

CASE STUDY

How Ford NZ Reached Auto Shoppers at the Right Moment



With consumers' paths to purchase constantly changing, Ford New Zealand (Ford NZ) and J. Walter Thompson (JWT NZ) recognized the importance of strengthening its online customer experience to build brand preference and drive consideration, while converting more site traffic into sales. To accomplish this, it tapped the Google Display Network (GDN).

Deliver an engaging digital experience to the right customers

Seventy percent of consumers indicate that searches, websites, and online videos are integral resources when shopping for a new car (Google Analytics and Ford Internal Metrics research, February 2014). Not only do consumers use these strategies to gather information about potential purchases but, more important, one in four report that a positive or negative website experience will actually lead them to change which brand they ultimately purchase.

Those are high stakes for an automaker, so Ford NZ wanted to give shoppers the best online experience possible. Although response rates in search were good, text ads alone weren't driving the desired shopper experience, and JWT NZ saw an opportunity to increase customer inquiries and sales conversions by providing more visuals. So, the agency developed interactive display banners and coupled them with tailored content aimed at engaging with consumers across different websites during their purchase journeys.

To truly focus on engaging consumers and building leads, Ford revisited the way it managed its campaigns. Most significantly, this included shedding the "set-and-forget" approach it had used in the past in favor of a new "test-and-refine" approach. Ford NZ's first step was to reevaluate how it measured campaigns to become more data-driven. Then, over a period of three months, it analyzed data to understand how consumer interactions with banners and landing pages were impacting lead generation. Following this period of analysis, JWT NZ created a new lead-nurture website and refreshed the brand's message and design to resonate more fully with the target audience.

About Ford New Zealand

- Ford New Zealand is the New Zealand subsidiary of Ford Motor Company.
- East Tamaki, New Zealand
- www.ford.co.nz

Goals

- Drive more qualified shoppers to Ford NZ's website to increase time spent per visitor
- Convert GDN-driven website traffic into direct dealership inquiries

Approach

- Reached consumers throughout the purchase journey with data-driven audience targeting
- Delivered personalized messaging at scale with dynamic creative strategies and optimization

Results

- 3X increase in average time spent on site from 2013 to 2014
- 60% increase YoY in website visitors (400K total), half of whom were visiting for the first time
- Bounce rate decreased from 65% in 2013 to under 1.5% in 2014
- 5% of call leads in 2014 came directly from GDN

With these new insights and creative assets in hand, Ford NZ deliberately and consistently weeded out poor-performing assets while amplifying activity that was yielding leads.

Data-driven targeting and creative strategies go hand in hand

Next, Ford NZ turned to cross-funnel audience targeting on the GDN to target the right car buyers at the right moment in their purchase journey. By using Google's audience suite coupled with data from its new lead-nurture website, Ford NZ was able to reach consumers at different stages of their purchase cycle with tailored messaging to drive awareness, consideration, and purchase.



Ford NZ used GDN's affinity audiences to reach auto enthusiasts and drive brand awareness for its vehicles. Affinity audiences enable advertisers to reach a broad segment of consumers with specific interests by utilizing a variety of data signals.

Next, to reach individuals who were already actively researching and considering the purchase of a new vehicle, Ford used in-market audiences. In-market audiences uses data focused on consumer intent to reach consumers who are actively looking to make a purchase. Both of these strategies leveraged Google's audience data to drive awareness and consideration.

Finally, to reengage with its highest-value customers, Ford NZ leveraged its own data for remarketing and to encourage return visits. The company used dynamic creatives to show customized messaging and relevant website content to returning visitors.

"It's critical to use the right data to drive your marketing strategy," says Ford's head of marketing, Chris Masterson. "We learned that there is a unique data insight about our audience at each stage of the

purchase journey. Acting on those right insights opened the door for us to truly deliver the right message at the right moment to the right potential customer.”

The data gathered from interactions was used to create a full suite of dynamic creative. For instance, Ford NZ noticed users were scrolling through the color picker, so it made a banner that cycled through the available car colors, resulting in an increased CTR and higher engagement on site. In this way, Ford NZ was able to ensure relevance at key moments in the customer journey.

The benefits of smart targeting and continuous optimization

As a result of the cross-device GDN campaign, Ford NZ saw a 60% increase YoY in site visits with more than 400,000 visitors, more than half of them new. Time spent on the site grew to more than nine minutes, exceeding the brand’s goal by 50%. Even more impressively, Ford decreased its bounce rate from 65% in 2013 to under 1.5% in 2014.

GDN helped deliver highly engaged potential buyers—exactly the audience Ford NZ hoped to reach. In fact, 5% of call leads—those who called a dealer, signed up for email notifications, or placed an online inquiry—came directly from the GDN.

“GDN’s strength is its ability to cast a wide enough net to the right people at the right time, along with the ability to target efficiently and effectively,” said Peeyoosh Chandra, head of interactive and social, JWT NZ.