Industry	Challenge	Solution	Benefits
Online	carsales.com Ltd sought to upgrade from its legacy ad server to a unified platform and better harness their data for competitive advantage.	SAS® Intelligent Advertising for Publishers	An integrated, Cloud-based platform with a simple pricing structure. As a technology partner, not a media provider, SAS doesn't compete with carsales or profit from their data.

carsales accelerates into the data-driven future with SAS®

The digital advertising industry relies heavily on technology to help support the millions of ads it serves every day to potential customers. Any technological issues, especially those that lead to any downtime in service, can result in a huge loss of potential revenue.

At any point in time, classified advertising website, carsales.com, runs over 3000 campaigns on behalf of 500 advertisers. Commercial Director of carsales.com Ltd, Anthony Saines, is responsible for the company's display advertising business, called MediaMotive, which accounts for over 25 per cent of the organisation's overall business revenue.

Each month, carsales serves an average of 150 million ads on mobile devices, 140 million on apps, and 330 million on desktops. "This is over half-a-billion ads each month that are delivered by our ad server," Saines says.

He says the ever-increasing number of online ads is proof of how data driven the world is becoming. "The future of advertising is all about becoming data rich and understanding more about customers," he says. "The more you know about customers the more you are able to predict where they are in their purchase cycle and what type of offer to give to them at that point in time. Having this data means getting sophisticated about ensuring offline and online data is amalgamated, analysed, segmented, and then making the best use of this."

Saines quotes the statistic that over the next five years, the marketing department will spend more on technology than the CIO. "This is where we are planning to go with carsales," he says. "The knowledge we glean from the data we collect will drive our own marketing efforts. It will also help us yield more from our audience when they are not just on our site. We know people are in the market for a car, we know what type of car they want, but there is a long purchase cycle and they are not always on our site 24/7."

But, Saines says, having the insights and ability to act on those insights means carsales can engage better with this audience and increase yield from them even when they are on other sites. "For this you need great data-driven strategies," he says.

While the industry is benefiting from the amount of data available, there remain challenges. One of the main ones for carsales is maximising the revenue for each user who comes to the site.

"You want each visitor to either buy or sell cars and while they are reading the editorial on the site, we also want to put targeted, relevant ads in front of them," Saines says. "But we need to ensure that the right ad is going to the right person at the right time."

He adds the better carsales is at doing this, then the better its yield, the better the customer engagement and the happier advertisers will be as they will receive a higher return on investment.

"We want to give our advertisers better value but our audience also wants to see more relevant targeted advertising as it makes their experience on the site much richer," Saines says.

At the heart of carsales' MediaMotive business is its ad server. "To continue to perform at the level we do, we rely heavily on our ad server," Saines says. "We face challenges in our industry every day and we need to make sure our ad server is able to meet these challenges."

In 2013, carsales moved its ad server to SAS® Intelligent Advertising. "It was a big decision to move from our previous supplier but we knew SAS was a highly competent solutions provider," Saines says. "One of the main advantages for us is that SAS isn't a media provider and therefore will never compete with us, nor profit from our data – which was the risk with staying with our previous supplier."

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While we don't have a business if we don't have an ad server, it was vitally important to protect and ring-fence our data as well."

There were also operational reasons for choosing SAS. "IA is a single platform solution that combines all the services," Saines says. "The SAS pricing is also much simpler. Rather than pay a different price for every service we require, we were offered an all-you-can-eat price in terms of product functionality. IA is also built on today's technology and not on a legacy system."

Saines says this means it has the promise of providing previously unavailable insights and reporting functionality. "We're not taking advantage of all its functionality yet but we have a roadmap that we are working closely with SAS' R&D department to roll out. We didn't take the risk of an ad server migration lightly: you only do a migration like this if you are convinced the product is better."

Another benefit of not being built on a legacy system is that IA offers a cloud-based solution – a feature that was important for carsales. "It is critical to be able to go into our system and interrogate it so we know how much inventory we have at any point in time," Saines says. "This is crucial for maximising revenue and yield."

He adds a cloud-based solution also means forecasting can be based on every ad call ever made rather than on a select sample from a point in time. "Sample forecasting means you can get your predictions wrong and undersell something or take a booking you can no longer deliver," he says. "Forecasting that is enabled by the cloud makes a huge difference from a revenue point of view."

While carsales is still early in its journey with SAS it is excited about the future possibilities the partnership offers.

"We knew we were going out on a limb but the solution was tailored for us and this has made a big difference," Saines says. "We are not the biggest publisher but we get a higher yield than our competitors through having a state-of-the-art ad server and the ability to forecast, segment and target our customers. The ability to achieve this makes SAS the right call for us."

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>
> Anthony Saines
> Commercial Director

To contact your local SAS office, please visit: sas.com/offices

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