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THE POWER OF PERSONALISATION



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INTRODUCTION

As humans we all like to be loved, we want affection and the need for someone to understand our feelings is paramount. We want things that are personal to us and in the world of online marketing, brands are scrambling to make sure that their content is not only unique but that it is personal.

What is personalisation?

Personalised marketing (or one-to-one marketing) can be defined in a number of ways, but at the most basic level, it can be explained as follows:

Personalised marketing is the implementation of a strategy by which companies deliver bespoke content to recipients through data collection, analysis, and the use of automated technology.

The main goal of running a tailored marketing strategy is to engage the user at the highest level by communicating to and connecting them with a wider message, in a way that makes them think it is tailored directly for them.

The history of personalisation

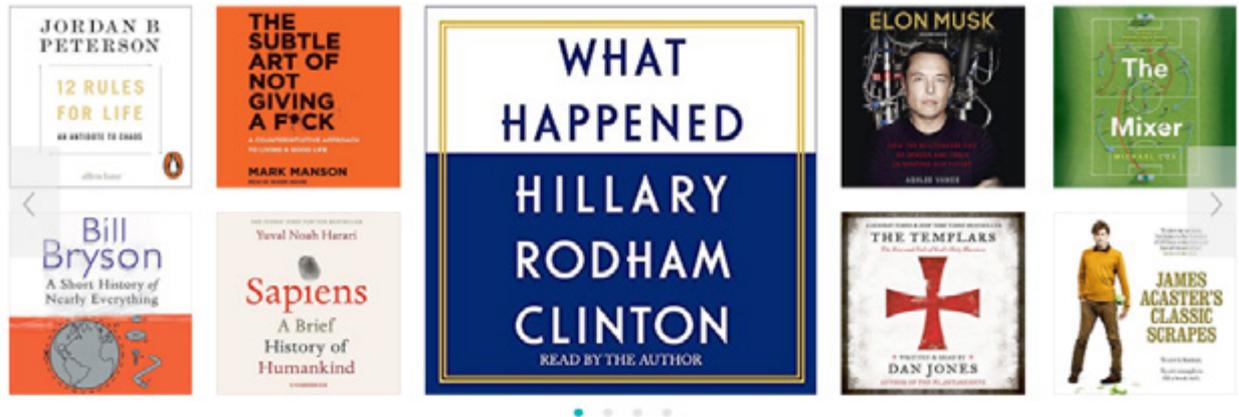
The history of personalisation dates way back, and recently I read a fascinating piece relating to the first origin of personalisation in retail. It is said that Lock and Co Hatters of St James, London kept records of measurements and preferences in the form of a customer Q&A in order to produce bespoke hats. In the 18th century, so the story goes, a trusted customer could simply descend from their carriage outside the door of the shop, shout 'hat' and then leave.

The shop's workmen would then refer to their records for details of the customer's hat size and style preferences before making the hat and delivering it to their residence.

Retail continued like this for some time, with shopkeepers and business owners building rapport with the locals and understanding their needs. We then went through a dark spell where convenience took away the personalised feel of things. Individual sellers, the butchers, bakers and candlestick makers became less 'time efficient' and customers stopped chatting and instead bought enmasse in one location such as a supermarket. This trend continued and in some respects still does as the 'time poor' struggle to include shopping as part of their experience.

Where the real change was made however was in 2006. Back then, Time magazine named 'you' as its Person of the Year, in recognition of the way user-generated content created by individuals and made available to a wider audience was changing the commercial world. Large, online retailers got on board with this idea and personalisation was again the hot topic. Sure, you might lose the face to face intimacy of going to a shop in person but, through highly sophisticated data collection and algorithms that could remember your preferences, digital businesses started to show you products that you might like, similar products to your previous purchases and even offer the chance to reorder the exact same product. These models have worked especially well in the retail and food markets.

