

Mercedes-Benz

Mercedes-Benz and MSN

THE MARKETING CHALLENGE:

Think Mercedes-Benz - you already have a picture in your mind. The well-established Mercedes-Benz C-Class and E-Class are familiar, recognisable faces in the prestige car market.

But it is unlikely the car you are picturing is the Mercedes-Benz A-Class. With prices starting from £13,025 and seating for five adults, the A-Class is a clear alternative to the familiar family hatchback or compact people carrier.

As Mercedes-Benz builds market share, the A-Class is playing a key role in changing perceptions of the brand. For the first time, many new car buyers are finding they can enjoy the Mercedes-Benz ownership experience with a car that suits their lifestyle and their budget.

But the marketing challenge for Mercedes-Benz is to get potential customers into the car; to allow them to appreciate its unique features and driving experience. That means making them aware of the car, getting it on their shopping list and then getting them down to the dealership for a test drive.

THE MARKETING SOLUTION:

To crack the problem BJK&E Media, which handles the Daimler Chrysler account in the UK, launched a specific campaign with the principal aim to generate test-drives.

Alongside conventional advertising in national and specialist press, online was particularly valuable for this initiative. Importantly, it offered instant information gathering and delivering on the number of test-drives that resulted from the medium. They chose to work with MSN Cars (then called MSN Carview). "We looked at all the major online portals but particularly liked MSN's creative ideas," explains Katy Driver, Senior planner buyer on the campaign.

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Microsoft

Our knowledge is your advantage



"The service levels they were able to provide, the technical expertise they brought to the project and the support of a viable editorial team were all important considerations."

As with other advertisers on MSN Cars, Mercedes-Benz was also attracted by the audience reached through this part of the MSN site: 97% ABC1, 60% male and below average consumers of commercial television.

"By using MSN Cars as part of an integrated campaign, including specialist and national press, BJK&E was able to target an audience that is notoriously hard to reach through other media," says



Katy. "We wanted a means of data capture and therefore create a relationship with our customers."

THE CAMPAIGN:

BJK&E set three elements to the creative brief:

- 1: Awareness - frequent exposure of a simple message - "test drive the Mercedes-Benz A-Class".
- 2: Understanding - the ability to deliver more complex messages - in-depth information on the car for those who need/want it.

3: Relevance - targeting the message to the right type of internet users and eliminating wastage.

As a multi-media portal, MSN was able to offer creative solutions which not only satisfied each element of the brief but also offered a degree of interaction with the potential customer that could not be achieved by traditional print or television media.

The MSN Cars campaign was based initially around a one-month bespoke promotion. The key elements were a "Featured Car of the Month" online advertorial and a "Digital Road Test".

The "Featured Car of the Month" is a detailed review of the car by the MSN Cars editorial team that runs to two-screens in length. With its editorial feel and constructive, informative content, the review is both a beneficial read for the interested buyer and a good sales tool for Mercedes-Benz.

The "Digital Road Test", a three-minute video clip that could be downloaded or watched on screen, gives the opportunity for the user to properly "see" the car in action: making use of the interactivity the internet brings whilst using TV-style visuals at the same time.

"An important aspect of the campaign was the respect for the MSN Cars editorial team," explains Katy. "Their editorial focus is on being genuine and user-friendly, so giving their readers an informative, constructive read."

The Digital Road Test clearly satisfied the brief to deliver more complex messages and create a relationship with the customer. Carview presenter, Victoria Macmillan-Bell, was able to describe the A-Class in detail and show the car in motion in real-life situations.



Just as important was the in-depth support of the MSN technical team. Full production of the Digital Road Test, from initial filming to final approved edit, was the responsibility of MSN and just one element of a comprehensive customer service package.

Both the Featured Car advertorial and the Digital Road Test were backed up by a Category Ad in the site's small cars listing, where the A-Class could be compared against competitors in its class. Hotlinks allowed visitors to jump instantly to the Mercedes-Benz website for more information or to apply for the all-important test drive.

In order to achieve relevance in the test drive requests, a minor level of qualification was created during the request process. Completed requests were forwarded to a fulfilment agency but, just to be certain of the quality, MSN also monitored them to clean the responses and removed any duplication.

"A great deal of thought went into the test drive request form," explains Penny Barnes, MSN Cars account manager who worked on the project. "We wanted to make it long enough to filter out time wasters - but not so complicated that it put off genuine applicants."


With so much targeted activity, it was important to achieve wider awareness and deliver traffic volume to MSN Cars. A promotion on the MSN.co.uk home page (the Network Information Page - NIP), which has more than two million visitors a day, was designed to do just that.

The NIP message changed constantly from a simple invitation to book a road test to a more complex editorial feature.

Once again the MSN Cars editorial team was brought into play with a specially commissioned lifestyle feature entitled 'Tate a taste'. In search of a little culture, the journalists took a Mercedes-Benz E-Class from the Tate Britain in London to the newly opened

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Tate St Ives, giving site visitors yet more insight into the car and its driving characteristics.

THE CAMPAIGN'S SUCCESS:

The MSN Cars campaign was so successful it was extended for a further two weeks.

Over 700 test-drive bookings resulted - more than three times the initial Mercedes-Benz target for the period.

"At the end of the day, MSN Cars delivered," concludes Katy Driver. "The MSN solution was complex, but competently organised with most of the hard work done for us. They answered the brief and simply got on with the job. We couldn't ask for more."

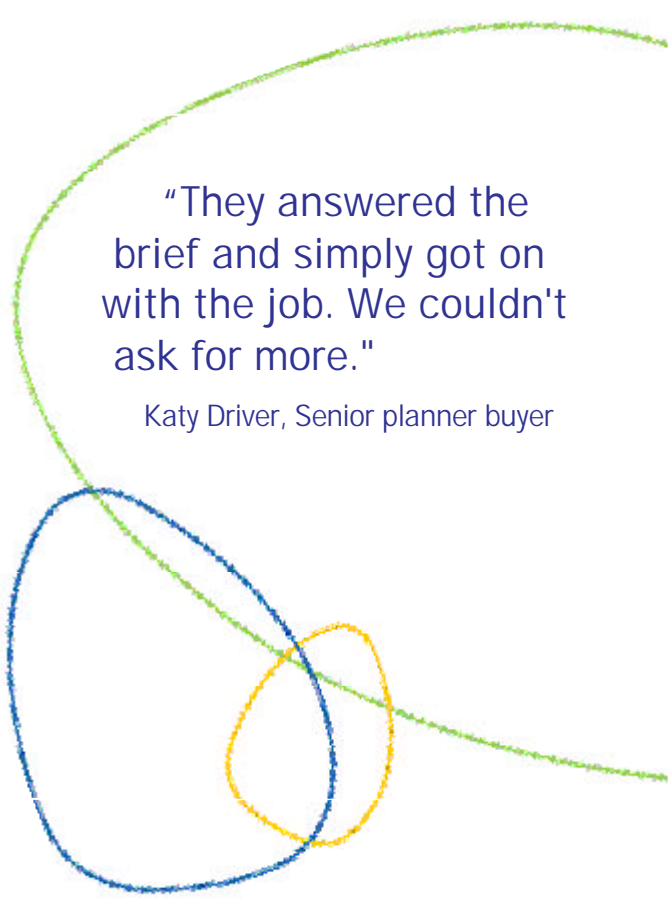
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