

Personal, relevant, timely – the new standard for customer contact

Frequent and irrelevant emails to customers can be more damaging to a dealer's reputation than no contact at all. It is something that everyone with an email address has suffered. Buy a new kitchen and, suddenly, the emails from kitchen suppliers begin to pour in. But it's too late, the message is irrelevant.

Jon Blythe, managing director at customer engagement agency Gecko, is familiar with the scenario and urges his clients, retailers and manufacturers alike, to eliminate the issue and set new standards in customer communications.

Blythe said: "I recently bought a Range Rover Sport from the local Jaguar Land Rover dealership. A couple of weeks after leaving the dealership with my new car, I started receiving emails about offers on the new Evoque. It was the last thing I wanted.

"Target customers with the wrong message at the wrong time and the response is always going to be the same. Zero.

"The worst thing is, once you have a positive and relevant message to share, the customer will probably have already gotten into the habit of diverting the material you send straight to their 'delete' folder.



"Target the right people with personalised messages and offers that you know will appeal to them and, chances are, your engagement levels will soar"

Alan Bateson, Volkswagen Group Ireland

"Poorly targeted communications don't hit the bull's-eye, it's as simple as that."

Gecko uses its expertise in data and campaign design to deliver manufacturer and dealer promotions via direct mail, email, smartphone messaging or social media.

Over the past 15 years, the business has had success with a number of manufacturers, one of

which saw an increase of 42% in its engagement levels. After a dealer group in the north put its promotional campaigns in the hands of Gecko's team of data analysts and designers, it saw an increase of 28% in aftersales bookings.

Blythe is in no doubt of the reason for the success: "It's simple. Our skill lies, first and foremost, in the way we process and interpret data.

"The first step in all of our relationships with clients is getting them to hand over all the customer data they have. That's what we work from. We're ISO 27001-accredited, so we're well equipped to handle customer data securely.

"The better [the] quality and more complete the data, the better the results, but we can refine what we have and use other sources and databases to build a picture of each customer and accurately target all communications in a really personal fashion.

"We have to mine data on location, customer ages, recent transactions, and the service intervals of their vehicle. It all builds a picture that means we can communicate with them in a relevant fashion."

Gecko's team of data analysts combines more than 500 demographic, geographic and lifestyle characteristics to create accurate customer profiles.

A Gecko personalised direct marketing campaign generated more than 100 test drives for VW Group Ireland at the National Ploughing Championships



They will also identify 'lookalike' customers, mapping where customers live to give a picture of potential targets for direct mail campaigns.

As well as its own technical and design specialists, Gecko owns its own printing facility, neighbouring its offices in Leeds, so it is equipped to deliver end-to-end campaigns in-house, keeping costs down and maximising efficiency.

Gecko recently won Alan Bateson, Volkswagen Commercial director at Volkswagen Group Ireland, as a client. It did not take long for Blythe and his team to convince him they could deliver on their promises of an end-to-end customer engagement process that delivers results.

Bateson said: "We started our relationship with Gecko five or six months ago and already it is a relationship which I see us carrying on for some time into the future. It's been a real success.

"Before we brought Gecko in, we had received a number of awards for our customer engagement, but we really wanted to move things forward a step, to keep evolving, and it was Gecko that stepped forward and said 'we can do that'.

"Gecko established a personalised direct marketing campaign for the launch of the Volkswagen Amarok V6 in Ireland, which surrounded the National Ploughing Championships, the biggest outdoor exhibition

in

Europe.

"Gecko were the first company that I've come across that made use of PURLs [personalised URLs] and that allowed us to send personal emails and direct customers to a specific site about the event – offering an off-road driving experience at the championships – rather than our own website.

"All customers were linked back to dealerships in their local areas too, which really maximised our chances of engagement."

Bateson said 50% of the 500 customers who responded to the campaign actively engaged with it and more than 100 took test drives at the ploughing championships as a result.

Volkswagen Group Ireland, which has a 24-dealer network and claims 41% sales growth in 2016, recently launched its "171" campaign with Gecko.

The promotional campaign will be delivered directly to about 14,000 customers.

Bateson said: "If our relationship with Gecko has shown us anything so far, it is that there is little substitute for a personal approach to direct marketing

for customers.

"Target the right people with personalised messages and offers that you know will appeal to them and, chances are, your engagement levels will soar."

Based on the success it has already achieved, Blythe said Gecko is preparing to grow.

A new website went live in November and the business is targeting new customers.

Blythe believes the business will grow even stronger in 2017 as retailers become more customer- and digital-savvy and see the advantages of reaching customers in their homes via post or, increasingly, a mobile device.

He said: "The last thing we want to do is compromise the personal service we are able to offer.

"We know our strength is that we can offer the full service, from technical expertise to design and print, but we do want to see growth.

"Hopefully, more and more retailers will begin taking advantage of the results our approach guarantees."



To find out more, call 01133 910 704, email hello@gecko.co.uk or visit us on twitter @geckoAgency