Recommendations, based on your Audible purchases



The benefits of personalisation

What businesses want to know when they are putting together their strategy is ‘what are the benefits of building a strategy that revolves around personalisation?’ Well the answer to this is pretty simple. Personalisation leads to both a greater conversion rate than non-personalised marketing and it delivers a higher level of user experience (UX) – which is something of a ‘holy grail’ in search marketing.

Some of the main benefits for personalising your search marketing strategy to meet the needs of your audience are:

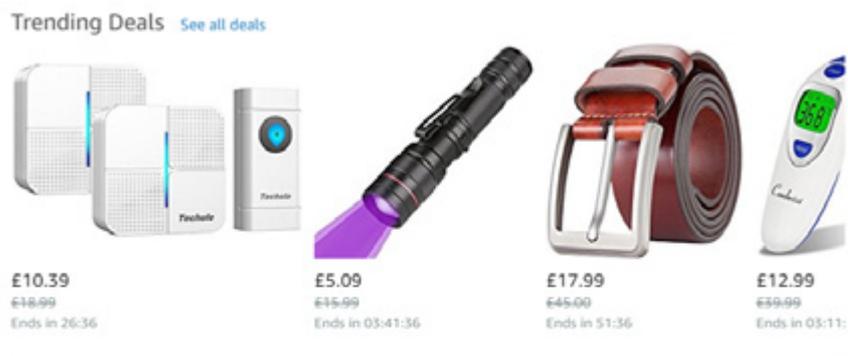
Increase in conversions

As we mentioned in the stats section of this resource, there is a direct link between the increase of personalisation and the improvement in conversion rate. This alone should bring home the message that it is a vital part of a forward thinking strategy.

For any business (not just online), the aim is to drive conversions, and increase sales. Personalisation can help to achieve this in a number of ways, including:

Pre-filled personal details – By remembering purchase information, shipping addresses, or other details, it removes one barrier that would otherwise stop the customer from converting. All of this helps the UX and makes the process smoother. As was mentioned earlier, time is precious and many people choose short windows such as when commuting to shop. Pre-saved details also allow for a shopper to make a purchase if they haven’t got their cards to hand.

Providing the best deals – Personalisation helps to find the best, most relevant deals for the customer in particular, which encourages them to convert, as they do not have to hunt for the deal most suited to them. The below example from Amazon covers both trending deals and new products that the buyer might be interested in.



Customised content – Personalised content can encourage customers to engage and do business with you, such as personalised subject lines, greetings, or references to previous actions taken in email campaigns, (something we will cover in a little more detail later).

Landing pages – Specific landing pages pre-loaded with customer information such as the form for those that download more than one piece of content (hint hint).

Building relationships

When it comes to any form of marketing, the first thing that you need is the contact. There are a number of ways that you can attract customers but it’s what you do next that is important.

Personalisation allows you to develop and build relationships based on the data you collect and store. If you can look at spending habits and product preferences then you can get the correct content at the right time in front of your website users. B2C and B2B relationships differ, but rewards for individuals can still bring past relationship closer, and create new ones.

Personalisation makes customers feel a little more special, as it can help replicate the feel of one-to-one communication.

Understanding your leads

Understanding your leads is vital and if you can personalise messages or offers along each stage of the marketing or sales funnel, and encourage potential customers to move further down the funnel, then revenue and transactions are sure to improve.

General content can be promoted to customers at the beginning of the funnel, with more specific content based upon their behaviour or chosen products being sent to them further down the line. Take your leads on a journey, nurture them and they will convert.

Expanding on calls and background research

If you have the data then use it. When you are in the process of making calls to customers, something a lot of businesses do, then having details that might help spark a conversation and a connection. Personalised information based on customer behaviour can really make a difference, as you have the intelligence to improve business-wide messaging and communications.

Better engagement

Engagement from your audience is vital and part of this depends on the call to actions (CTAs) and triggers that you put in place to encourage increased activity. By using a personalised approach you are able to keep your visitors on the site longer and this will ultimately lead to more chances for you to put offers and products in front of them.

