

Automotive Outreach Blueprint

How to turn your data into happier customers,
more service appointments, and more sales leads.

Presented by Interactive Marketing



Thanks For Picking Up The Automotive Outreach Blueprint

As the experts in automotive outreach, we at Interactive Marketing have spent more than two decades providing outsourced call services to car dealerships.

In that time, our call-makers have dialled hundreds of thousands of numbers and spoken to an almost endless stream of customers, helping to book in sales and servicing appointments for car dealerships across the UK.

That's a lot of calls. And from those calls, we've gathered a lot of insight.

In this, our Automotive Outreach Blueprint, we share everything that we have learned about what makes the perfect car dealership outreach call campaign.

Whether you're looking to book more servicing appointments, secure additional sales, or just reach your customers to gather feedback, this guide is a must-read for you and your team.

Over the next nine steps, our automotive outreach experts have outlined everything you need to consider when planning your dealership's outbound call activity.

We hope you find value from this resource and welcome any questions you may have.

To your future success,

EMHarding

Liz Harding
Operations Director – Interactive Marketing

1. Your Outreach is Only As Good As Your Data

“Data is king.” You’ve probably heard that phrase bandied about by marketing gurus trying to convince you to use Facebook Ads, or by an overly keen salesperson selling you a new CRM system.

But have you ever considered all of the data your dealership is sitting on?

Every customer who buys a car from you brings with them data. And every time that same customer comes into your dealership, be it for a servicing appointment or to discuss their future purchasing options, they’re leaving a trail of even more data.

The data a customer leaves, when used correctly, can be one of the most powerful and valuable assets your dealership has.

But not all data is created equally. That’s where data cleansing comes in.

Some customers in your database will be good for years to come. They’ll be loyal to your dealership, stick with a brand you supply and will remain living in an area local to you.

Others may have purchased elsewhere since buying from you, may have moved to another part of the country or may just no longer wish to engage.

We recommend cleansing all data by way of an outreach phone call after a certain period of time to unlock a number of benefits.

Primarily, data cleansing allows you to remove bad data from your customer database.

Inside of your database right now, there are customers who are never going to be returning to the market for varying reasons. Keeping these customers in your database will lead to wasted time and resources each time they are contacted by your dealership, meaning removing them at the earliest possible opportunity makes business sense.

Additionally, each data cleansing phone call gives your dealership a fresh chance to speak with your customer and explore any opportunities they currently present.

When a customer picks up the phone and speaks to your dealership as part of a cleansing call, the chances of them igniting a conversation and sending revenue in the direction of your sales or after sales team increase.

For these two reasons, good data should be a prerequisite of any automotive outreach campaign.

Now that you've considered the data you'll be using to make calls, it's time to consider the best way to approach phone conversations with your customers. Keep reading, as in the next section we explain why you should do away with your telephone scripts and let natural conversation do the talking.

2. Natural Conversations Trump Restrictive Scripts

When David Walliams recorded his famous “Computer Says No” sketch for the television series Little Britain back in 2003, little did he know just how big of a shared cultural frustration he would be tapping into, even all of these years later.

Since then, the term “Computer Says No” has become synonymous with sales and support calls that are firmly restricted by processes, systems and scripts.

Because for many companies, when direct face-to-face human contact is taken out of the equation, communication becomes impersonal and robotic.

And what is one of the biggest causes of these painful interactions? Scripts.

Now – there’s a big difference between having no script and going into any kind of phone call blind.

We’re not recommending the second one.

But often, a restrictive and unnatural feeling script is not only a turn-off for your customers, but it can actually stop your dealership from getting the most out of a call.

If your call script is laser-focused at just one outcome, your call-makers could miss other obvious money-making opportunities directly under their noses.

That’s why we recommend that you ditch the script when making your outreach calls.

Calls should be unscripted, but planned.

Your call-makers should know the eventual ideal outcome of any given call before they dial a number, but without a script in front of them, they're free to take the phone call wherever it needs to go.

Does the customer you're phoning about a servicing appointment have their eye on a new model?

Has something gone wrong with the customer's vehicle since the sale that they haven't reported?

Are there any other opportunities that may be of interest to your dealership?

Without a script, these and an indefinite number of other talking points can arise, all within the wide-open confines of a natural and comfortable conversation.

And that's why we recommend you say 'no' to the 'Computer Says No' outreach call approach.

Now that we've covered what to say in your calls, it's time to consider the best time of day to reach your customers. Keep reading, as in the next section, we'll cover how you can increase your strike rate with out-of-hours calls to your customers.

3. Increase Your Strike Rate with Out-Of-Hours Calls

Teachers, nurses, office workers, shop assistants, train conductors; these are just some of the thousands of potential job positions held by the customers in your database. These are also all job positions which make it very difficult to pick up the phone during typical 9-to-5 office hours.

