

'Lost lead'? Don't write off prospects so readily

Jeremy Evans, MD of Marketing Delivery, explains why more than a third of all 'lost' leads aren't lost at all – and how dealers can re-engage and convert them

Q What do you see as the biggest challenge for sales teams in 2019?

A After a challenging year for motor retailers, sales staff need to maximise the potential of every worthwhile lead that comes into the business. There is a degree of reticence among customers at the moment – exacerbated by Brexit-related uncertainties about the economy and doubts about diesel – and many are putting off decisions about whether or not to buy a new car. The challenge for dealers is keeping prospective customers engaged until they make that decision.

Q How can dealers spot real prospects and keep them interested?

A One of the most effective tactics dealers can employ to nurture a lead is contacting that customer with carefully timed reminders about the car they are interested in. A well judged follow-up email can make all the difference. We recently analysed data from Q4 2018 showing that 36% of customers marked as a 'lost lead' by sales staff are, in fact, still in the market for a vehicle. By keeping these customers engaged with relevant, timely information, businesses maximise their chance of closing a sale, rather than simply writing them off as a 'lost lead'.

The sheer volume of leads salespeople have to tackle nowadays is a challenge, with digital interaction making it much easier for consumers to generate an enquiry. No wonder some prospects fall through the cracks, particularly when their requirements can't quickly be met by the dealer. Automation makes sense to help process leads in an efficient manner, and to pull true prospects back into the pipeline if they drop out prematurely.

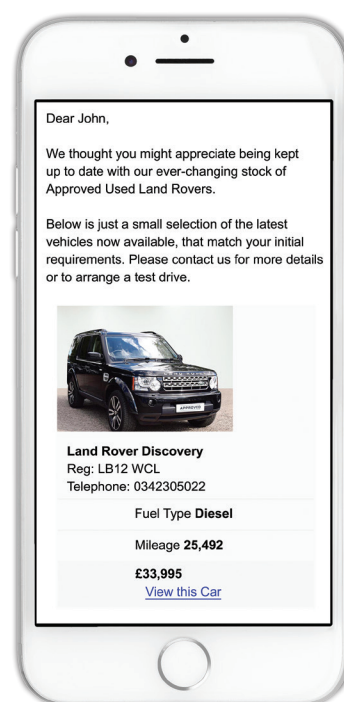
Q More than a third of customers are incorrectly classed as 'lost leads' – what can dealers do to address this?

A There are a number of reasons why a prospective customer may be qualified as 'lost', yet still be in the market for a car. Our research suggests that the most common reason is that the right car simply isn't available at the right price –

availability was cited by 39% of all 'lost leads', with 47% putting it down to affordability, such as monthly payments or a car's overall price. Drivers, particularly used car buyers, do more research than ever on what car or specification they ought to buy. If they contact a dealer and the specific car they want is not available, many businesses mark them as a 'lost lead' and move on. This is self-defeating, but all too common. Instead of abandoning the enquiry, there's a good chance the customer may still be interested if the right car becomes available or the price falls. Our 'Car Alerts' eCRM [electronic customer relationship management] tool helps dealers stay in touch with genuine would-be buyers.

Q How does the Car Alerts system work?

A Car Alerts was designed to keep undecided 'approved used car' customers engaged with a dealer, even if the car they want is not available. If an enquiry has not progressed to a sale after seven days, a customer can be auto-subscribed to receive a 'Car Alert' – an automated email that updates them



whenever new stock arrives matching their enquiry or existing stock drops in price.

When we piloted this system with a pair of Audi dealers in south Wales, one recorded 40 additional sales of approved used cars in the first three months, and the other achieved 46. More than 300 dealers across the UK now rely on Marketing Delivery Car Alerts to boost their used car operations.

Q Where do you see the greatest opportunities for dealers?

A While fewer new cars were sold in 2018, dealers and workshops have all the incentive they need to tap into the potential from their existing customer base. Our research highlights the importance of ongoing engagement with customers who have already purchased a car, particularly in the wake of GDPR. Getting a car into the workshop is a great excuse for dealers to update customer and vehicle details, and to ensure they

COMPANY PROFILE

Key products: Sales CRM, Car Alerts, Aftersales, Lost Sales, Social Media

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Marketing Delivery

DATA
DRIVEN
MARKETING



36% OF CUSTOMERS MARKED AS A 'LOST LEAD' BY SALES STAFF ARE, IN FACT, STILL IN THE MARKET FOR A VEHICLE

JEREMY EVANS, MARKETING DELIVERY

send vehicle owners the most appropriate, tailored marketing messages.

Aftersales should be a key focus for dealers, and service receptions can use eCRM tools to keep in touch with customers and generate 'leads' the same way sales departments do. Customers want to be interacted with like this, and it takes a significant administrative burden from a dealership that may otherwise fill workshop bays by making calls or – worse still – just waiting for business to come in.

Q How could dealers use eCRM tools to increase aftersales business?

A 60% of UK motorists say they are more likely to book a service or MOT with a dealership that reminds them at an appropriate time. Dealers get the best response from aftersales prospects with an email reminder about an MOT or service three to four weeks ahead of the due date. We can provide our dealer partners with a service retention report to track customer responses to aftersales marketing, helping service teams target their emails even more effectively.