Low-cost examples of targeted marketing

Car-Sharing providers in general don’t have large budgets for marketing. Thus they must make the best possible use of available funds to reach their target audience. Cost-heavy advertising efforts such as paid advertisements in print media may reach a broad audience, but they are often spread too thin to effectively reach the intended target. In this fact sheet, we present several good examples of focussed, low-cost, target group-specific marketing measures for Car-Sharing.

Soliciting new customers around new Car-Sharing stations

New Car-Sharing stations are often established as an upfront investment by the provider. At the time of the station opening, there are generally not enough individual or commercial customers within walking distance of the station to enable the vehicle to be used to full capacity. It is thus wise for the provider to increase marketing efforts in the immediate area of a new station. In this way, issues such as the walking distance to the new station, the parking pressure in the area or the high cost of rented parking spaces can be brought up. Time-limited introductory offers for new customers around the new location also strengthen the hoped-for quick decision to sign up.

Looking for interest in not-yet-served neighbourhoods or districts

Often comparatively few Car-Sharing customers live in neighbourhoods or districts that are less urban. As Car-Sharing providers cannot set up vehicle locations that are economically viable during a neighbourhood’s development phase, current customers must travel sometimes a long distance to the nearest Car-Sharing station. What can be done in these situations to build a large enough customer base to bring a station in a new district or neighbourhood to full capacity as quickly as possible?

Car-Sharing providers can determine the minimum number of customers needed for any potential station location and then publicise among their members the number of existing customers and interested parties in the area.

Fig. 1: Advertising flyer for a new Car-Sharing station in Aachen (Source: cambio Aachen, StadtteilAuto Car Sharing GmbH)
Satisfied customers and keen users solicit new customers

“The first customer is drawn in by your advertising, all the rest by your service.” This marketing rule definitely applies to Car-Sharing. If you ask Car-Sharing providers how their new customers found out about Car-Sharing and by whom they were approached, word-of-mouth advertising by current Car-Sharing users is always first. This implies two things: current customers must be happy with the product and service of their provider, and they must be well informed and interested enough in Car-Sharing that they bring it up as a topic of conversation with the people around them.

Apart from the basics of high-quality service and customer friendliness, Car-Sharing providers can actively stimulate word-of-mouth advertising among their customers with two measures: first, they can keep customers up to date and keep up their interest in further developments with a customer newsletter or an e-mail newsletter. Second, rewards can be offered to those who bring in new customers. For example, every new Car-Sharing customer signed up can mean “driving credits” deposited into the account of the customer who signed him or her up.

Information packages for new residents

Changes in living situations are a good opportunity to develop new habits, and a move to a new city or to an unfamiliar neighbourhood serves as a reason for a household to give some thought to new mobility arrangements. Daily routes have to be planned anew, offering a chance to try out new modes of transport. Some local authorities offer new residents who move from other cities an information package which provides – along with valuable information on life in the unfamiliar city – cost and schedule information for public transport. It would be useful if this opportunity could be used to also selectively distribute Car-Sharing information. As the addresses of new residents cannot be given to Car-Sharing operators for privacy reasons, collaboration with the city is necessary to implement such a campaign.

That could provide an incentive to current users to solicit new members in their neighbourhood. This could also be supported by time-limited special offers.

Such a measure of focussed local solicitation was carried out by the German providers teilAuto Tübingen and Kay-Bee CarSharing, Würzburg.
Connecting the idea of Car-Sharing with public life in a city or neighbourhood

Car-Sharing is seen in many cities and regions as a new and innovative mobility service. A Car-Sharing provider with strong connections to the public life of a city or district strengthens this positive impression. It also allows for concrete information about the convenience of Car-Sharing to be carried into broader circles of society. Examples of some opportunities worth mentioning are:

- A Car-Sharing information stand at a district street festival or a citywide festival;
- A local festival as a thematic “hook” for a Car-Sharing marketing campaign: Stadt-mobil Rhein-Main started a special offer at the Frankfurt Grüne Sosse Festival (Grüne Sosse – literally “green sauce” – is a traditional food in Frankfurt in spring);
- A Car-Sharing contribution to European Mobility Week.
Marketing Examples

Further information:

On Munich’s new residents’ package: Münchner Verkehrsgesellschaft mbH (Munich public transport union), state capital Munich, local authority presentation: Gscheid mobil in Munich. Munich 2009 (in German)
On European Mobility Week: http://www.mobilityweek-europe.org/ (in English)

Author
Willi Loose
Bundesverband CarSharing e.V.
Hausmannstr. 9-10
30159 Hannover
Germany
willi.loose@carsharing.de
www.carsharing.de

momo project co-ordination
City of Bremen
The Senator for Environment, Construction, Transport and European Affairs
Michael Glotz-Richter & Michael Frömming
Ansgaritorstr. 2
28195 Bremen, Germany
Tel.: +49 (0) 421 361 174 85,
Fax: +49 (0) 421 496 174 85
momo@umwelt.bremen.de
www.momo-cs.eu

Belgium
Bond Beter Leefmilieu
www.bondbeterleefmilieu.be
Taxistop
www.taxistop.be
International Association for Public Transport
www.uitp.org

Greece
Center for Renewable Energy Sources
www.cres.gr

Czech Republic
Institute for Environmental Policy
http://ekopolitika.cz

Ireland
Mendes GoCar Ltd. & GoCar CarSharing
www.mendes.ie, www.gocar.ie

Finland
Motiva
www.motiva.fi

Italy
Italian Ministry of Environment, Land and Sea (IME)
www.minambiente.it
Italian Board for New Technologies Energy and Environment (ENEA)
www.enea.it

Germany
The Senator for Environment, Construction, Transport and European Affairs
http://bauumwelt.bremen.de
Cambio Mobilitätsservice GmbH
www.cambio-carsharing.de

Spain
Foundation Sustainable and Safety Mobility
www.fundaciomobilitatsostenible.org

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