Retention

Winning customers is one thing but keeping them is an altogether more difficult proposition. If you are able to speak to your users or buyers in a way that they feel resonates with them you can put yourself in a much better position. Using a personalised approach to your marketing means that you are able to further build connections and make further sales. You may also encourage your customers to share their knowledge and recommend you as a reputable business, growing your client base further.

Some good examples of personalised marketing that helps with customer retention includes:

- Loyalty programmes
- Personalised offers
- Suggested products
- Suggested repeat purchases

Benefits of bespoke in email marketing

Email marketing is vastly different to other forms of marketing yet the principles remain largely the same. If you can add a personal touch to something then you can connect, build, nurture and convert relationships. Here are some of the benefits:

Increases the likelihood of being read

When a customer or potential customer sees an email in their inbox that is sent to 'Dear Customer' and has a subject line that is even less appealing, they are more likely to delete it.

However if you can add in the first name and engage them with copy in the subject name then you are sure to see performance increases, especially in terms of open rate.

Increases trust

Building trust is not an easy task for a business to achieve. The starting point is to ditch the 'spammy' emails, do this and you will be one step closer to earning that trust. The important question to ask is whether or not the email is genuinely useful to the recipient. If it isn't, then it's spam. Only send the content that has purpose and that will fulfil a need.

Increases engagement

It's all very well adding in the name of the recipient in the opening line of an email but if you want to gain more from an email and make the reader click on the CTA then a good tip is to use personalisation throughout the email. You can build trust and nurture them through the message showing them the many benefits or offers that you have.

Allows segmentation

Segmentation is massive in the industry and is a great way of splitting your marketing lists to ensure that the content you are sending is bespoke and that it resonates with the correct people. People feel that an email is personal to them but in truth they may have been segmented on a number of metrics such as age, gender or location.

This sort of targeting brings better results and businesses should see not only an increase in conversions but in open rates and return visits.

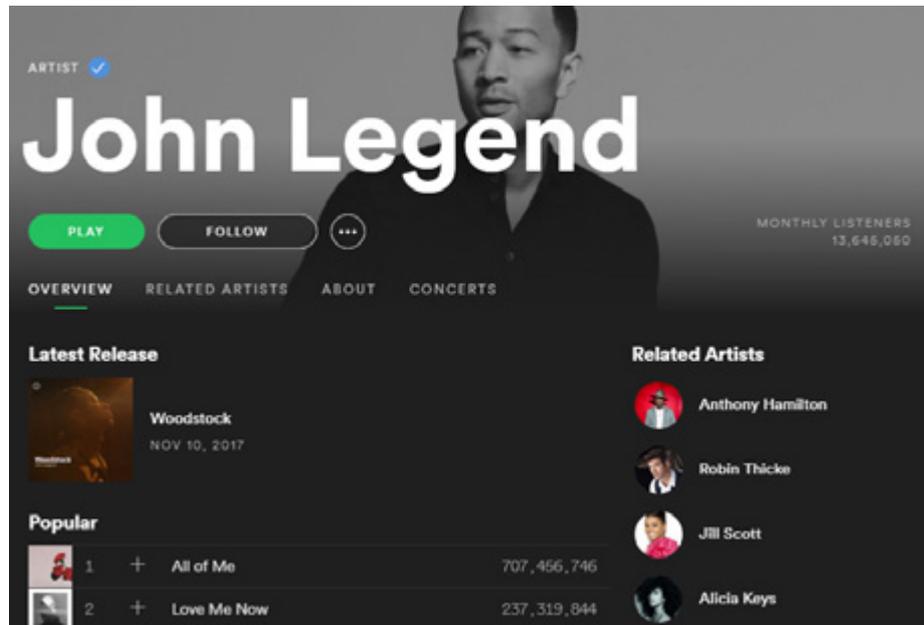
The stats around personalisation

According to studies on personalisation, and the positive impact that using these tactics on your audience has, have revealed some pretty revealing findings. These are the key stats according to Econsultancy:

