

Digitising the showroom experience

 By [Michael Frans](#)

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Automotive dealers can take advantage of the latest in mobile, cloud and beacon technology - to digitise their showrooms and distinguish themselves with interactive customer experiences.



@goodluz via [123RF](#)

With the right mix of technology, customers can enjoy an augmented showroom browsing experience - with mobile apps that interact with beacons on the showroom floor. This provides more information about the vehicles on show, video demonstrations, photos, pricing and financing options, and the ability to easily book test drives or meetings with advisors.

With their engagements logged, dealerships can follow-up with customers and target specific offers based on their behaviour, giving dealers unprecedented insights into potential customers' interests and needs.

Extending the showroom experience

But perhaps most importantly, digitisation enables dealers to 'extend the showroom experience'. This is most applicable in areas like:

- Customers can now engage with the mobile app, download information, and find out more about vehicles and offers whenever they want. This creates something of a 'virtual showroom' - open 24 hours a day, from wherever the customer may be.
- Dealers can now maximise their activations in places like shopping malls, shows, exhibitions and other events. For example, if company representatives are not around, people can still engage with vehicles on display using digital interfaces like an app to find out more, get contact details, or book test drives.
- In busier times, when sales representatives are all engaged with clients, dealerships can cater for higher numbers of visitors by providing all the information customers need in a digital format, and following up with interested customers at a later stage.

Importantly, the dealer's digital, interactive showroom can be easily connected to the servicing side of their business - linking up maintenance and service schedules, spare parts orders, and other operational areas.

This allows service staff to attain high quality customer engagements, keeping customers informed with accurate views of where a car is in the servicing process, what parts need to be replaced, and other pertinent details.

Getting closer to the customer

The advantage of digitisation is gaining a truly singular view of each individual customer and their history with the dealership, and the cars in which they've shown an interest.

When mashed up with external unstructured data, such as social media feeds, the dealership can build comprehensive customer profiles - to provide that personalised touch that engenders customer loyalty.

Digitising the showroom also creates the platform for future innovations, including exciting concepts like virtual reality test drives that deliver rich, immersive experiences. Imagine test driving your car along California's mythic 'Big Sur highway', with the raging Pacific Ocean beneath you, all from a standard showroom in South Africa.

The future is now

New-age digital innovations bring all of these opportunities within easy reach of dealers. With the right technology, new insights generated from apps and beacons are automatically added to one's customer profile databases. Prompts and alerts help sales consultants by matching individual customers, with special offers or test drive opportunities.

In fact, with a simple deployment of just a few beacons, and some initial content uploading and systems integration, it's possible to have a modern digital showroom up-and-running in less than a week.

From a financial perspective, this newly-digitised environment enables easier measurement of the lead generation performance - allowing dealers to prove tangible ROI on their digital investments.

2016 will be the year that the showroom finally evolves from being highly physical and paper-based, to an integrated, digital entity that transforms the customer's enjoyment, and increases brand affiliation and sales potential.

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