How digital marketing can drive customer acquisition for financial brands

By Bianca Quinn-Diavastos

3 Oct 2016

South African banks and insurers have long struggled with the high costs of customer acquisition and fierce competition to attain new customers. The move online offers them ways to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of their acquisition efforts and gain better visibility into the performance of their marketing spend.

The key here is how financial services companies can use data and analytics tools to streamline their customer journeys and make better informed decisions about their customer acquisition strategies. Today, they have information at their fingertips that can help them to find the best mix of media and engagement tools (lead generation and product offers) to create targeted online and offline customer journeys that reach new customers.

Here are some ways that financial services companies can drive better return on investment (ROI) from their online customer acquisition efforts:

Optimise for mobile

When thinking about ad placements, search engine optimisation and customer conversion, financial services companies would do well to remember that a high proportion of financial transactions and searches for financial products happen on mobile devices. We have found in South Africa that our financial service clients' customers and prospects do most of their research for home loans and short-term insurance on mobile devices.

Embrace programmatic advertising

Programmatic advertising offers more than just advertising reach – it is also a wonderful tool for lead generation and customer acquisition.

Financial services companies can use programmatic advertising to reach the right person, at the right time and at the right price. Programmatic ad buys make it easier to segment audiences, deliver personalised messaging to them, and then measure the results.

©belchonock via 123RF

This means that a financial services brand can see which placements and messages helped to generate leads and convert customers as well as how much these customer acquisitions cost them versus the value they generated. We can take this even further by measuring the value of a lead or customer – for example, the potential value of the interest it could generate from a home loan applicant over the period of the mortgage.

Use remarketing to turbo-charge your efforts

Remarketing is one of the best tools a bank or insurer has at its disposal to improve customer conversions in a cost-effective manner. Remarketing is all about presenting a follow-up digital ad or email message or offer to a customer who has already expressed interest in the brand's products and services.

For example, a customer that has already browsed mortgages on a bank's website is probably looking to buy a house and is thus more likely to convert. The remarketing message needs to be carefully thought-out and reach the person at the right time to ensure conversion. Some questions to consider:

> • What kind of message did they react to the first time? How should this shape the response or follow-up message?• What does history tell us about the journey? For example, have they moved beyond researching a car insurer towards getting quotes?

Make it easy for customers to get in touch

Once the brand has the customer's attention, it shouldn't squander the opportunity by making it difficult for the customer to find out more or get in touch. For example, don't ask a customer to fill in a long form to express interest in a loan – keep it to three or four of the most important questions. Make it easy to look up more information on your website or contact an agent through an instant message or click-to-call link. Again, remember the customer might be engaging with you from a mobile phone and will expect convenience, ease of use and simplicity.

Provide valuable content

Customers shopping for banking or insurance products want information and answers at their fingertips so they can make informed comparisons. It's important to invest in good content that will answer customers' questions when they discover a financial services need and start investigating their options.

Content should be personalised based on what the bank or insurer knows about where the customer is in his or her journey as well as any behavioural or demographic data it has managed to collect. Interactive tools like calculators are also a great way to interact with customers.

Understanding the journey

Building a successful customer acquisition strategy is all about using data and analytics to fully understand the customer journey. This must go far beyond simple metrics like impressions and click-throughs. Financial brands should look at how their audiences react to their messages and offers; How are they engaging? What are they sharing? What are they engaging with the most? What are the touchpoints in their journey?

Furthermore, cost per acquisition is emerging as one of the most important metrics in the digital marketing world and one that financial brands need to embrace in order to measure the real value behind their digital marketing investments. Brands that wish to effectively leverage digital marketing tools to acquire new customers need to engage with digital agency partners who ultimately demonstrate real accountability by measuring their success through harder metrics such as customer acquisition rather than hiding behind the click.

ABOUT BIANCA QUINN-DIAVASTOS

Bianca Quinn-Diavastos is the managing director of the digital marketing agency Jetweb - "Digital on Demand". She has worked in media and publishing since 2006, and has gained a diverse range of experience spanning the marketing and strategic digital industries.

- #BizTrends2018: Personalised advertising, robots and AR - 8 Jan 2018
- Managing your personal brand - 14 Nov 2017
- Five FAQ's about influencer marketing - 31 Jul 2017
- How digital marketing can drive customer acquisition for financial brands - 3 Oct 2016
- Marketing automation adoption key to South African marketers - 6 Sep 2016

View my profile and articles...