, and using social media to share their opinions with the world at large.

A cleansed and up-dated database not only results in more effective communications, but also in a reduction in marketing spend because messages are more accurately targeted rather than being used in a more costly

'scattergun' approach, contributing to improved profitability.

### Creating a journey people will want to keep taking

Apart from a different glowing logo on the fascia, one car dealership looks pretty much like another nowadays, so how does a dealership differentiate itself from its competitors? Customer communications play a key part in giving a dealership its own distinct character and to do that effectively, those communications need to be regular and, above all, relevant.

Simply bombarding

## "Part of what we do is to assess and improve the quality of a dealership's data, the best place to start any customer journey"

people with weekly specials can not only reduce interaction but, worse still, make people switch off entirely.

With our experience in the automotive sector (many of us here at Marketing Delivery have worked in some capacity or other in the industry and automotive is all we do) our clients enjoy, on average, an open rate of 60% for emails sent out as part of a regular and relevant CRM programme, which is quite an improvement on the 20% opening rate for the retail sector in general.

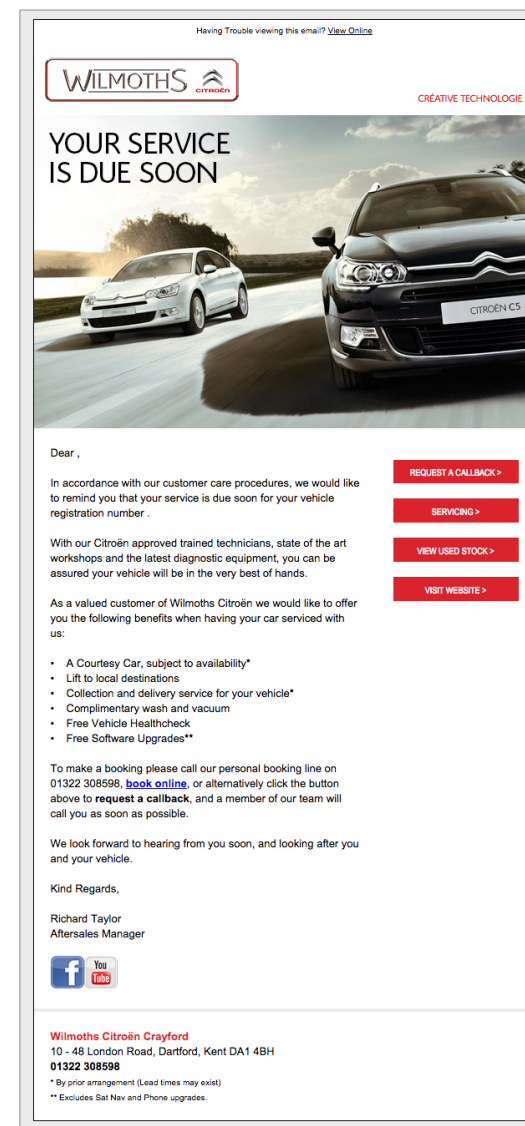
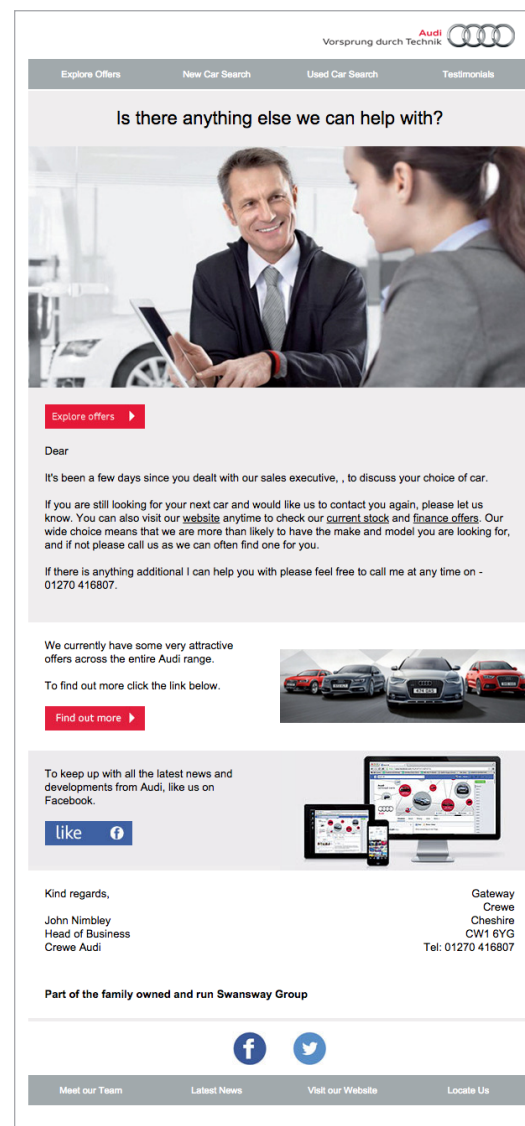
We never forget that the most important part of CRM is the 'C', the customer, and we always discuss with our clients how, when and what to communicate to their customers to ensure that nobody gets left behind on the journey.

### Conversation helps shorten the journey

Before we all went mobile and digital, the 'contact cycle' was virtually all outbound from the dealership until such time as the customer made a phone call or visited the showroom or service department. Today's customer journey, thanks to text messaging, apps and online booking systems, is built around letting customers have their say, but the peace of mind of being able to talk to somebody in the dealership is still a major factor in whether a customer chooses to continue on their journey.

We see the dealerships we work with using a mix of online and offline contacts in ratios that reflect their particular needs and situations.

With the 'immediacy' of modern



So what is happening to those 'hot' leads that aren't being converted in this initial four-day window? With an average of three to five new sales leads a week, it's not hard to work out that hard-pressed sales staff can only manage a pipeline of just so many leads before last week's unconverted prospects fall away – and are often left with no meaningful follow-up as attention is switched to the new leads.

To become a high-conversion dealership, we recommend that every sales enquiry is followed up with a mobile-friendly interactive message after 24 hours, 72 hours and 14 days to keep the potential new customer actively engaged – a practice that often achieves open rates of between 60% and 70%.

After 14 days, we auto-enrol enquiries that haven't resulted in a sale onto our 'Car Alerts' service that updates the customer when new stock arrives that matches their enquiry.

Every enquiry closed off as being a 'lost sale' triggers a customised message that opens the door to re-engaging at a later date.

### Let us help you on your journey

We work with dealerships of all shapes and sizes up and down the country and are thrilled to have won the 'Dealer Recommended' award for digital marketing. We are also more than a little pleased when somebody like Anna Ling of the Swansway Group says things like: "Your agency is one of the most efficient, commercially minded and genuinely nice I have ever had the pleasure of working with."

If you'd like to join us on a customer journey with a very satisfying ending, our website <http://marketingdelivery.co.uk> is a good place to start.

communications and the ability of the customer to book, respond and react almost instantly, it's vitally important for dealerships to ensure that they can deliver what the customer wants. Long lead times, a shortage of courtesy cars, delays in post-service vehicle collection, poorly trained staff manning the phones – these can all bring the journey to a very abrupt end.

If repeat business is the easiest way to maintain and improve the fortunes of a dealership, then bringing in new customers, while seemingly harder, is the most rewarding, as they can

then be added to the database for on-going, repeat aftersales business.

Our analysis of over 2,000 sales enquiries identifies that top-performing dealerships achieve an average sales conversion rate of 31.3%, significantly out-performing the industry average of 25.4%.

Our analysis also shows that 80% to 85% of incoming enquiries were closed within the first four days of a showroom visit.

**Marketing Delivery**

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