

IBM

Putting innovation in the driver's seat

Audi UK brings smarter
experiences to customers

by Allison Leking
5-minute read



It was a drizzly morning in London that gave citywide permission for a lazy Saturday. Olivia lounged in her cozy flat sipping warm tea and listening to the soft patter of rain. In the market for a new car, she was casually poking around online.

Olivia tapped out www.audi.co.uk. She had been lusting after luxury vehicle brand Audi because of its reputation for beautiful design, top-of-the-line performance and exceptional owner experiences. The website felt like it had been designed with Olivia in mind. It was intuitive and immersive, pulling her from her couch into the driver's seat, with beautiful images and clear specifications. Olivia's Saturday just got a little more interesting as she clicked "Book a test drive."

With 90% of car purchases now starting online, Audi UK, which operates under parent company Volkswagen Group, is reimagining its digital experiences to complement the entire customer journey. Audi's exceptional experiences and brand philosophy, "Vorsprung durch Technik," or "Advancement through Technology," begin at the first touchpoint—the website—and continue through the entire customer and ownership journey, culminating in the vehicle itself.

Committed to smart design and constant evolution, Audi anticipates the needs and preferences of the next generation of Audi drivers, aiming to deepen their connection and loyalty to the brand. Customers are motivated by various aspects of car-buying: price, experience, product, technology, safety. How can the Audi UK website make it easy for customers to interact with Audi based on whichever element is most prominent for them?

COVID-19 has made the online experience even more important as car dealerships have had to close or limit operations. As COVID-19 continues to affect economies worldwide, one might think that consumers aren't clamoring to purchase luxury cars. So, while car sales plunged 29% in the UK in one year, how did Audi UK see a 59% increase in leads year over year?



Lead generation increased

59%

in 2020

Audi UK developers
deliver tools

75%

faster

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Delivering 75% faster with agile approach



Audi sought true digital transformation and smarter experiences pre- and post-purchase. Following the agile, user-focused [IBM Garage™ Methodology](#), and working with [IBM iX®](#), the Audi and IBM team co-created a strategic roadmap for transformation. To deliver customer-centric tools that enhance the user experience, Audi and IBM reimagined how they could deliver new innovations to the Audi website. To improve digital front-end development and analytics, the team tapped into the [IBM and Adobe partnership](#) and moved to the latest version of [Adobe Experience Manager](#).

The first challenge was cutting development cycles, which were averaging between 6 and 12 months. More often than not, by the time Audi delivered customer-requested functionality it was no longer relevant. After working with IBM to adopt agile practices such as pair programming and two-week sprint cycles, developers are delivering tools in three months—up to 75% faster. Solutions built and scaled this year include a test-drive booking application, vehicle maintenance scheduler and part exchange calculator. These tools improve the customer experience and encourage brand loyalty.

Through coaching and practice, the Audi and IBM teams collaborated to establish new ways of working. Development squads adopted agile principles, organized into scrum teams and selected product owners who attended weekly product refinement sessions. The Audi development team moved from project-oriented deployments to a continuous delivery engine churning out new tools and functionality based on user feedback. As a result, Audi began delivering more relevant functionality faster.

Jay Sadier, Head of Digital Product & Transformation at Audi UK, explains: “We are able to turn around to our leadership team and show what we’ve delivered. It’s a testament to the way that we’ve been working with IBM. We are not just talking agile; we are proving it through delivery.”



Driving the future via the cloud



Audi's cloud transformation is purely driven by user experience. Yet its back-end architecture had been built over years and had become fragmented and challenging to maintain. Audi is now building for the future instead of reactively deploying new pages and applications. Moving to a cloud environment provided greater flexibility, scalability and security when delivering new features to the infrastructure.

Webpages are responsive and integrate with the Adobe Experience Manager content management system (CMS), which offers a lot of flexibility in the development architecture. With this new back-end and front-end framework, Audi content editors are empowered to complete everyday content changes so that developers can focus on more complex tasks. Audi is also creating

libraries of reusable components, such as an application framework that has reduced initial setup time from weeks to minutes.

Following user-centered design principles, application development teams involved customers in design discussions and tested prototypes with user groups. Then, they iterated based on that feedback before scaling. Audi's model pages followed this process with great results. After various discussions with customer panels, the team decided to create customer journeys and more immersive experiences from a digital product perspective. The pages launched in early 2020, giving customers—like Olivia—the ability to view vehicle information, including high-quality visuals, details about technology and key differentiators that Audi offers.

A custom website demands a custom analytics package. So, the Audi and IBM team built the Audi analytics platform from scratch on [Adobe Analytics](#). The IBM team brought Adobe expertise to the project and provided education around advanced tools so that analytics would become part of the development cycle.

Previously, Audi didn't have standardized data reporting or analytical insights for its digital activity, so the team first established a core level of reporting across the digital landscape. Reports include basic metrics such as page views up through advanced customized events and variables. Analytics provide marketing insights and help pinpoint and mitigate technical issues. For example, Audi reduced customer submission errors by 90%, from 10% to 1%.



Getting 50% more to customers



Audi can now make business and customer-experience decisions based on data rather than assumptions. Through data, the team can see holistic customer journeys and understand how consumers interact with the site. This insight helps Audi continuously optimize what is working and scratch what isn't. Antony Roberts, Head of Digital at Audi UK, says: "In a matter of 18 months, we went from being very poor in terms of the data analytics that we were able to present, to being incredibly rich. We've been able to prove that across the entire VW Group in the UK, the Audi brand has the most effective online platform and we generate the highest number of leads that result in a sale."

Audi has embraced the challenge to reinvent and evolve its brand's digital touchpoints, which set the tone for the whole customer journey. Not even a pandemic is going to stop Audi from providing the best customer experience. "Regarding COVID, the transition to working virtually was actually seamless," says Sadier. "From an Audi perspective, we haven't actually seen any dip in performance. In fact, we've seen the opposite, where the cadence of the delivery teams and the output has actually increased." The Audi digital group estimates that in 2020, it will deliver 50% more than last year.

In closing, Roberts shares a memorable moment: “The most exciting part of this project for me was when I sat in a big, cross-department meeting where we presented analytics. I stayed quiet as they talked about how our website’s number of unique visitors had dropped, but our leads had grown exponentially and our conversions had improved. One of the key directors said, ‘What’s behind this? I don’t understand this.’ There was a lull in the conversation and I couldn’t resist chiming in with, ‘It’s the Audi digital team, the entire team, including IBM, who I consider my team.’”

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Audi

About Audi UK

Headquartered in Milton Keynes, England, [Audi UK](#), a premium automotive manufacturer, operates 115 Audi Centres in the UK. Founded in 1885, Audi currently serves approximately 2 million customers and employs more than 90,000 people globally. Approximately 175,000 customers and 10,000 employees are based in the UK. Audi UK operates under parent company Volkswagen Group.

Solution components

- IBM Garage™
- IBM iX®
- Adobe Analytics
- Adobe Experience Manager

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