

CASE STUDY

How a luxury holiday rental business used Hive to retain customers and deal with the boom and bust of the pandemic



kate & tom's

Imagine you are running a company offering extraordinary holiday celebrations that relies on email communication as its main way to build retention, but you have **no effective tool to provide a detailed overview on your customers' previous behaviour**. Add to that that you have no way to react swiftly to sudden changes in the sales environment - a problem exacerbated when unexpectedly faced with the changing travel and social distancing rules caused by the Covid pandemic. **How do you successfully keep your customers coming back?** How do you mitigate the potential massive loss of revenue due to lockdowns? And, conversely, how do you capitalize on the surge of interest generated when people are allowed to meet again?

kate & tom's luxury property rental business was in this position at the start of 2020. They were unable to easily analyse their customer's data to send emails to bring previous renters back or to tempt those who had expressed an interest. That was before they drew on Hive's experience to **generate compelling personalised marketing communications tailored to their customer's likely wants and needs**. The platform also provided the ability to react quickly to changing news, events and customer needs. The segmentation and speed of targeted campaign creation offered by Hive let kate & tom's **generate high quality leads and monitor the success of its email marketing** from day one, as well as keeping their customers well informed of latest restrictions.

The challenge

kate & tom's specialise in renting out luxury properties across England and Wales for celebrations, family holidays, parties and stag do's. They pride themselves on providing a luxurious setting for any celebration, but one where the guests can feel they can relax as they would at home. They add to this by providing extra services to make their guest's stay even more special, such as private chefs and pamper parties.

Previously they were relying on services like Mailchimp to get their message out there, but the lack of insight available from their customer's response to their communications was slowing the company from growing. It also meant that there was no way of enticing new bookings from previous customers in a focused way. Their email marketing wasn't properly targeted and they had no way of monitoring the effect campaigns were having on the bottom line.

“Before Hive we weren't talking to our previous guests!”

Typically, kate & tom's relied on generic emails to data that they weren't easily able to segment. This resulted in their customers receiving often poorly timed offers that had little or no relevance to them. They had disparate and siloed previous sales data, but to analyse it was a manual process that took time and was easy for errors to creep in. This meant the company couldn't be reactive to changing events as campaigns had to be planned long in advance.

This lack of agility became a major issue during the Coronavirus pandemic. The ability to react with speed was essential, especially as different regional lockdowns hit and social distancing rules changed. The pandemic could have been a make or break situation for their 'friendly luxury' accommodation rental services, so they needed a marketing tool which could target very specific and niche segments of their audience. Such a tool would allow them to capitalize on the changing pandemic situation, yet also pay for itself.

The solution

Andy Brooker, kate & tom's new Business Development Manager, had experience of customer insight and engagement platforms from a previous company, so he knew what he wanted for kate & tom's from day one. He had seen that if kate & tom's previously siloed customer data was imported into Hive - a task which would be made easier by the fact that Hive was already integrated with their incumbent booking software, iPro - he could use this as a base to segment his audience so the company could send focused and highly personalised email communications in a far faster timeframe.

“It took me all of two minutes to do something that used to take half a day. It's massively time saving.”



Once he had persuaded the company to invest in Hive, and he had completed the in-depth software training, Andy was ready to put it into action. However, world events were conspiring against him. This was just as the first lockdown hit.

As Andy told us it was hard to wait: “Previously we weren't able to segment our audience into different groups like parties, celebrations, family holidays and so on, but now we could create different audience groups and send them different and much more targeted messages.”

“For example, we knew that now we could easily show customers houses that are of a similar value to what they have booked before, as we know they are unlikely to spend money on a much more expensive house so that would be a wasted communication. We could also use dynamic content to show our

Some benefits of Hive Marketing Cloud



customers properties with similar features to what they had booked before, such as hot tubs.”

He also knew Hive could automate the complete customer journey, meaning timely follow up reminder emails wouldn't be missed, thus encouraging bookings to be made. He was also ready to implement retention marketing such as targeted offers sent to the customer 5 days after checking out of a property or a month before the anniversary of previous bookings.

Once back from the initial lockdown, kate & tom's was ready to put his plans into action. The Hive Marketing Cloud platform allowed Andy to quickly create a tailored 'We're back' email campaign which targeted different audience segments to match their needs based on their previous behaviour. Andy's belief in Hive was proved to be justified. With their targeted offers based on Hive's analysis and segmentation



tools, Andy was able to cover the cost of two years of the Hive platform in just one email campaign!

