



## Sophisticated e-Newsletters Create Interest, Detect and Qualify Buy Signals

Smiles, discussions of terms, holding hands with the spouse, etc., are buy signals sales people pick up on as customers progress toward buying. A customer walking into your showroom is the ultimate buy signal. What if you could determine if your customers are sending you buy signals before they ever set foot on your showroom floor?

Well-written e-newsletters are powerful customer retention tools, keeping dealerships top of mind between showroom visits. They deliver even greater value by driving customer interest in new products and promotions and then helping dealers to detect and act upon buy signals arising from the customer's interaction with the e-newsletter.

### *Content creates interest and action*

E-newsletters are marketing tools that help you create and then elevate customer interest levels. The first step is to add content that pushes customers and prospects to take action.

For example, you can run factory or dealership offers to help convert shoppers into more of a buying mode. Certain time-driven offers can boost interest even more by creating a higher level of urgency. Good examples are limited-time financing promotions or early lease termination. When a reader engages with this content, he or she is in effect sending a buy signal. The next step is to capture, measure, and act upon it.

### *Detecting buy signals*

The right content is necessary for creating and elevating interest, and it becomes more valuable when you can tell which readers are engaged and what is their level of interest.

There is e-newsletter tracking available that shows how recipients interact with articles and offers. It can tell whether or not a recipient reads an article and how far he or she drills down into it. It can also tell you if a customer reviews a promotional offer once or multiple times. Taking it to the next level, you can embed a "shadow form" (an offer-specific inquiry

form between the e-newsletter and your dealership's Web site) at the end of an article, in a promotional offer or both. When the reader clicks on it, the form pops up and provides an opportunity to request more information about the topic or offer. E-newsletter services can track this behavior and provide a detailed lead report showing you who in your subscriber base is ready for a response from your sales team or business development center.

### *Qualifying the level of interest*

Not only does content tracking monitor who is interested, it helps dealers qualify and prioritize prospects by the level of buy signal. If a recipient reads the first few paragraphs of an article but doesn't click through to the more detailed information on a jump page, then he or she may be only mildly interested and not really sending a buy signal.

However, if a customer or prospect reads an entire article, perhaps more than once, or clicks through to a related promotional offer, then he or she is sending a real buy signal.

Recipients who read articles or promotions then click through to your Web site or fill out a shadow form, are sending very strong buy signals and qualify as hot prospects.

Content tracking functionality not only enables you to detect these different levels of buy signals, it does so on a recipient-by-recipient basis. Some e-newsletter solutions provide e-mail addresses mapped to a specific individual's interaction with content as part of a sales lead report. This makes the tracking information easily and instantly actionable.

### *Respond immediately*

It's important to have a systematic approach to following up on buy signals generated by content tracking reports. Identify who on the sales force or marketing team owns the responsibility and require immediate follow-up. A prospect who is clicking around your e-newsletter and Web site for information can easily click to competitors' sites, too. Keep them interested in what your dealership has to offer.

Recipients who fill out a shadow form when they click through a promotion, intend for

you to contact them. If they provide you with a phone number, then you already know what to do. If they don't, respond right away with an e-mail that compels them to make a showroom appointment before a promotion expires.

### *Assessing e-newsletter solutions*

There are in-house software products, turnkey e-newsletter services and ways to integrate e-newsletter services with your Web site, CRM and DMS systems. The key is to make sure that the information captured by the tracking is as actionable as possible. Reports should be automatically generated and easily interpreted. Ideally, individual viewing behaviors should be mapped to corresponding e-mail addresses.

### *Gain advance knowledge of customer preferences*

Continuously fine-tune your e-newsletter, with buy signal capabilities, to deliver more valuable feedback. Your customers walk into the showroom having done extensive research on their vehicle purchase, your dealership and perhaps even your inventory. E-newsletter buy signal reports give you advance knowledge about your customers.

Example: You have several 30-year-old customers who have previously purchased coupes or sedans. Content tracking shows they recently spent a lot of time reading an article on mini-vans for growing families. Now you have the advantage. You can anticipate their needs and send an e-mail promoting a mini-van offer just for new parents — perhaps you offer a car seat to customers who respond within a certain timeframe. You're now in a position to have a trade-in, upsell and financing strategy mapped out by the time the customer comes in.

Information is power, in this case, selling power. And you get this selling power by extracting the most value out of your e-newsletter — driving interest, detecting buy signals, and then following up with an offer your customer can't refuse.

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