BIG DATA

HOW IS IT IMPACTING SALES IN THE AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY?
The market for Big Data is set to grow to a staggering $47bn by 2017.

How many times have you heard the term Big Data so far this year? More often than you care to remember? As a whole, Big Data is a pretty vague term for what has quickly become a global phenomenon affecting most of us, both as automotive consumers and professionals.

The market for Big Data was worth little over $3bn in 2010, yet this is set to grow to a staggering $47bn by 2017. The value of Big Data is huge, but many still don’t see the value of it just yet, to many of us, it is still something relatively new, particularly in traditional industries such as the automotive aftermarket or truck parts.

For those ‘in the know’, Big Data encompasses the huge amount of structured, semi-structured and unstructured data that has the potential to be mined for valuable information. Big Data is bigger than we think it is, in fact it’s getting bigger every day to the point that most organizations are faced with the incredibly daunting task of analyzing it. To that end, most don’t.
How is Big Data impacting the automotive industry?

The impact of Big Data on the automotive industry is huge, from connected vehicles to smarter management of dealerships, manufacturers and even production lines. Both vehicle and parts manufacturers are increasingly prioritizing strategies that demand an uplift in new business, customer retention and constant ROI. But the vast majority of companies simply don’t yet realize the part that Big Data can play in ensuring these stretching business goals are within reach, rather than pipe dreams.

Big Data can help at every single step of the supply chain, from product planning and fault monitoring through to marketing, sales and guaranteed customer loyalty.

We all know that customers in every industry are getting more needy and demand more attention from you as their supplier. Whether they’re buying a new car or looking for brake pads, you need to be able to respond quickly, with the right information and always at the right price.
What does this mean for your company?

Despite a demanding customer, there’s no reason for you to not to be keeping ahead of the pack in the automotive industry. In short, the rise of Big Data simply means that you are able to keep your finger on the pulse of what is happening within your business at any given moment. You’ll no longer have to wait for IT to pull your business reports or the warehouse to update you on the status of a particular order, yet it will be available in seconds at the click of a mouse or at a touch of your smartphone.

Big Data has paved the way for Big Data solutions that process every single scrap of your business’ data and presents it back to you in a format that is easy to manage and interpret. Enter dashboards, simple reports and charts that can tell you all you need to know in seconds.
The changing face of automotive sales

Your sales operation is just one of the areas that can benefit from Big Data. In today’s market, salespeople need to be more switched on and able to stay on top of market changes, able to ride the peaks and troughs that come with every sales territory.

While the industry ‘big boys’ like GM, Delphi and Bosch continually flood the market with their billion dollar sales and marketing budgets every year, it is all too easy to get lost in a sea of marketing messages and sales calls.

Big Data can, however, ensure that your sales calls are timely, your reason for calling is defined and the content of your call is valuable to the person on the other end of the phone. In short, data is making cold calling a thing of the past and lets you, as an automotive supplier, compete directly with the industry giants. It levels the sales playing field.

The reason sales teams are improving

The sales teams of today are improving, becoming smarter than ever before and more aware of competitor activity, customer needs and changes in the market. A lot of this is down to the growth of sales and business technology tools that are empowering salespeople to work that bit smarter.

Big Data has afforded many automotive companies the means to utilize the reams of data clogging up their business, transforming them into detailed customer profiles, actionable insights and using them to create more intelligent sales techniques.

Sales teams now have more access to a range of tools that can make selling as streamlined as possible. The advance of technology leaves salespeople free to do what they were hired to do: sell. It can automate admin tasks, find prospects, send emails for you and even prepare proposals. Removing this extra legwork leaves your team able to concentrate on closing the deal.
How can you improve your sales?

For any sales operation, the end game is closing a deal and getting that elusive ‘yes’ from your prospect before your competitors get there. Or, if you’re clever, it might be securing a more profitable cross or switch-sell within your existing customer base. Either way, it’s about making money.

And that’s really where Big Data can come into its own. As previously mentioned, Big Data has led to an influx of Big Data software. Enter Business Intelligence (BI) solutions. These powerful pieces of software sit on top of your current ERP system or accounting package (including the likes of Sage, SAP, MAM and Infor) and turn your data into actionable customer insights and sales opportunities, allowing you to increase your customers’ spend and boost their loyalty too.

