



Manage your online reputation

Automotive retailers have long understood that their success is massively dependent on how customers talk about them and their buying experience – which is why they carry out extensive CSI customer satisfaction surveys. But how many of them tap into the immense, and free, amount of customer feedback that exists online?

Anthony Gaskell, the managing director EMEA of Reputation.com, refers to this digital network of customer voices as “the Feedback Economy” and believes it is vital that dealers listen to them.

“Feedback from other consumers is valued as much as a personal recommendation from family and friends. People are searching online for the opinions and experiences of consumers before they decide to buy a product or use a service,” he said.

Gaskell said the market has moved beyond in-dealership customer

comments and CSI surveys, and believes dealers need “to think bigger”. “You can’t just think about direct feedback or surveys any more. You’ve got to see the bigger picture and aim to look as good as possible online, across all of the channels where someone can come across your brand when doing a search,” he said.

Reputation.com’s platform monitors and analyses all of this activity and assigns a Reputation Score based in part on the sentiments customers and potential customers have expressed.

“Think about everywhere a person can interact with your brand online – online reviews, business listings, maps information, social media accounts, Google My Business profiles, contact information, etc. Now think about what they’re going to find. Will it be an active, accurate and positive search result, or the opposite?” asked Gaskell.

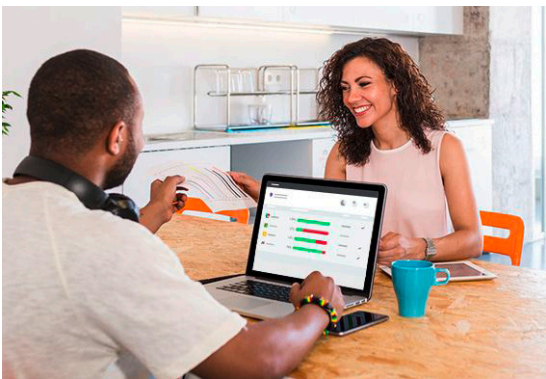
But the range of search avenues



available to customers may be bigger than dealers realise, and new channels are emerging all the time.

“People don’t go to just one source. They look at social media, online reviews and more. Social media is evolving every time a new generation comes in. New platforms are being used by younger buyers, but previous ones are still in play and important to remain engaged with. Facebook is still an important channel, as is Twitter, but Instagram is growing fast for businesses, so they should learn how to benefit from it.”

That spread of channels can make it difficult for dealers to get an accurate reading of how they appear online to customers, a challenge that Reputation.com believes is compounded for businesses, such as



“WITH HIGH-VALUE PURCHASES SUCH AS CARS, CUSTOMERS WILL DO THEIR HOMEWORK – IN TODAY’S WORLD THAT MEANS ONLINE RESEARCH”

ANTHONY GASKELL

car dealers, that operate across many locations and offer ‘high ticket’ purchases.

As a global authority on online reputation management (ORM) since it founded the industry in 2006, Reputation.com taps into its Silicon Valley origins to meet that challenge, said Gaskell.

“The platform uses both artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning to analyse customer sentiment over millions of points of data. Sentiment is broken down per category, so dealer groups can visualise what’s working and what’s not. AI provides a clear analysis of the business’s strengths and weaknesses.”

While Reputation.com’s Customer Success Managers meet with clients as needed, Gaskell said the platform is also heavily automated: “Our software-as-a-service (SaaS) platform can deliver auto-scheduled, pre-built and fully customised reports. The platform also updates in real time, so customers always see real-time data. We also offer a mobile app, which is

continuously developed – to the point where you can manage your entire online reputation in the palm of your hand.”

The Feedback Economy also affects how high a motor retail business appears in local search results, he said, as many dealers do not realise that third-party review sites will rank high in Google and often be above their own websites.

“Dealerships need their business listings and directories 100% accurate and up-to-date. The Feedback Economy is all about making sure a brand looks positive across all sources that a person can look for it online, and asking for user-generated content such as reviews and starting conversations on social media, so brands and dealerships rank higher online against their competition.”

He believes the automotive industry is particularly affected by the Feedback Economy.

“With high-value purchases, such as cars, customers will do their homework – in today’s world, that means online research. The influence of a good reputation from positive reviews to community management on social media is definitely part of dealers’ priorities and many are already seeing the benefits of this form of marketing,” said Gaskell.

He cited one ‘Big Three’ carmaker in the US who directly attributed additional profits of \$31 million across the group to using the Reputation.com platform to manage its online reputation.

Gaskell added that a Reputation.com study found that dealers that improve their Reputation Score see a 6% increase in sales, and that a separate study by the Harvard Business Review found that a one-star improvement in a business’s review rating can bring a sales uplift of up to 9%. “This works both ways, a negative reputation will bring sales down,” he said.

Reputation.com’s 500 employees work with car manufacturers such as BMW, Hyundai, Kia and Toyota in Europe, as well as with more than 17,000 dealership locations worldwide. In the UK, its partners include Arnold Clark, Inchcape, JCT600, Lookers, Perrys and Robins & Day.

Harry Pennington, head of marketing at Robins & Day, said: “You need to focus on the way your business looks online. It’s so important

KEY CONTACTS



Anthony Gaskell
Managing Director – EMEA
Tel: 07802 723 433
agaskell@reputation.co.uk



Gary Banks
Enterprise Sales Manager
Tel: 07715 416 337
gbanks@reputation.co.uk



Scott Campbell-Quinn
Enterprise Sales Manager
Tel: 07714 259 209
scampbell-quinn@reputation.co.uk



Phil Capper
Enterprise Sales Manager
Tel: 07759 535 349
pcapper@reputation.co.uk



Peter Cain
Enterprise Customer Success Manager
Tel: 0800 066 4781
pcain@reputation.co.uk



for retaining customers and for getting that conquest business.

“Reputation.com gives us a lot of reporting, a lot of insight into our business. It’s not just about a star rating, it’s actually what the customer is saying in that review and which sales advisor they mention in that review. It’s pretty impressive.

“You can also drill down by dealership. If you have a certain dealership that isn’t performing as well as it should, you can use the Reputation.com platform to drill down and work out why that is.”

Because the platform uses a SaaS model, costs are minimised, said Gaskell.

“The cost is based on a range of factors, including what level of functions is taken, number of locations, contract length, etc. The platform itself is modular, meaning brands can pick and choose the exact functionality they need, so you never pay for features you don’t need.”

Reputation.com said the single-dashboard system also increases dealer efficiency by reducing the time and resources needed to manage their footprint in the Feedback Economy.

Gaskell said: “The right software platform drastically reduces the level of employee hours you need to properly manage your online reputation, regardless of the size of your business. Other aspects, including machine learning, AI and automated workflows, help businesses to deal professionally with negative responses, but people training and buy-in is instrumental.

“It’s about changing the mindset and giving visibility to everyone in the business. This doesn’t mean every employee would have more work or become a specialist, it is about turning it into a part of their daily role.”

For more information, reputation.com :: contact-uk@reputation.com :: 0800 066 4781