

Driver provides timely, relevant lifestyle and industry content, such as movie reviews, vehicle profiles, financing news, and service tips, which subscribers look forward to each month. Embedded links to relevant web pages, like new or pre-owned inventory, drive web site traffic and generate strong leads. Detailed readership analytics let dealers know how many subscribers read each article, how long they spent reading, who clicked through to the web site, who called the dealership, and more. As a result, it's easy to track and compare the effectiveness of each issue and make continuous improvements to the e-newsletter over time.

“Choosing IMN Loyalty Driver was a no-brainer,” said Haynes. “The e-newsletter provides a highly professional look, engaging content, and the ability to track each reader’s interaction for easier, more targeted lead follow-up—all at a surprisingly affordable cost.”

While IMN creates 90% of the content for each e-newsletter, Penske Indianapolis supplements that content with discount service coupons, surveys, a letter from the General Manager, or the occasional company- or dealer-specific news article. “Because IMN does almost all the work behind the scenes—from content creation and distribution to reporting and analytics—the e-newsletter doesn’t put added strain on our dealership resources,” commented Haynes.

A Smooth Ride

In October 2005, Penske Indianapolis sent out its first Loyalty Driver e-newsletter and hasn’t looked back since. In the first month after the initial send, more than 90 customers used the dedicated call tracking number at the top of the e-newsletter to make inquiries or to schedule sales and service appointments. The second e-newsletter contained an article on a Chevrolet Red Tag sale, along with a button readers could click to schedule a test drive a new Chevy. Within an hour of sending out that issue, the dealership had scheduled 15 test drives. An additional 10 test drives were scheduled within the month.

This success proved to be much more than just beginner’s luck. Over time, the e-newsletter has continued to yield impressive results. For example, in June 2006 Penske Indianapolis sent out a “Special Bulletin” e-newsletter to its database of 17,000 Chevy customers announcing General Motors’ limited-time financing rate of 0% for 72 months. “This was big news,” said Haynes. “We felt we owed it to our customers to let them know about this incredible financing offer.” Evidently customers appreciated receiving the news. Over the course of that week, Penske Chevrolet saw a 500% increase in web site traffic and received more than 30 incremental phone calls. “The leads generated from the Special Bulletin blew away our expectations,” added Haynes.

Best of all, the positive impact of the e-newsletter shows no signs of waning. Since Penske Indianapolis started sending the e-newsletter seven months ago, web and phone leads are up 200% per month on average. Open rates for each e-newsletter average between 25% and 35%, while opt-out rates remain incredibly low—always less than 1% and sometimes as low as 0.1%.

Full Speed Ahead

Between its two dealerships, Penske Indianapolis is adding 2,000-4,000 e-mail addresses to its online contact database each month. As they strive to communicate with this rapidly expanding list in the most effective and cost-efficient way possible, the dealerships are continually looking at ways to enhance their Loyalty Driver e-newsletters.

To provide even more value to customers, Penske Indianapolis is now inviting one vendor, such as car care service provider Ziebart, to include a discount coupon in its e-newsletter each month. “It’s a win-win for everyone involved,” explained Haynes. “The customer gets the chance to save money on a reputable service; the vendor gains broad market exposure; and we bring in some money to offset the already low cost of the e-newsletter.”

The success of the e-newsletter has also allowed Penske Indianapolis to cut back on costly direct mail by about 75%. By limiting printed direct mail almost exclusively to those customers who don’t have e-mail addresses, the dealership is enjoying significant savings.

“If my management told me I could use only one Internet product or service to drive business here at Penske Indianapolis, I’d choose IMN Loyalty Driver,” concluded Haynes. “It’s the smartest Internet marketing investment we could make; there’s simply nothing else out there that delivers more bang for your buck.”