Introducing BI to your company will not only deliver a complete 360° view of your customer but can also allow your sales and marketing teams to perform detailed segmentation to make smart decisions when it comes to outperforming the competition.
The impact of data on customer retention

While data continues to reign supreme across the automotive industry, many often neglect to see how it will (and should) benefit your customers. When it is applied properly, Big Data can have such a vast impact upon customer loyalty and ultimately retention. It's a wonder why we haven’t been exploiting data all along.

In its simplest form, Big Data can take the shape of your company’s CRM system. But it’s often the transactional, ‘hard’ data that can really make a noticeable impact. When analyzed properly, every sale, invoice and order can provide a clear-cut insight into where your next big sales opportunity lies.

Having a granular level of insight into your customer behavior can be a powerful tool in outsmarting the competition while maintaining your customers’ loyalty. Many automotive suppliers are already introducing software that can provide this kind of information in seconds.

Think about it: if you are an aftermarket supplier and brake discs are one of your top sellers, wouldn’t it be wise to work out where your customers are getting their brake pads from? This would highlight the perfect opportunity to offer an exclusive promotion to those customers to secure their business and take it from your competitors.
How can data improve customer retention?

Better customer care and management

With a complete understanding of who your customer is, what they tend to buy, what they aren’t buying and so on, you can supply a level of customer care that will ensure their loyalty.

Using Big Data, automotive suppliers can maintain a profitable and positive relationship with their customers. Powerful analytics can empower customer service teams to be proactive in their nature, so they can check in with customers before they even have to think about calling your customer service department. Any company that is proactive in their customer service, putting in a courtesy call every now and then will likely secure their customers’ lasting loyalty.
How is Big Data impacting sales in the automotive industry?

Better identify needs of customers
Big Data also has the potential to identify the forthcoming needs of your customers, so you, as their supplier, can swoop in and fulfill them before your competition even gets wind of an opportunity.

For example, you can use your call notes, purchasing trends and other customer data to predict what your customer may purchase next, and which product line would be best for their needs. By taking the time to match customers to the right product, they are less likely to shop around or leave you for another supplier.
How is Big Data impacting sales in the automotive industry?

**Powerful and personal promotions**

Marketing can be one of the biggest beneficiaries of Big Data. As a department, marketers are constantly using data to track, monitor and analyze market conditions, campaign performance and drive ROI. With Big Data analytics in place, marketers can extract precise information that will allow them to design truly personalized campaigns that pack a punch with your customers.

Any good Business Intelligence system will let you harness the data you need to create bespoke campaigns. Let’s look at an example and say you wanted to find all of your customers in London that had purchased oil filters from you but not the oil itself (easy link-sell) in the last 12 months and had Company X as your competition, your BI system will be able to deliver that information in a few seconds as it feeds on your company’s transactional data.
Will the pace of change continue to accelerate?

The automotive industry is constantly moving and the rise of Big Data will only bolster the pace of change within the industry. There’s pretty much no limit to where the automotive industry could go with Big Data.

Within the next decade or so, we’ll see the rise of connected driving, even driverless cars could become mainstream. For the automotive supplier, Big Data will be a huge opportunity. Cars could soon be connected in their entirety, from helping to drive the car itself, to predicting traffic delays, watching the weather and even paying tolls for you.

Your car could soon be monitoring the wear of its parts, tires, brakes and every other consumable. When do they need replacing? When does the vehicle need servicing? How many miles have you got left to run on your brakes? The entire maintenance of a car could be managed remotely and having this information a few clicks away could be like gold dust for the everyday garage or parts supplier.

What about in the short term?

In the short term, however, Big Data and its analysis has quickly become one of the biggest assets within the automotive space. It is already at the heart of many of the largest manufacturer and supplier businesses in the industry. But for the more modestly sized company, Big Data can be the next logical step in creating a more profitable, smarter business. Analytics tools such as Business Intelligence will continue to grow in influence, as will sales technology, and those who are the early adopters will be in pole position to beat their competition.
MAKE EVERY CALL
PRODUCTIVE AND RELEVANT

One call using sales-i yielded a $5,000 order from an account that was leaving us for a competitor, he felt we did not care, sales-i showed him we did.

Ron Dahlhaus, Prostock Automotive

How is Big Data impacting sales in the automotive industry?

sales-i is a powerful cloud based Business Intelligence solution that joins your ERP data together with your CRM data to give you actionable sales information for each and every customer. We turn a good sales person into a great one.

www.sales-i.com/request-demo

About us