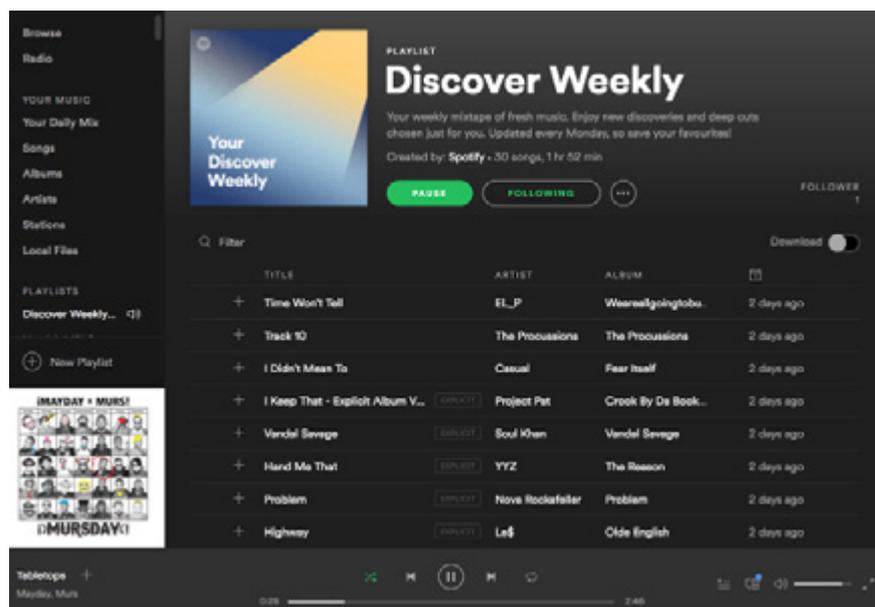
- 93% of companies are seeing uplift in conversion rates as a result of website personalisation
- 62% of companies are undertaking some form of personalisation in their marketing activity, and 44% personalise through their websites
- Having a personalised home page gives a 10% sales uplift
- Personalised recommendations on email campaigns and product pages give a sales uplift of 3.5%
- 74% of customers feel frustrated when website content is not personalised
- 84% of consumers reported always or sometimes taking action based on personal recommendations

Getting personalisation right

Some personalisation is very subtle in the digital world and as you can see in the below screenshot, Spotify uses a tailored approach to expand its content. When listening to any particular artist a user is drawn to the right hand side, where the 'Related Artists' tab sits. This assumes, through musical genre, artists that may be of interest to the user.



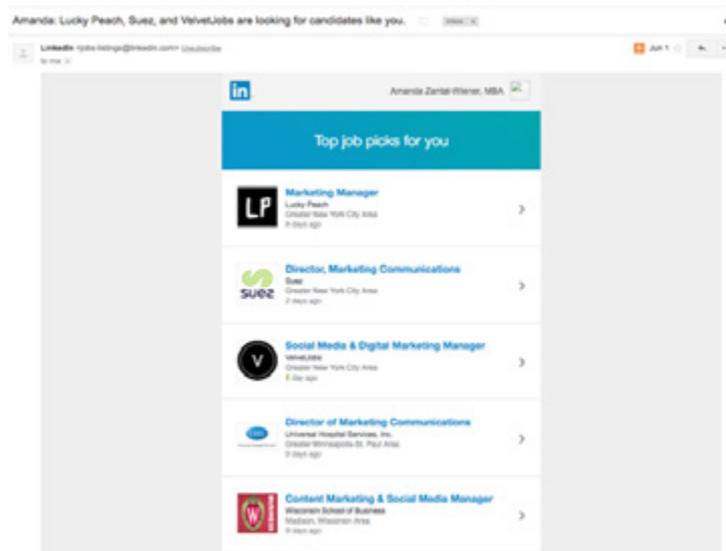
They also run a 'Discover' tab so that users can gain recommendations of new artists, songs and genres.



Another important development in personalisation is that which has been leveraged by LinkedIn. The social platform use live data from the profiles of those using the platform to show what they feel are relevant updates.

