



Car brands are still failing to respond to sales enquiries, highlighting inherent weaknesses in their ability to protect or grow market share

Survey shows brands have not improved the effectiveness of their lead management processes, leaving 61% of test drive requests unanswered within 4 days – and 45% not contacted at all*.

During November and December 2010 [BearingPoint](#) and [Multi-M/IT](#) repeated their comprehensive survey of car brands' response to sales enquiries. It revealed that, despite the fragile economic recovery, there is still widespread failure to act upon test drive requests from internet shoppers. Lead management seems to be an inherent weakness for the industry and demonstrates a failure to address the expectations of consumers who are close to making their purchase decision. It raises questions over the ability of manufacturers to maintain or grow their market share against a market background of weak demand across Europe and increasing customer expectations in respect to brand responsiveness.

The pan-European survey covered 19 brands in seven countries and involved researchers attempting to make more than 4,400 test drive and brochure requests via car brand web sites. The survey included traditional and emerging high volume markets and brands right across the price spectrum.

The results show that 42% of brochure requests resulted in no material being received within seven days – a slight improvement from last year's 44%. Even more critically, 61% of those asking for a test drive received no contact within four days, again a negligible improvement on last year's 63%. The seven and four day thresholds were retained for this year to enable comparison between 2010 and 2009. The actual expectation of consumers has of course advanced – with many internet shoppers experiencing same or next day response from other industries. At the close of the survey, which lasted for 14 days in each country, 45% of those asking for a test drive had still not been contacted.

James Rodger, Automotive Partner at BearingPoint, said: "This year's survey clearly demonstrates that none of the brands assessed have successfully addressed weaknesses in their lead management processes. This appears to be an endemic issue for an automotive industry confronting a prolonged period of weak consumer demand in Europe. Against this backdrop manufacturer growth will be increasingly dependent on their ability to take market share from their competitors, and the ability to quickly and efficiently respond to sales enquiries will be a key differentiator.

Rob Malyn, Director at Multi-M/IT, said:



“With the survey results almost unchanged from last year, manufacturers need to make sure that their marketing focus on broadcast advertising and their web presence is balanced with sufficient investment to ensure that every enquiry that is generated is managed effectively and efficiently.

The survey also reveals opportunities for investment in features and facilities within the brand websites and supporting ‘back-office’ which would make it easier for the consumer to do business with the brands – resulting in a better experience during the process of submitting the enquiry, and reducing the risk that the enquiry will not be responded to as quickly as expected. ”

James Rodger concludes: “There is a real opportunity for car manufacturers to improve their responsiveness to prospective customers and thereby improve their sales performance. The key is to adopt a holistic end-to end approach to address the key elements of lead management, including the systems used, the people involved and the processes followed. It is particularly important to understand the respective roles and responsibilities of the brand and the retail channel as effective communication between all stakeholders is pivotal. Given the current difficult market conditions across Europe the benefits of investing in fixing lead management are substantial.”

BearingPoint and Multi-M/IT both work extensively across the automotive sector and have helped a number of brands improve their processes, systems and results.

- Ends -

Press contact:

Notes to editors

1. In 2009 BearingPoint produced [‘The automotive Connected Customer’](#), a report that showed that the first port of call for many of those who are interested in buying a car is the manufacturers’ website. This subsequent research project therefore focused on the ability of consumers to request a brochure and then order a test drive through this channel.

2. The survey encompassed 19 car manufacturers across seven European countries – the UK, France, Germany, Netherlands, Spain, Italy and Russia. The survey had two key elements:

- Researchers sought to request a hardcopy of a brochure from the car brands’ website.
- Researchers also sought to request a test drive from the brands’ web site.

3. High level comparison of results 2010 and 2009



BROCHURE	2010	2009
Surveys completed	2233	1273
Links found	1127	751
Actual requests submitted	1095	718
Brochures received within 7 days	637	402
% received within 7 days	58	56
% not received in 7 days	42	44
Brochures received in survey period	785	486
% received in survey period	72	68
% not received in survey period	28	32

TEST DRIVE	2010	2009
Surveys completed	2233	1273
Links found	1920	1124
Actual requests submitted	1838	1023
Contact made within 4 days	726	379
% contact made within 4 days	39	37
% not contacted in 4 days	61	63
Contact made in survey period	1014	566
% contact made in survey period	55	55
% not contacted in survey period	45	45

Notes:

- 2,233 surveys were completed. For each survey our researchers attempted to make an online request for both a brochure and a test drive using the car brand’s web site.
- The “Links found” number relates to the number of surveys where our researchers found a link on the car brand’s web site which allowed them to request a brochure or a test drive. As can be seen in the table above, in a number of cases this functionality either did not exist or our surveyors were not able to find it on the web site. While most car manufacturers offer the ability to request a test drive online, some have introduced a policy of not allowing hard copy brochures to be requested from their web sites.
- For a small number of surveys, a request was not submitted even where a link had been found on the car brand’s web site. This was typically due to technical issues experienced with the web site.
- The total elapsed time for the survey was 14 days.

4. About BearingPoint:

BearingPoint delivers Business Consulting with both Management & Technology



capabilities. Owned and operated by its partners throughout Europe, BearingPoint offers its clients the best possible value in terms of tangible, measurable results by leveraging business and technology expertise. The firm currently employs 3,200 people in 14 European countries and is serving commercial, financial and public service clients.

BearingPoint offers its clients a seamless cross-border approach, strong focus on results, an entrepreneurial culture, profound industry and functional knowledge, and solutions customised to clients' specific needs. The firm ranks high in client satisfaction, has long-standing relationships with reputable organisations, and is seen as a trusted adviser. BearingPoint has European roots, but operates with a global reach. For more information, please visit: www.bearingpointconsulting.com

5. About Multi-M/IT:

Multi-M/IT is a privately owned company which specialises in CRM consultancy and full service Direct Marketing solutions for the automotive industry. Multi-M/IT currently employs a multinational team of 100 IT professionals and direct marketing specialists who serve clients in Europe, Latin America, Africa and the Middle East. The company has more than ten years experience of manufacturer and retailer lead management systems and processes.