That's why it should come as no surprise to you that when an outreach call campaign includes calls made outside of these hours – up until 8pm – the success rate climbs noticeably.

Even with the best data, the best call-makers and the best messaging in the world, your outreach activity is pointless if your customers don't answer their phones.

That's why we recommend trying to reach your customers outside of office hours.

This point is fairly self-explanatory and yet it's a point often overlooked by dealerships both big and small.

If you attempt to reach a customer during working hours but don't get an answer, add a note in your CRM to try and contact the customer again, between the hours of 5pm and 8pm.

Some customers will be unreachable irrespective of the time of day.

But other customers – perhaps more than you might expect – will miss your calls during the day, but then be more than willing to hear you out during the early evening hours.

If you're struggling to make your outreach activity work, try calling when your customers aren't at work.

Now that we've covered when to make your calls, keep reading, as it's time to consider an important principle of all telemarketing activity; to listen more than you talk.

4. Listen More Than You Talk

Your customers didn't ask for you to call them. But that doesn't mean that they don't have things on their mind. You shouldn't consider your outreach calls as one-way traffic; once you listen to your customers, you'll discover all kinds of revenue and customer experience opportunities that are hiding in plain sight.

When the phone connects and you're speaking to a customer, it's tempting to plough through the sales message and reach the conclusion of the call as quickly as possible. After all, that's the whole point of outreach calls... isn't it?

We think otherwise.

Whilst it's correct to suggest that outreach calls should be done efficiently, to reach as many of your customers as possible, this efficiency shouldn't come at the cost of failing to have real conversations with every customer you speak to.

And real conversations are about both speaking and listening.

That's why we suggest making a conscious effort to listen more than you speak in your outreach calls, even if the customer seems to be taking the conversation down an entirely unrelated avenue.

This relates to many of the things covered in point 2, but we think it's worthy of its own point of focus, as efficient isn't the same thing as effective.

But many dealerships fall into the trap of performance managing calls at a break-neck speed, causing opportunities and pain-points to go undetected.

Now you're hearing the needs of your customers, even if they fall outside of the initial reason for your call. Keep reading, as next we'll explain why this approach makes it more important than ever for you to be ready for anything on your outreach calls.

5. Be Ready For Anything

Customers are unpredictable. It's impossible to second guess what might be on an individual's mind when they answer your phone call. And a quick call about a service being due can quickly morph into something else entirely.

That's exactly why it's important to be able to sign-post your customers in the direction of any product or service your dealership offers... even the ones far removed from the reason for your initial call.

In the minds of your customers, whatever the job position of somebody calling from your dealership, they are their current point of contact for your entire brand. And, as customers often do, many will have questions relating to new vehicles, finance options, additional services, and so on.

For that reason, the person making your outreach calls should be willing and able to communicate with every department inside of your dealership with ease.

Your call-makers can often feel like they run a switchboard into your dealership.

From passing on details of a new lead to the sales department to offering after sales support advice to a customer looking to resolve an issue, outbound call makers generate lots of off-topic tasks and opportunities which require the attention of others inside of your dealership.

Having good systems in place to ensure that every off-topic eventuality can be handled quickly and effectively holds benefits for both your dealership and your customers.

And so that's the body of your outreach calls covered. But keep reading, as there are a number of things to consider when ending your calls, including confirming what was discussed before disconnecting the line.

6. Give Confirmation at the End of the Call

There's only one thing all connected outreach calls have in common; they all come to some kind of conclusion. Whatever the outcome, your customers will appreciate it if your call-makers are in the habit of summarising the call before disconnecting.

"I have booked your servicing appointment for next Tuesday, 12th June at 4pm. We'll see you then" not only offers clarity to a customer at the end of an outreach call, but it acts as a call to action for the date and time of an appointment to be added to a calendar or diary.

There are a number of benefits to this kind of 'what was agreed' confirmation at the end of calls.

As well as improving the overall experience for your customers, removing any doubt in their mind about what has just been agreed, end-of-call confirmation also makes it less likely that you're wasting your time booking in no-shows.

Research shows that the leading cause of missed appointments is a customer forgetting the date and time of their booking. An end of call confirmation helps to reduce the risk of this happening.

Missed appointments cost your dealership money and reduce the efficiency of your staff.

Did the customer book an appointment? Was another service of more interest to them during the call? Were you given the cold shoulder after just a few seconds? Regardless, keep reading, as the next point will discuss why it's important to say 'Thank You' to every customer you speak with, regardless of the outcome.

7. End With a 'Thank You' – Regardless of the Outcome

Some outreach phone calls end with the exact outcome you were aiming for, with appointments booked, revenue secured and customers welcomed back into your dealership once more. Others don't. But whatever the outcome, one thing remains true; by answering your call, every one of your customers has given you part of their finite time and attention.