As the image below shows, this particular user is being showed highly targeted posts relating to jobs within their industry. This will be based on the sector and job title entered when a user build a profile.

The private message shows a number of jobs that might be relevant to you based on the information that you have previously provided. Recruitment teams see this as a valuable marketing tactic as it makes everything look and feel bespoke.



If you show a chef a job as a post master are they likely to convert? Probably not, but ask a teacher to look at a head-teachers role, in their location for more money and you might just get the conversion.

These two highlight some of the nuances in personalised marketing and a different approaches that platforms take to emphasis the personal touch.

When personalisation goes well

There are countless examples of good personalisation in marketing and how sales can be improved if you add something extra to your campaign no matter how simple. Here are some of the best examples we've seen:

Coca Cola

Coca Cola selected the UK's most popular names and printed them on their labels, and made even more available online. It sparked a sharing frenzy across the nation and quickly became one of their most successful marketing campaigns. They were totally overwhelmed by how many people picked up personalised bottles and cans and used them to create and share stories, selfies and special moments with the brand.

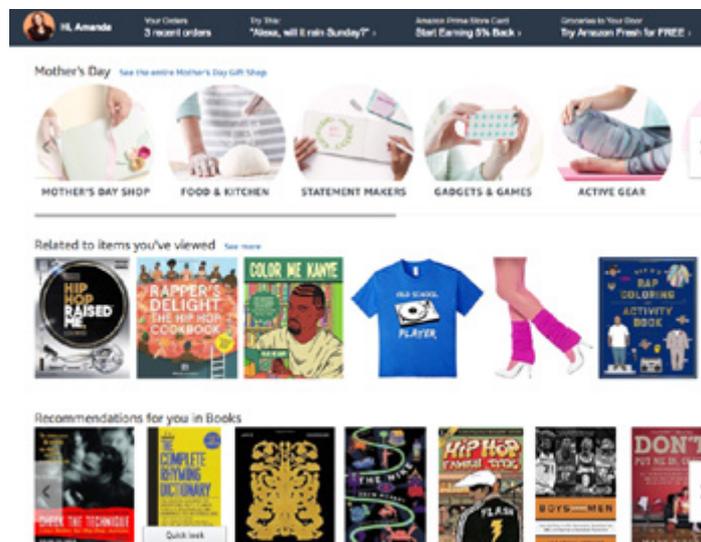
The top level stats from this campaign were:

- Over a thousand different names on bottles
- 998 million impressions on Twitter
- 235,000 tweets from 111,000 fans using the #ShareACoke hashtag
- More than 150 million personalised bottles sold
- Over 730,000 glass bottles personalised via the e-commerce store
- 17,000 virtual name bottles shared online across Europe
- 65 experiential stops on the Share a Coke tour



Amazon

Amazon's personalisation efforts aren't exactly new. Since at least 2013, its product curation and recommendation algorithm has made for headlines and case studies. The nice thing about tactics of this nature, when it's executed correctly, is that it often can lead to unplanned purchasing decisions. If you're in the business of personalising curated items or recommendations for your customers, remember: The best part about it, for the user, is the resulting discovery of new things that they like -- whether it's a book, a tool, or an article.

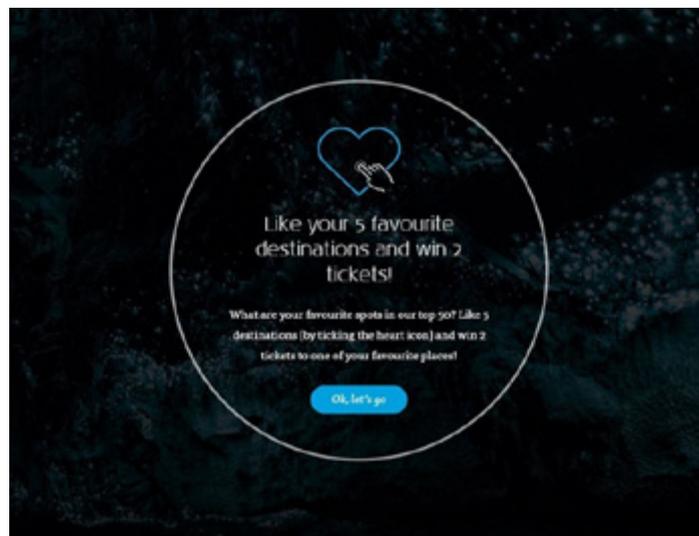


KLM

One of the best examples was that of KLM.

