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Add a Personal Touch to Automotive Marketing



By [Chad M. Beasley](#)
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Liven up your consumers' experience with more online personal connections. Jumpstart Automotive Media explains.

We work in and for an industry that can be quite impersonal, especially when driven by search, email, IM, servers reacting automatically to calls... all without direct connection to a human personality. From the consumer side, there is something independently powerful about booking our own travel, banking without walking into a bank and even researching the price of a new car to the point that a dealer has little negotiation power when we walk into the dealership.

But, there has been a recent emerging of companies focused on more personal relationships/connections in the online auto market. This article will start a series focused on technology partners that strive to bring a little human interaction and trust to websites and online ads.

eStara

Daimler Chrysler was looking for a solution to improve how it finds, engages and funnels prospective Chrysler buyers to local dealerships. It already has a B-to-C website to optimize the process of finding prospects, initiating dialogue, engaging the prospect and funneling them to the dealer to purchase a vehicle. But, like all OEM brands, The Chrysler Group is challenged to increase the conversion of website visitors into actual buyers. To do this, it needed a solution that would help it identify "high value" leads from its sites, respond quickly and effectively, and refer them to their local dealerships when appropriate.

The Chrysler Group incorporated eStara's push-to-talk and agent console services across key purchasing points on its brand websites. eStara's technology lets online buyers transition within the context of their online session into immediate telephone or PC-based voice contact with sellers.

More specifically, eStara's push-to-talk allows visitors to place a call directly from web pages where near-term buyers commonly land, by using either their landline, cell phone or voice-equipped PC to place a call that is immediately routed to the most appropriate contact point in the Chrysler Group contact center. Whether customers were making a purchasing decision, applying for financing, or just needed an answer on how to configure a vehicle for a quote, a Chrysler Group representative was at the other end for assistance.



eStara also provides an agent console, which allows clients to contact a center agent to synchronize voice and data logs of the web-based call to allow the agent to see on their PC screen exactly which page the consumer is calling from. This helps them to quickly determine the caller's needs and, therefore, deliver the right web content back to the customer.

Specific to Chrysler, the product has converted 20 percent of push-to-talk calls compared to 10 percent for standard inbound calls. The call completion rate off the push-to-talk button was 92 percent and the total call volume increased, as 10 percent of total calls are now push-to-talk. Most importantly, according to the Chrysler Group, twice as many push-to-talk customers are converting to purchase versus standard inbound calls.

LiveMarkets

The internet also provides a safe haven for those who just hate the phone... really the only platform that allows consumers to funnel their way through a purchase cycle without ever speaking with someone on the phone. However, sometimes further information or guidance is needed just prior to making that final purchase decision.

LiveMarkets launched a service in April that lets website visitors click on an advertisement and immediately IM chat with a salesperson from the marketer. It has taken the popularity of live chat to provide real time purchase relevancy.

The technology allows chat to be input within a standard IAB ad, text link or any HTML. The chat windows can be "skinned" a number of different ways, including the color scheme, background, and the shape of the window itself. For publishers, the technology allows for visitors to never leave the content or site by letting the conversation happen in a chat window floating above the site.



The biggest task with this product is staffing a chat center with enough knowledgeable employees to increase rapport with prospects. Incoming chat requests are routed to the associate with the fewest chats in progress, and LiveMarkets can assist in determining on a per-campaign basis how many simultaneous chats each associate should be able to handle before redirecting to web pages. LiveMarkets is very new and the initial performance benchmarks are just coming in.

Both eStara and LiveMarkets seem most relevant for Tier 2 and 3 auto marketers that are very close to selling a car... a real person on the other end is sometimes vital to provide further information and recommendations and, ultimately, the final sell through. The greatest positive about both is immediacy, but the greatest threat is poor targeting. Ultimately, they allow consumers the information they might need and want on their terms, without the shunned direct salesperson or phone call.

Stay tuned next time for the latest products from Rovion, including a very interesting case study from a mega dealer.

Chad M. Beasley is senior vice president of marketing at [Jumpstart Automotive Media](#). [Read full bio](#).