

Best at Travel

Helping an online tour operator grow their cross channel marketing activity using Experian data and customer insight

Best At Travel is a tour operator that's spent more than 20 years building a reputation for worldwide tailor made holidays, including Dubai and the Middle East, the Caribbean, Indian Ocean, Asia, USA and Canada.

As the company has grown, so has their online presence and today they have 19 specialist websites dedicated to popular destinations around the world. To keep the business moving forward, Best At Travel started looking at new marketing strategies to build their customer database and grow the business – with a little help from Experian Marketing Services.

Challenge

As an online business the majority of Best At Travel's marketing was website focused, using tools like Google PPC and search engine optimisation to drive sales. However, ambitions to grow the business meant that they also needed to evolve their marketing strategy.

"We knew we couldn't get the business to where we wanted it to be using the same methods we had always used, and you can only get so far with PPC before you reach a point of diminishing return," explains Charlie Bateson, Head of Sales and Marketing at Best At Travel. "So when a plan to reactivate old clients and gain more new business over a 2-3 year period was put in place, the logical step was to target customers through more channels."

As a result, Best At Travel quickly became more analytical as a business. "We knew we needed to increase the size of our database, connect better with past customers and make more money out of things we sell – all while reducing costs," explains Bateson. "So we started looking closer at what drives a sale, what drives a conversion and what's the ROI on everything we're doing".

It was around this time that Best At Travel attended a marketing roundtable event hosted by Experian. Bateson explains, "Experian approached us to discuss how they could help us reach more customers through more channels. Not long afterwards we started working together on our first mailing."

"Every day we're making more informed decisions and now that we have a clearer understanding of Experian's scope and expertise, we're considering opportunities to work together in the future on our long-term marketing plans."

Solution

The first step Experian took was profiling Best At Travel's customer database. This is so the online tour operator can focus their marketing time and budget on the strongest areas of their data to drive more sales while reducing costs.

"Even though we have a good general understanding of our customers, Experian is able to tell us who they are, what they are like and what they buy in far more detail than ever before," explains Bateson.

"Knowing things like a person's propensity to buy certain products at certain times is insight we would never have had without Experian. Now when it comes to targeting, we can really narrow down our segments, saving time and money on mailings."

Once Best At Travel supplied their data to Experian, a full report came back quickly. It contained detailed information on customer characteristics, lifestyle and buying behaviour that Best At Travel can use to target offers and promotions at specific groups. "Experian took the time to understand us and our needs, so we got real, actionable insight from the data."

The second step Experian took was to supplement Best At Travel's database with quality leads that matched the profiles of their best existing customers. This is so Best At Travel can target people most likely to be interested in their products and services. Bateson explains, "Mailing in such high volumes means getting the right data is crucial – even a small percentage increase in response will have a big impact on our return.

"With Experian's support we can look at our data segments more closely and see which ones are over performing or over represented. We can then refine these segments further ready for the next mailing."

Results

Database profiling has given Best At Travel a more holistic approach to marketing, helping them become less reliant on online sales and strengthening the business as a whole.

The first mailing the business sent using insight and data from Experian went to approximately 90,000 customers and generated a response rate of 1.5-2% – a significant increase on previous mailings. Conversion rates in their call centre also improved as more sales enquiries turned into actual bookings.

"We had good strong response rates of 1-1.5% using cold data in the past, but Experian helped us find out exactly what drives a sale so we can make our mailings work even harder," explains Bateson. "Experian's support has really helped the business understand itself better. We've gained the confidence to slice and dice our data, eventually getting down to a fairly granular level in terms of who we target – we're constantly learning and finding new opportunities."

Analysing the data from their first mailing also allowed Best At Travel to narrow their audience further for the second. The second mailing was sent to 93,000 customers also using Experian data. Initial indications suggest that the results will be even better.

For more information please contact us

0845 234 0391

marketing.services@uk.experian.com

www.experian.co.uk/marketing-services

Registered office address:

**The Sir John Peace Building, Experian Way,
NG2 Business Park, Nottingham, NG80 1ZZ**

T: 0845 234 0391

www.experian.co.uk/marketing-services

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