

Redefining the Customer Experience in the Tire Replacement Market

halfords

The Challenge: Fitting Ecommerce to Tire Service

Buying tires is often a distressed purchase from punctures, damage or wear and tear and the customer experience from visiting a fitting depot not always the best. Halfords Mobile Expert (HME) wanted to improve the customer experience offering an online-based mobile fitting service that brings the garage to the customer. By making the purchasing and scheduling processes as quick and easy as possible, and allowing customers to select their service time, HME is taking advantage of increasing consumer sentiment to have more of their goods and services “delivered”—and the pandemic has accelerated adoption as deliveries can be conducted in a contactless fashion.

Route Planning Enhances the Driveway Experience

HME is a fast-growing operation. It believes that delivering a superior customer experience has been the key to its success so controlling the experience on the driveway as well as measuring it have always been critical. They have been able to achieve (hundreds or tens of) thousands of five star reviews from Trustpilot, the global consumer review service. Operational efficiency and effective route planning were critical as mobile service-based organizations are expensive to operate and they wanted to reduce the stress on technicians’ execution of the day’s work to retain valued employees.

HME faced many of the challenges of a successful ecommerce startup. Every process was manual and they used point solutions to solve various logistics and customer-facing situations. In addition, they were limited by their technology in terms of the level of service they could perform such as only being able to offer half-day service appointment windows. To scale the business and offer more advanced service proposition such as 2-hour and 4-hour windows and offering a 24/7 booking for their customers they needed to adopt more advanced solutions. In addition, HME needed to improve the productivity of service routes to be able to serve increasing customer demand and reduce costs.

Company Profile

Halfords Mobile Expert
Motoring and cycling products
and services

Descartes Solution

Descartes Last Mile Delivery Solution

About the Client

Halfords is the U.K.’s leading retailer of motoring and cycling products and services. Through Halfords Autocentres, it is also one of the U.K.’s leading independent operators in vehicle servicing, maintenance and repairs. Headquartered in Redditch, West Midlands, Halfords employs nearly 10,000 colleagues up and down the country.

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Dynamically Scheduling and Pricing Service Appointments at Point-of-Sale

To enhance their customer experience and help improve operational efficiency HME chose to implement a dynamic service appointment scheduling solution from Descartes. The Descartes solution allows HME to present unique delivery appointment options based upon the buyer purchase and location, existing orders, fleet capacity, road network restrictions and a number of other factors. These options are scored so that HME can choose which options to present to the customer at the point of sale. The options provide choice for the consumer and help drive service appointment density, which improves efficiency.

HME took its delivery appointment service to the next level by implementing dynamic appointment pricing based upon the delivery appointment options provided by Descartes and an algorithm that considered other factors. Dynamic pricing allows HME to better represent the cost of individual service appointment options and influences buyer behavior to drive delivery density and efficiency. It has helped the improve the organization's operating margins.

Innovating by Optimizing Pay-Per-Click Spend with Service Capacity

Based upon the Descartes solution, HME also created another innovation called pay-per-click (PPC) optimization. As an online business, HME uses online PPC advertising extensively to drive demand for its services. It is one of their largest marketing expenses, so they did not want to waste PPC investment when demand in a given area was close to exceeding the capacity of the service technicians in that area. As the service technicians are highly trained and finite, HME could not use 3rd parties to meet the demand that exceed capacity. Instead, they would use the forward-looking capacity in the Descartes solution to help them reduce PPC advertising in specific geographies, maximising the return on marketing spend.

Driving Contactless Service with Mobile Application

To help their service technicians consistently successfully conduct their service at the customer' home, HME developed a custom mobile application that steps the service technician through the tire removal and installation process, capturing service data and picture of the installation. With the mobile application that was integrated to the Descartes service appointment solution, the service technician had all of the information they need to conduct the service and required no contact with the customer – a big benefit during the pandemic. HME also took the opportunity to build addition automotive service checks to enhance their customer database for recommended maintenance and additional inform on the wear performance of specific tire brands and car combinations.



A New Class of Tire Replacement

HME has taken tire replacement service to the next level by designing the whole tire fitting process for an online business, combining a compelling customer experience with operation excellence. Their leading-edge approach to service strategies, tactics and technologies have allowed them to quickly grow into a nationwide service. The Descartes service appointment scheduling solution has been a fundamental element of HME's approach and has provided them with a platform to help drive top and bottom-line performance.