Hive also allowed Andy to react to the constant changes in the accommodation rental marketing space caused by Coronavirus. The COVID-19 restrictions created a sudden need for the company to change its strategy to start renting larger houses of a higher quality to smaller groups (to meet the rule of six restrictions). This strategy supported immediate sales, and Andy was then able to start selling the dream of next year. The Hive marketing platform removed a lot of the pain points from this work and allowed for much more specific and relevant communications.

Obviously, getting to grips with such a detailed marketing tool in such a short space of time created its own challenges, but Andy was generous with his praise of the support offered by the Hive services team. "Whenever I've raised a support ticket all of them have been answered quickly and accurately. This is particularly important when I'm building a campaign. If I push the wrong button, I could potentially send the wrong email to 80,000 people, so I don't want to be doing that! The fact that they are so readily available to check what I am doing is definitely a positive thing."

“Hive IS our retention strategy!”

There's also the speed factor: before Hive the company's email communications were created using Mailchimp, with email lists extracted, juggled and re-imported by hand. For Andy, the fact he and his

team no longer need to remove duplicates in Excel or extract separate lists for suppressions means they can focus on more creative and profitable marketing tasks. He explains, "It took me all of two minutes to do something that used to take half a day. It's massively time saving." This also applies to building the emails too, with all the pain of copy and pasting between templates, merging tags and general set up removed.

The bottom line

Despite the limited time Andy has had to put Hive into action, Kate & Tom's has already seen results: "Since July 2020 around 24% of bookings (generating around £1.5m) have come off the back of a customer being sent a journey email via Hive."

Andy puts this down to the removal of major pain points such as no longer having to rely on generic email communications to try to retain customers, and now having granular visibility on the effects of the campaigns sent offering increased ability to continuously iterate and improve on successes.

Time saving has been a major change since Hive's implementation. No longer having to manually build dedicated segmented and compliant lists for specific offers or communications means campaigns are ready to go in a fraction of the time compared to their previous workflow. Add to this the ability to generate insight by being able to drill down into what customers have shown interest in in the past, their location, age and other behaviours, means marketing time and budget is no longer wasted sending communications to people who wouldn't be interested in specific offers.

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The automation of the entire customer journey brings peace of mind that leads aren't lost due to follow up emails being missed because of a previously manual process. In addition, due to automation, Kate & Tom's retention communications are now sent to different customer segments with different strategies applied to regular bookers, those that have shown interest but haven't made a booking, or people likely to respond to add-ons and upsells, so the emails have much more impact. The automation comes with its own time-saving too because now Andy has built one customer journey for one segment, it is easy to copy the journey and tweak it for any future segments created.

The conclusion

Andy is impressed by the effects Hive has had on his marketing efforts, even in the limited time he's had to use it, and is excited to put the power of Hive into action properly. As he explains, "Before Hive we weren't talking to our previous guests! We can now interrogate the data, and build campaigns

very quickly. So, if we know people always book in November, we can now automatically send them out emails in October to tempt them to use us again. Our newsletters are now going out to a much bigger audience and just being able to see how our marketing efforts and activity are converting into bookings is a game changer - before we didn't have that view."

“Andy was able to cover the cost of two years of the Hive platform in just one email campaign!”

kate & tom's

kate & tom's is a close-knit team based in the heart of the Cotswolds with one big wish: for our guests to enjoy an extraordinary holiday celebration or adventure. Whatever the occasion, whatever the backdrop we have an incredible house for you. From swimming pools to billiard tables to marble drenched breakfast bars. From ocean views to private woodlands and everything in-between – kate & tom's portfolio is unrivalled.



Hive Marketing Cloud puts enterprise capability into the hands of marketers in medium sized businesses to accelerate their marketing revenues by enabling them to deploy highly personalised, sophisticated, multi-channel marketing from a single technology platform; based on customer intelligence. The Hive platform can surface all of its clients' data for an improved, relevant, customer experience that converts.

Andy has been able to prove Hive's worth to his superiors too – often a challenge for marketing departments! As he explains, "Now we can holistically measure the ROI on our communications, which we weren't able to do before. We can build campaigns, set our audience and then just get stuff running in the background, and we can then see how effective those campaigns are from the revenue metrics. You can see it working right in front of you."

The bottom line is that kate & tom's wanted to offer people a luxurious adventure in a property that exactly matches their needs at a time they are likely to be thinking about booking one, and now, with Hive behind them, they can do exactly that. We can't wait to see what they do with it in the future.

See our platform in action

Book a demo and we'll show you how our other Travel & Tourism clients are making marketing more personal and results more impressive.

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