

European survey shows car brands fail to respond to 63% of potential customers

Majority of online requests for new car test drives are being ignored

A comprehensive new survey by [BearingPoint](#) and [Multi-M/IT](#) reveals widespread failure to act upon test drive requests from potential customers.

The survey of 19 different brands, across seven European countries, saw researchers attempt to make more than 2,500 test drive and brochure requests through car manufacturer websites. Surveyors asked for a brochure to be mailed to them or requested a test drive at a dealership.

The results show that 44% of brochure requests resulted in no material being received within seven days. Even more critically, 63% of those asking for a test drive received no contact within four days. 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 received a reply.

James Rodger, Automotive Partner at BearingPoint, said: “The consensus across the automotive sector is that 2010 is set to be a really tough year. Scrapage schemes artificially boosted demand and brought forward sales into 2009 but manufacturers are set to feel the impact of low consumer confidence for some time. Against this backdrop of low demand, our survey shows brands are failing to help themselves by responding effectively to those customers who are in the market for a new car. All brands believe that a test drive significantly increases the likelihood of the consumer going on to purchase the car. They must therefore look carefully at these results which show an inability to capitalise on serious interest in their products.”

Rob Malyn, Director at Multi-M/IT, said: “The automotive industry spends billions of Euros each year on advertising and sales promotion in order to raise awareness and increase consideration amongst the car buying public. Our research shows that a significant amount of the investment in this area is wasted through failing to follow through and satisfy the requests of those potential customers who are closest to making their final buying decision.

“This is a comprehensive survey covering traditional and emerging high volume markets and brands right across the price spectrum. No one single brand performs consistently well across all markets. Results within each country vary significantly. Surprisingly, premium brands do not typically perform better than the volume brands, and in some cases they perform worse. Our conclusion is that this is an endemic industry-wide issue that needs prompt attention if manufacturers and their dealers are going to protect their share of a depressed European car market.”

James Rodger concludes: “To identify and address the root causes of poor performance in lead management manufacturers need to take a holistic

approach which looks at issues associated with their systems, people or processes. The respective roles and responsibilities of the brand and the retail channel are particularly important and the communication between the two parties is critical. Addressing the leakage in the sales process will take time and require investment but, for those brands prepared to take action, the rewards could be significant.”

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 -

For more information please call Enda Joyce or Isobel Bradshaw on +44 20 7400 7395 or email bearingpoint@hanovercomms.com

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.

In November 2009, 1,273 surveys were carried out. They 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. This was possible in 56% of cases (718 of 1,273). Only 56% (402 of 718) received the requested brochure within seven days.
- Researchers also sought to request a test drive from the brands’ website. Out of 1,273 potential requests, 80% (1,023) were possible. Only 37% (379) of the 1,023 possible requests resulted in contact within four days to actually arrange the test drive.

The brand with the highest response rate to test drive requests only achieved 57%, while the ‘worst’ could only managed 25%. Both of these cases are premium brands.

2. To support manufacturers, over the last 18 months the UK, French, German, Italian, Dutch and Spanish governments introduced ‘scrappage’ schemes to encourage consumers to buy new cars. These saw payments of several thousand Euros being offered to those prepared to trade in their old vehicle and buy a new one. Many of these schemes are either time limited or only run until dedicated funding is used up.

3. About BearingPoint:

BearingPoint is an independent pan-European management and technology consultancy. Run and owned by more than 120 Partners around Europe, BearingPoint offers its clients tangible results by gearing strategic advice to excellent implementation. The company currently employs 3,250 people in 14 European countries and serves clients in the commercial and financial industries as well as the public sector.

4. 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 80 IT professionals and direct marketing specialists who advise 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.