

## SUPPLIER SPOTLIGHT

In association with **heycar**

# heycar keeps its ears open and innovation high

**H**eycar believes the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic have provided an opportunity to demonstrate its commitment to supporting dealers and the success of its efforts to “do things differently”.

Underpinned by free car listings, heycar's offering has been constantly evolved and improved with the help of a collaborative “open ear” approach since its August 2019 UK launch, helping to grow its profile and that of dealer stock during a challenging 12 months for the sector.

From free car deliveries and fuel vouchers for car buyers, to major TV campaigns, the sponsorship of BT Sport's FA Cup coverage and the 2020 acquisition of consumer website Honest John, the business has worked hard to maximise its exposure.

As the sector prepares to re-open showroom doors with the easing of COVID-19 ‘Lockdown 3’ it is also demonstrating its

desire to inspire and reward staff on the showroom floor with its ‘Lift the Cup’ campaign – offering rewards for sales converted from heycar leads.

But Account Director Emma Rayner insists heycar's high-profile campaigns are just the tip of the iceberg in terms of the individually-tailored support offered to dealers.

“Our aim has always been to be an open ear, to operate differently to the sector's established players by really listening and acting on what dealers tell us,” says Rayner.

“Just like car buyers, we know car dealers don't want to be sold to any more. We want to hear everything our car dealer customers have to say – any suggestions they might have – so we can try to adapt, improve and provide a better service.”

Rayner tells *AM* the heycar team remains relatively “small”, in that its members work dynamically and cross-departmentally to be able to respond quickly to changing

environments. This ensures everyone can be involved in discussing new ideas and that new innovations can be implemented quickly.

She says: “There's no bureaucracy and we like to demonstrate that we act on the feedback we get to try to improve the platform.”

Newly-launched in March, the ‘Lift the Cup’ initiative sees car sales executives qualify for a range of potential rewards – ranging from JustEat vouchers and week-ends away to BT Sports passes and 80-inch televisions – when they convert a heycar lead into a sale.

The heycar team worked with WAA Chosen to roll-out the initiative – the latest in a ‘heycar Extra’ series of support for retailers – which Rayner sees as an opportunity to give something back to hard-working staff on car retail's shop floor.

She says: “We know how tough it's been over the past 12 months and many sales teams have been working to drive business with a much lower headcount and lots of other concerns to deal with outside work.”

“Lift the Cup is a great way to give some recognition and boost morale at a time when we're all excited about helping the market get back on its feet again.”

Rayner says Lift the Cup is just one example of a full schedule of car buyer and dealer-facing initiatives launched to bolster the sector throughout the pandemic and beyond.

And heycar believes its efforts have contributed to an industry-wide change in mindset which has helped transform a sector which sold fewer than 900 private

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new cars in the first full month of April lockdown into one in which dealers registered almost 38,000 new private cars during January.

As the shock caused by the first UK lockdown kicked in more than a year ago, the heycar team prepared blog content providing dealers with advice on how best prepare their online showroom, with tips on video, imagery and – eventually – the delivery of safe remote test drives.

New calls to action (CTA) were also introduced for customers to use when looking to buy. These include a ‘Register Interest’ option and a shift from a ‘Call Dealer’ function to ‘Request Callback’ aimed at allowing smaller showroom teams more time to respond to customer enquiries.

A partnership was also formed with SilverBullet in July last year, allowing car buyers to complete paperwork online ahead of a car purchase, back in July last year.

That development followed research from heycar which found that a third of its users had an expectation of being able to buy a vehicle from the comfort of their own home.

Upon showrooms reopening last summer, heycar also introduced a ‘Request Viewing’ CTA to help dealers manage footfall and maintain compliance with social distancing regulations.

Fast-forward to November and car buyers were given the opportunity to opt to collect

or have their vehicle delivered to their home as part of a free delivery offer on all 100,000 vehicles advertised on the heycar platform.

Rayner says: “Free home delivery was immensely popular with customers and dealers and became a really good closing tool at a time when some people were nervous about visiting a dealership.”

Another ‘heycar Extra’ that proved a hit with car retailers was an offer that allowed car buyers who acted on a lead generated through the platform to claim a pre-paid fuel card worth £50.

“Dealers told us that a car sale can often hinge on whether there's a tank of fuel thrown in, so we wanted to solve that problem,” says Rayner.

“We've really tried to keep on delivering initiatives to keep car buyers interested and help retailers in a different way and, I think, in some cases, it has helped them think about how they can trade slightly differently too.”

“Some of my AM100 dealer clients have been enquiring about how we facilitated the fuel cards as I think that's something they saw as a USP they could use more widely.”

Rayner says that, like many of her colleagues, she has also been able to help car retail clients respond to certain pinch points in the business on an individualised basis.

In tandem with the recent Lift the Cup



campaign, Rayner says the company has been keen to listen to dealers' challenges and has offered support through various unique and bespoke initiatives, including one related to lead response times.

An online presence has been many car retailers' only customer touchpoint over the past year, but heycar's exposure – accelerated by its FA Cup sponsorship and Honest John's 25m site visitors – helped generate continued enquiries.

And now more than ever, Rayner is part of a team determined to boost that momentum as the sector emerges from Lockdown 3.

She says: “Ultimately, it's our business to ensure that exposure and that market presence for our clients and that's always our key focus, but we always want to be known for going a step further, for offering that unexpected bit extra.”



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EMMA RAYNER