Global travel brand KLM is one of the best adopters of creating bespoke campaigns that resonate with their audience and encourage engagement. The ideas and messages they spread across much of their digital marketing activity is well received and undoubtedly boosts performance. For example, it uses personalised emails to retarget customers that abandon carts online, allowing them to carry on the user journey from where they left off.

Another innovative show of bespoke content, was when KLM launched the iFly 50 campaign – an interactive anniversary edition of its brand magazine. The special 50th edition allowed readers the chance to pick their five favourite destinations for the chance to win the trip of a lifetime. This gave them not only an insight into the favourite destinations of their audience but also a chance to reward them.



Best Western

In another good example of personalisation, hotel chain Best Western wanted to personalise its emails in order to better engage both new and bring back former customers. All of this was in addition to the main goal of increasing the number of downloads of its mobile app.

To do this the campaign relied on getting users to allow the use of recipients' device and location. In the first stage, they tracked the data and identifying the device used to open the email. Depending on the specifics of the device the message was altered accordingly.

The personalisation at this level meant that it was possible for Best Western to send people using an Apple device to the Apple app store, while Android users were sent to the Google Play store.

The goal here was to remove any friction in the user journey, encouraging users to download the app.

Meanwhile, Best Western used geo-targeting to send specific and relevant offers based on the user's location. Both strategies proved to be effective. The hotel chain saw a 143% uplift in downloads of its app compared to similar campaigns.

When personalisation goes bad

Be warned there are some instances where personalisation might be the best option but the execution lets down the brand. When mistakes are made, the effect can be catastrophic. Over the years there have been many brands that have fallen foul especially on social media. If we look at some of the worst mistakes that businesses have made, you can judge for yourself on whether or not these were genuine errors or 'risky' PR exercises, in a bid to improve interactions and raise follower numbers.

Four times personalisation went bad:

Coca Cola

For all the good work there is often bad and this is the case for Coca Cola. In February 2015, Coca Cola ran into trouble over an automated, algorithm-generated bot created for advertising purposes.

Gawker's Editorial Labs Director, Adam Pash, created a Twitter bot and set it up to tweet lines from Mein Kampf. He then – rather 'cheekily' attached it to the #MakeltHappy campaign that the soft drinks company were running. This 'hijacking' of a social media account was clever insofar as it proved a fault in the system but in reality it meant that for over two hours, Coca-Cola's Twitter feed was broadcasting big chunks of Nazi propaganda.

New England Patriots

Another example from November 2014, highlights the plight of the New England Patriots who were forced to apologise after an automatic, algorithm-generated bot was tricked into tweeting a racial slur from the official team account.

The National Lottery

Much like the Coca Cola, when a social media campaign goes wrong it can have a huge impact in a business's reputation. Last year The National Lottery encouraged people to upload their names to receive a personalised message from Team GB athletes.

The National Lottery's campaign, called #Represent, was subsequently hijacked with offensive and malicious messages and personalised tweets from Olympians to supporters who used the hashtag #IAmTeamGB instead posted messages about the Hillsborough disaster and Madeline McCann.

Walkers

Much like the previous campaign, Walkers fell foul of the pitfalls of customisation after putting trust in the public to submit photos as part of its Champions League campaign.

Twitter users commandeered the brand's 'Walkers Wave' campaign, meaning the images broadcast would go on to inadvertently feature Rolf Harris, Stalin, serial killer Fred West.

