

Blending old and new to boost ROI

Even in the innovative and fiercely competitive franchised dealership sector, Call It Automotive has an unusual business model. Some of its rivals focus solely on using 'big data' via multi-channel platforms. Others choose to simply offer basic contact centre services.

However, Call It Automotive says it is happy to span the widest range of options, according to the needs and strategic desires of its manufacturing and dealership clients.

As the former group includes Alfa Romeo, Fiat, Ford, Jeep, Lexus, Peugeot, Renault and Suzuki, and the latter includes 150 of the UK's top 250 dealers, it would appear that its model is delivering tangible results.

"When we established the business in 2010, we took time to identify and recruit individuals with the expertise and the mindset to deliver new sophisticated solutions, but also to see the benefit of existing and proven solutions, and that remains our philosophy," said managing director Nick Reisinger.

"We do stand out in this marketplace, because we have years of experience in both marketing and information and communications technology, and because we realise you can only succeed if your business model is client-led."

Reisinger said he regards the divide some observers see between contact centres and multi-channel platforms driven by big data as artificial.

"Success is all about contacting the right person, at the right time, to buy the right product, but the means by which that is achieved is entirely up to each client's requirements; whether that is right across a major manufacturer's network, as

we do for Škoda, or for a small family-owned local dealership."

He said the business model depends on certain values: "To deliver excellent standards of service, underpinned by integrity, strategic vision and accountability".

"At the operational level, we focus intently on creating solutions which are innovative and scalable, and based on best practice, but recognise that the ideal solution is often a blend of the tried, the tested and the very new."

Reisinger said Call It Automotive prides itself on integrating seamlessly with a client's processes and business culture, so that it becomes almost an extension of their team.

"Above all else though, everything we do, whether for the largest manufacturer or the smallest dealer, is designed to deliver bottom-line returns. The size of your business doesn't matter, but achieving ROI levels which are both acceptable – and measurable – certainly does."

Although he is keen to emphasise the flexibility his business offers, most of Reisinger's customers do choose a multi-channel solution driven by big data. He is enthusiastic about the benefits of such an approach.

"We acquire all sorts of data, we mine it to extract what is relevant for a particular client, and then we carefully align it with their strategy, and in line with their key performance indicators. Then we make contact via the phone, SMS, text, emails, or whatever route has been agreed," he said.

"The nature of the contact could be as simple as a reminder about an MOT or an aftersales service, or it could be about a

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customer's finance package which is coming to an end."

Call It Automotive can manage outbound calls or inbound calls, but online methods are growing in importance, believes Reisinger.

"Live chat is an increasingly popular option. Many consumers will do their research before visiting a showroom, and so have to be reached via different channels.

"We understand entirely why many clients wish to let us handle their live chat calls, as they typically last around 15 minutes, and can take as much as 30 minutes, so it would be very demanding.

"Dealerships are usually very traditional businesses in the way they operate and are resourced, and can't handle the unpredictable workload created by customers who have embraced digital technology."

However, he said dealers do recognise the need for these services, and very quickly realise that contact such as live chat sessions can provide a very high percentage of qualified leads.

"Typically, around 50% of all live chats generate a call to action for dealers, so for

us that is a massive and very fast-growing channel. Surprisingly, it's still very under-utilised by manufacturers, although I would expect manufacturers who are innovative to break ranks soon, and really see the value of live chat."

The nature of Call It Automotive's client relationships varies according to their different business models.

At the simplest level, it can bring the complexities of data management systems and multi-channel communication together to make life easier for its clients, said Reisinger.

However, he added: "Some dealers want us to integrate their entire CRM system into a new model, taking in every aspect of big

data, and using the full range of multi-channel contact options. Others might just want us to operate their aftersales servicing needs, or handle their marketing requirements.

"We have a very strong research focus, so we can constantly improve our service levels, but we also help dealers to increase the efficiency of their in-house services. For example, our quality control team vets 5% of all inbound calls to dealers, then debriefs the management team.

"A dealer might ask us to provide a 'good' example of a response and a 'bad' example, so they can establish benchmarks for quality, and we also provide structural coaching for staff so they get the style and

content just right for a particular marque."

The company has been engaged by vehicle manufacturers too. Its client base includes Toyota and Lexus, Renault and Ford. Reisinger said these activities aim to ensure a manufacturer's people are having conversations, with customers and prospective carbuyers over the phone and across digital technology, that reflect its own brand values.

"You can have the most sophisticated and comprehensive CRM strategy available, but unless your staff are trained to use the correct words, and offer the best options to each customer, you may well not see the ROI figures which you were expecting," he said.

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