



CASE STUDY: KEN WILSON FORD BRANCHES OUT INTO NEW TERRITORY

CAR DEALERSHIP TURNS TO TARGETED EMAIL
MARKETING TO ELEVATE SALES

Ken Wilson Ford, a local dealership in the Asheville, North Carolina, area, wanted to ramp up its online visibility and branch out from a strong foothold in the pickup truck market, but it needed help. Having been in business since 1980, the dealership knows that buying a vehicle is a big deal. The purchasing timeline for cars is long when consumers collect make, model, safety and pricing information before making an informed decision. For local car dealerships, sending out random promotional emails won't get people through the door, but a targeted approach will yield better results and keep prospective buyers and customers engaged.

Looking to make inroads into new markets, like cars and crossover vehicles, the dealership turned to G/O Digital for a targeted email marketing solution, and Ken Wilson Ford found it was the right approach to attract new customers in the area.

CHALLENGE

Ken Wilson Ford is located on the outskirts of Buncombe County, making the dealership more of a destination than a place people happen to stop in. As a result, the dealership knows that prospective car buyers need a reason to visit their location.

Additionally, people come to Ken Wilson Ford primarily to buy trucks. It's the go-to dealership in the area for new Ford pickups. However, the dealership has a wide range of other vehicles that weren't seeing the same level of sales as their truck inventory.

After running print and online ads with several sales spikes, but no consistent success, the dealership knew it needed to amp up its presence online to attract people to the showroom and purchase new vehicles.

KEY PERFORMANCE METRICS: PERSONA-TARGETED EMAIL CAMPAIGNS

12.32%
Average open rate



15%
Open rate using G/O
Drive email templates



1.41%
Average click
through rate



48
Actual sales



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STRATEGY

After running successful [Cars.com](#) campaigns and nurturing a great relationship with its account manager, Ken Wilson Ford brought on G/O Digital to develop a targeted email campaign that would reach outside the typical customer base. The end goal was to bring in new buyers for vehicles outside of their truck selection. “We were looking for a way to reach prospects not in our database, and there’s only so much you can do with PPC,” says Frank Towson, Internet Manager at Ken Wilson Ford.

The strategy included a monthly email to 20,000 recipients, which were new email addresses and potential customers for the dealership, in the Asheville area. The email messages were targeted based on G/O Digital buyer personas — a bank of profiles for different kinds of auto buyers, all based on attributes and patterns specific to each “persona,” or each kind of buyer.

The email messages, crafted by G/O Digital automotive experts, were sent the second week of every month and included helpful tips for those currently engaged in the car-buying process. Based on the persona, the team crafted subject lines like, “Buying a crossover doesn’t have to be hard.” or “Worried about financing? We can help.” that easily alerted prospective car buyers because they had already shown interest in areas associated with car buying or a particular kind of car.

The dealership also piloted new G/O Digital email templates developed to coincide with different buyer personas, which allowed emails to be targeted to a specific audience, as well as having a design and imagery that speaks to the demographic. Personalizing templates proved effective, as G/O Digital officially released them as part of their April 2015 auto offerings.



The above email from Ken Wilson Ford targeted people interested in purchasing a convertible, and the copy and images speak to the known interests of people looking to buy that type of car.

“Having the G/O design team is helpful because I’m not a pro email marketer, but it’s well formatted and great across all devices,” Towson says.

KEY DIGITAL MARKETING DELIVERABLES



Persona-Targeted Email Campaigns — Target specific demographics of prospects that fit the buyer persona of the make and model they are advertising.



Personalized Emails — Use optimized templates proven to resonate with your intended audience to increase click-through rates.



Matchback Reporting — Submit a list of car buyers since the targeted email campaigns started and we’ll compare who purchased from the list of email recipients.

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CASE STUDY: KEN WILSON FORD

“The market has been up and down for us lately, but there have been several months where there was a steady increase in sales just after the targeted email campaigns went out,” Towson says.

One of the most valuable deliverables that Ken Wilson Ford implemented is G/O Digital’s Matchback Reporting. A car dealer can submit sales numbers from the past few months or quarter to G/O Digital, who can then compare names of purchasers to the list of people who received the targeted email. The result is being able to attribute actual sales to the dealership’s email campaigns.

“People do so much research before coming in to the dealership, so it’s hard to pinpoint the exact trigger that brings people in,” Towson says. “Even though a customer doesn’t announce what exactly brought them in, having the Matchback Reporting provides concrete numbers.”

RESULTS

With G/O Digital’s reporting and tracking dashboards, Ken Wilson Ford was not only able to see how many people clicked through to their site from the targeted emails, but they could attribute actual car sales to those clicks.

Upon launching email campaigns in June 2014, the G/O Digital targeted emails for Ken Wilson Ford have seen a 12.32 percent open rate on average, the highest at **15 percent in March 2015 — the month the dealership tried out the new buyer persona email templates**. With strong open rates, an additional 1.41 percent of openers clicked through to the dealer’s website.

“We were surprised to see how long people were looking at emails and what things they were responding to and clicking on,” Towson says. “Our average time on site is 3.5 to 4 minutes, but with people coming from those targeted emails, people tend to stay on our site from 5 to 6 minutes.”

Additionally, Ken Wilson Ford can attribute actual revenue to those open and click rates through the Matchback Reporting. Through the reporting measures, **the dealership can attribute 48 actual sales to the targeted email campaigns**. According to Kelley Blue Book, the average price of a vehicle in 2014 was \$32,500, meaning that the targeted email campaigns generated an estimated **\$1.5 million in additional revenue for Ken Wilson Ford**.

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— Frank Towson,
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G/O DIGITAL BUYER PERSONAS

The targeted email solution allows dealers to reach a specific demographic with copy and images that fit the buyer persona of the make and model being advertised.

Example:

Crossover Intenders



Young, active families



Email includes family, active and outdoor photos

The targeted email blasts generated an estimated \$1.5 million in additional revenue for Ken Wilson Ford.

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CONCLUSION

Even though they're located outside of a metropolitan area, Ken Wilson Ford increased its profit margin using targeted emails and leveraging the digital space. The dealership reached a larger audience beyond its current contact list by targeting consumers with the intention to buy. Messaging aimed at the needs of this market resonated and proved effective, as Ken Wilson sales increased.

Although the dealership has dabbled in other forms of advertising and email campaigns in the past, G/O Digital provided Ken Wilson Ford with its first targeted email campaigns, and they were a huge success. "We've been doing a lot, with targeted email blasts as one piece of the larger puzzle," Towson says. "We really appreciate what the service has done for us."

HOW MATCHBACK REPORTING WORKS



Step 1: Targeted email blast goes out to potential new customers.



Step 2: Three months later, dealer sends list of new car buyers, with contact information, to G/O Digital.



Step 3: G/O Digital compares new car buyer list to email blast recipients from targeted email blasts.



Step 4: G/O Digital sends dealer report attributing actual sales to recipients of targeted email.

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