

## Using digital to improve what you already have

Josh Pert, CTO, Virgin Experience Days



The business was founded as many good businesses are – by people truly passionate about what they were doing. In 1989, two car enthusiasts started offering flying days and supercar track days for people to taste through an ‘experience’. Today Virgin Experience Days (VED) offers a range of 2,000 experiences ranging in price from £9 to £25,000.

During the business’s impressive evolution, its IT and digital capabilities were developed reactively to serve growing online demand. This was entirely reliant on a small agency to deliver the online platform and an internal team processing the vouchers.

This worked for a time, however it eventually became clear that the relatively inefficient process and absence of digital leadership was limiting the opportunity – the team couldn’t optimise customer acquisition and retention without an effective customer data platform. VED couldn’t swiftly tailor the site to meet the needs of various individuals with different browsing and buying habits, which ultimately meant fairly low conversion rates.

The business was doing well – double-digit revenue growth for a decade, and sales doubling in the three years to 2017 to £50m. But that didn’t mean we could stand still.

We needed a sustainable growth plan to see us through the coming years, and it became increasingly clear that this needed to encompass a dynamic and sophisticated digital strategy. In September 2017 we partnered with Inflexion to help us on this journey.

An example of a change we were inspired to make was in the supercar space, one of our core areas but one which had become increasingly competitive.

We trialled sending a follow-up email for abandoned online baskets within an hour, rather than within 24 hours, which is what we had been doing. We also added selector tools to our site to make it easier to navigate. These changes generated very positive results: 75% of mobile visitors used the selector tool, and we experienced a 36% increase in mobile conversion rate. We’ve also focused on optimising our mobile payment options.

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**The team at Inflexion quickly helped us to realise it wasn’t about buying in more digital capability but rather transforming what we already had to make it more interesting.**

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We continue to look around us to see how we can keep making VED better. One of our goals is to convert voucher recipients into customers, thereby tapping into a market of people who may not have visited our site before.

The successes have been strong, but we’re not standing still.