The brand apologised in a statement saying: "We recognise people were offended by irresponsible and offensive posts by individuals, and we apologise. We are equally upset and have shut down all activity."

A key learning here is to test, test and test again. Knowledge panels and internal roundtables can highlight the potential pitfalls of a project before they leave the ground.

What other mistakes are marketers making?

According to Evergage, a personalisation think-tank, based in the US there are several key areas that marketers ignore when it comes to personalisation and these mistakes can be the difference in a growing, converting audiences and a dwindling, spend resistant one. Their three areas to avoid are:

Aggressive pop-ups

When a business serves up pop-up messages to everyone on their site and someone crosses out of the window, it is important to understand that the person doesn't find the message compelling.

The mistake that businesses make is that they keep the algorithm running and the same messages are continually displayed. This will annoy visitors who have to constantly close them and the last thing a business wants to do is offer a poor user experience (UX).

Instead, businesses should adapt to specific user intents and target audiences who are about to leave their site or who may be struggling to use a particular feature in an app. A viable solution to this might be to incorporate chat bots. By doing this you are putting yourself in the best possible position to serve the personal need. You can ask direct, tailored questions to your audience and guide them through any difficulties that they may face.

Condescending messaging

The last thing that customers and prospects want is to be condescended — and yet, many marketers create messages that ignite shock, guilt, or are insincere.

Today's buyers are research-driven and need flexibility to make informed decisions. They're well aware of 'hurry! buy now!' marketing tactics, and don't like feeling disrespected.

Therefore marketing messages should always aim to inspire. Through web personalisation, you are in the strongest possible position to make your audiences feel good and empowered.

Mismatched intent

Business' must have the right message for a new audience and need to retarget their existing audience at the right time.

Marketers need a clear understanding of their buyer's journey and customer personas. Future messages then needs to align with those personas and be timed appropriately.

Simple steps to improvement

If you don't have the time or money to collect and analyse 'Big Data' then there are several simple improvements you can make in terms of personalisation. Our Director of Search, Alan Reeves looks at them here:

- Track phone calls. This can be done for free with AdWords Call Conversions which limits you to phone calls received from AdWords traffic. For a relatively low investment phone calls can be tracked at session level across all sources through other call tracking software. How much do you currently spend on display advertising or SEO without knowing how many, and what type of phone calls the traffic generates?
- Feedback on the quality of calls or leads. Many businesses can be put off by the large amount of admin and process involved in tracking enquiries through to conversion and beyond. While this is the ideal, it's much easier to provide basic feedback that can improve your campaigns today. For example, basic feedback such as a grading system or potential leads value can be valuable data for campaign managers.
- Use AdWords Conversion Import. Collect the "GCLID" from leads driven via AdWords, this can come through as a hidden field in an enquiry form and be easily imported into many CRM's. When your leads are given a grade or value, they can then easily be imported to AdWords to determine the keywords and ads that are driving your best leads and worst leads.

Are those generic keywords used by people who are going to buy? Are some ads just generating customer service enquiries?

- Track offline conversion rates. You may not have the technology to track each offline conversion back to its original source. However top line data about leads to conversion is still better than nothing. If your offline conversion rate and lead time is normally consistent, share it with your campaign managers and it may be possible to map improvements or reductions back to changes on campaigns.

Each of the above can be done with very little investment and if you have Google Tag Manager they can also be set up without technical assistance. Marketers often find this data is being measured in some format within most businesses; it just needs to be shared with the right people. This often leads to improved communication and the break-up of silos which can bring many other benefits.

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ABOUT US

Located in North West England, Click Consult is a multi award-winning search marketing agency with a focus on organic (SEO) and paid search (PPC), with over 70 professionals employed and with a portfolio of over 60 clients from across the UK, Europe, Americas and Australia.

Click was named Search Agency of the Year 2018, adding to its long list of other awards and accolades, and also ranks within both RAR's and Econsultancy's 'Top 100 Digital Agencies', and Prolific North's 'Top 50 Digital Agencies'.

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