



ON THE ROAD FOR A DIGITAL ADVENTURE

With price comparison sites eroding the brand awareness and profitability of specialist insurance providers, Bennetts, the UK's leading bike insurance broker, took a radical new social media-led approach – with astonishing results. HANNAH SQUIRRELL reports.

THE CHALLENGE

Price comparison websites entered the bike insurance market in 2007, providing an easy route to market for new providers, and eroding the core performance of the more traditional, direct-led providers. As a premium brand, Bennetts' brand awareness had declined 14%, direct sales had halved, and the brand was no longer deemed to be standing out in the bike industry.

A completely new brand strategy was required to return the brand to health and achieve its growth and profitability aspirations.

ROLE MODEL: JOURNEY TO NEW DISCOVERIES

THE STRATEGY

Independent brand tracking by Ipsos Mori highlighted the insight that 74% of consumers looking for bike insurance would go directly to a price comparison website as opposed to a direct brand such as Bennetts. Standing out as a specialist provider on aggregators proved impossible – a brand is simply a logo, feature list and price point, and nothing about the brand's unique assets is communicated to consumers. Bennetts needed to acquire more business directly, and to achieve this it needed to increase the frequency of interaction with the brand.

THE EXECUTION

Bennetts placed the biker at the heart of everything it does, with the commitment to spend its direct marketing budget on bikers and their community. Social media was used as the linchpin to the new strategy.

The brand already used 'un-owned' social media platforms (e.g. Facebook, Twitter and YouTube) to position Bennetts as the 'go to' brand for industry news, views, gossip and rider updates and it was already often first to break the news of the most exciting changes in racing, thanks to its well-placed sources around the world.

It created 'money can't buy' experiential promotions via Biking Dreams (where Bennetts enables a biker to undertake a once-in-a-lifetime experience, such as meeting their biking hero, or having a VIP visit to the Ducati factory in Bologna) and promoted these across all social media channels, endorsing the brand's commitment to bikers to drive recall and advocacy of the brand by having the winners blog, status update and tweet about their amazing experiences and share these with the biking community. These were fully integrated to all Bennetts' assets such as Bennetts: LIVE – its highly successful national and regional events programme.

Bennetts also developed full customer servicing across both Facebook and Twitter, delivering on its commitment to being 'easy to do business with'.

The brand then took social to a totally new level by launching its own network – a UK first, Bike Social, designed and built specifically for bikers – a site for bikers to own and get the most from their biking lifestyle and community. This site overcomes the risks of a purely 'un-owned' strategy of data ownership, lost search engine optimisation benefits and consumer privacy. The site brings together

all 'un-owned' social media activity while empowering the biking community to contribute content such as photos, routes, clubs and events via blogs, forums and message boards.

PROOF THAT IT WORKED

Key objectives of the new brand strategy included:

- significantly increased direct sales
- improved brand metrics on every key metric: most strongly around awareness and 'a brand supporting bikers and their community'
- 50,000 Facebook fans, 5,000 Twitter followers and 2 million YouTube views
- reduced advertising spend as a result of brand advocacy across the biking community
- reduction in complaints by offering customer service via social media networks.

ACHIEVEMENTS

- Two successive years of record sales
- number one brand across ten key factors including 'specialist brand', 'is part of the biking community' and 'does more for bikers than any other brand'
- brand awareness up 20%
- complaints down 65% and 'number one for customer service' crown stolen from a competitor
- over 84,000 Facebook followers, more than all competitors and also major bike brands including Honda, Silverstone and Triumph
- nearly 9,000 Twitter followers and well over 2 million YouTube views
- over 300,000 visits to Bike Social without any advertising

- £1.2 million reduction in PPC spend (spent on bikers instead who advocate the Bennetts brand throughout the community).

VALUE ADDED

Bennetts is on a journey to becoming the true biking brand and its success trajectory is expected to continue, further widening the space between its market leadership and the competition. The evolution of this radical strategy is expected to deliver:

- the top ranking on natural search (eliminating PPC spend)
- continued record sales volumes
- 500,000 bikers regularly interacting with Bike Social, with 32% of returning visitors every day
- new revenue streams – brand appeal across all things biking, not just insurance
- elimination of marketing spend that does not benefit bikers and their communities. ■



Bennetts' new brand strategy proved to be a startling success