This point is as fast to explain as it is to implement.

At the end of every single connected outreach call – no matter the outcome, no matter the mood of the customer, no matter what was discussed – ensure that you end with a 'thank you'.

When you capture the attention of any given customer, and in doing so, take up some of their time, the burden is on your dealership to rightfully show gratitude.

In the minds of many of your customers, the brand of your dealership will be reflected by their most recent interaction, whatever that was.

Consistently saying 'thank you' to every customer before the end of a call helps to control the perception of your dealership and ensures that every interaction ends on a polite and positive note.

And so that's the end of the call. But outreach doesn't end there. Keep reading, as we'll be revealing what you should do immediately after every single outreach call.

8. Keep Accurate Notes of Every Interaction

One of the key points raised in this Automotive Outreach Blueprint is the fact that no two calls are the same. With dozens of variables at play every time you pick up the phone and speak with a customer, almost nothing can be predicted.

Looking at this point another way, it's a huge challenge to recall the points covered in just a fraction of the outreach calls your dealership will make in the next twelve months.

Some customers will want follow-ups, others will suggest that they may be back in the market in the near future, and others might ask not to receive certain marketing and sales communications.

Regardless of the scenario, it's vital that your call-makers keep detailed and accurate notes of every call they make.

Not only does this ensure that your customers are getting the level of service they expect (think follow-up calls on the dates they request them), but it will also allow anybody within your dealership to make future calls with the benefit of a full context of all previous conversations.

Even though they take place after the call itself, detailed note making is one of the most important areas of outbound calls, even when a customer doesn't book an appointment.

Everything covered? Almost. Keep reading, as in the final point, we explain why a culture of continuous learning in your dealership will benefit your customers, your employees, and your bottom line.

9. Create a Culture of Continuous Learning

What's the formula for a successful outbound call? The previous eight points in this guide? Yes. But there's always more that can be done. Just like with all other forms of sales, marketing and communications, a culture of continuous learning and refinement is the key to your best results ever.

Outreach calls can be tough. Busy customers and unexpected calls can often lead to frustrating days spent dialling numbers and getting nowhere. But it doesn't need to be that way.

As a final recommendation, we suggest creating a culture of curiosity and learning inside of your dealership, with every call-maker openly sharing stories of their successes and failures.

Although it's uncomfortable to talk about calls that go wrong – the ones where you've reached a customer at the completely wrong time of day, the ones where you're bluntly told not to call again, and the ones where you're hung up on – these calls are rare. And that's why they're so important.

Discussing the characteristics of unsuccessful calls frequently with anybody in your dealership who makes outreach calls is the best way to make them even less likely to happen.

The same applies to your very best calls.

Did a recent call end with an unexpected positive outcome? Did one of your call-makers say something which opened up a new line of conversation with a customer?

All of these things should be noted, discussed and tested, to ensure that the efficiency and the effectiveness of your outreach calls is forever improving.

Outbound calls are a great way to keep in touch with your customers and give them timely information and reminders about their vehicle. They're also one of the most powerful tools your dealership has to increase your overall revenue. Interactive Marketing are the experts in all things automotive outreach. Keep reading, as in the final section, you'll learn more about Interactive Marketing and how we can help your dealership book more appointments than ever before.

We're Interactive Marketing

With over 20 years of experience, we help automotive dealerships talk to more customers, book more service appointments, and create more sales leads.

Interactive Marketing was founded to provide the motor industry with much-needed solutions to some of the most pressing customer contact challenges. Since then, we've worked with many of the best-known dealerships in the UK, conducting hundreds of thousands of phone calls and booked countless appointments on behalf of our clients.

Our four core services, outbound calls, inbound calls, one-off campaigns and live chat management, not only increase appointment bookings but also help to deliver your customers with timely service reminders and solutions to their problems.

We provide our services to dealerships offering vehicles from manufacturers including JLR, Volvo, SEAT, Kia, Škoda, BMW, MINI, Bentley, Citroen, Suzuki, Mercedes-Benz, Ferrari, Maserati.

We're also proud to be recognised as recommended suppliers to SKODA UK, SEAT UK, Volkswagen UK and JLR.

It's our people, processes and persistence that make Interactive Marketing so effective.

Our incredible team of passionate call-makers, alongside a continuous investment in training and hands-on experience, make us the go-to customer contact supplier for many of the best-known dealerships in the UK.

We're a market leader, with the best people, the highest standards of training, unmatched insight and impressive customer contact rates.

Ready to win more appointments?

Book a consultation call with one of our automotive experts and we'll discuss exactly how we can help your dealership win more sales and service appointments.

Phone **0330 122 0750** or email

theteam@interactivemarketing.co.uk to learn more today.

www.interactivemarketing.co.uk