

## D&R Sports Center Capitalizes On Targeted Ads To Stay Top Of Mind Year Round

### Executive Summary:

D&R Sports Center is a family-owned company that started as a small tackle shop in 1982. It has since grown to become one of the largest boating, fishing, and hunting outfitters in Kalamazoo, Mich.

The administrative offices are run out of the original tackle shop location, but D&R Sports relocated their retail space to a larger building on the other side of the parking lot. The company grew so much over the years that in August 2021, D&R Sports completed a remodel that doubled the square footage of their store.

The outfitters value providing quality equipment to boating, fishing, and hunting enthusiasts in and around Michigan. They also sell new and used boats from more than a dozen brands. Their community is important to them, and they view their employees and customers as a part of their family.

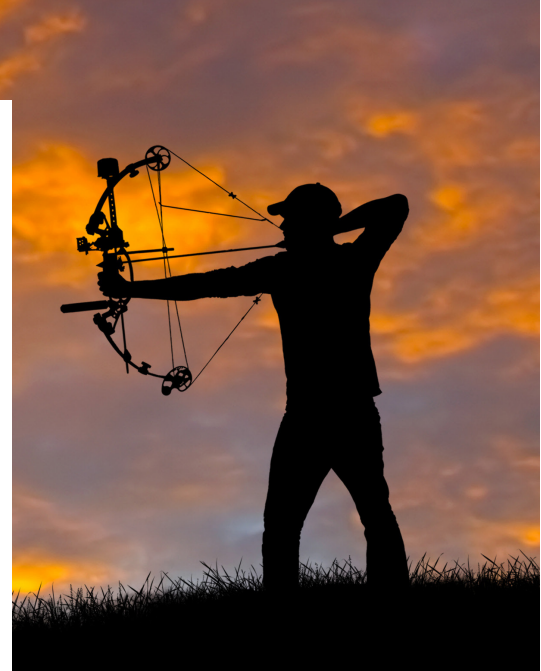
The company has partnered with Federated Digital Solutions for marketing since 2016.

### The Problem:

By 2019, D&R Sports Center grew significantly. That growth meant they've faced more competition with larger, big-box stores who are selling hunting and fishing gear and boats. Because of that, D&R Sports Center is constantly working to be top of mind with its audience.

"When it comes to fishing and hunting, we're certainly one of the first places many people think of," says Megan Bennink, marketing manager for D&R Sports Center. "But there are people who live in Kalamazoo or who live 20 minutes away who forget we're here. We always want to give them a friendly reminder of who we are and where we are and to come and shop with us."

They noticed that traditional advertising channels like newspapers



**"Digital advertising is a great thing for businesses to try out if they haven't done so already. Federated Digital Solutions is just there to help — they're not trying to be sales-y and push things that don't make sense for your business."**

-Megan Bennink, Marketing Manager for D&R Sports Center

## The Problem (cont):

and television ads weren't as effective as they'd used to be. To continue overall growth and the growth of boat sales, they knew they needed a change.

"We'd already been working on cutting out traditional methods," Bennink says. "When you run an ad in the newspaper, it may go out to hundreds of people, but you may only be reaching two people who are your true customers."

Bennink wanted to move the needle, but she wanted to be able to do it without increasing her overall digital spend. That meant D&R and FDS needed to work together to reallocate the sport center's budget more efficiently on what was bringing them their highest ROI — boats during peak season and fishing and hunting gear in the off season.

On top of that, the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 disrupted customers' ability to shop in the store. It required a quick pivot in marketing to better educate their consumers about D&R's e-commerce store.

Bennink is a one-woman marketing team, so her time is stretched thin to make sure that she's being as effective as possible. She needed a team of experts to help her fill in the gaps.

## The Process:

D&R Sports Center focused on four areas of its business with the targeted display ads: bass boats, fishing boats, pontoon boats, and general branding. Spending was reallocated from areas like Search Engine Optimization (SEO) to focus more on Search Engine Marketing (SEM) to maximize D&R's immediate reach. FDS created a custom SEM strategy focused on relevant keywords to the boating industry year-round.

The campaign also included targeted ads for the three types of boats it sells, which were run through the winter into early summer when boat sales normally enter a slowdown. The targeted display ads then switched to focus on general sales for the rest of the year.

Federated Digital Solutions geofenced the targeted display ads to improve performance. Some ads were geofenced around D&R Sports Center's business and some were geofenced around their competitor's businesses. The goal was to drive traffic back to D&R Sports Center's website and to stay top of mind for consumers visiting their competitors.

Bennink appreciates that FDS works with her as an extension of her team. She knows she can



rely on the experience of the team at Federated Digital Solutions to help her make the right decisions in areas where she's not an expert.

"We're able to communicate to FDS who exactly our audience is. Working in the office, I know our audience very well," she says. "The team at FDS understands targeted display ads and SEM better than I do, so we can work as a team to reach the audiences that we need to be."

That kind of partnership allows D&R Sports Center to pivot as needed. When the pandemic hit in 2020, Bennink knew she needed to try something new. FDS recommended adding in targeted Facebook advertising campaigns, since people were spending more time on social media.

D&R decided to run a three-month targeted Facebook advertising campaign from April to June 2020 as a result of the lockdowns in

## The Process (cont):

order to refer audiences to their e-commerce store to help maintain sales.

By handing off the digital marketing to FDS, Bennink is freed up to focus on D&R Sports Centers' marketing strategy and the day-to-day needs of being a solo marketing manager.

"With me being the only marketing employee, it's nice that it's one less thing that I have to do. It makes my life so much easier to be able to pass the SEM and targeted display ads off for the experts at Federated Digital Solutions to handle."

**"We've always known that digital advertising is an important part of our marketing strategy. Early on, we were only focusing on traditional methods of advertising — billboards and print — working with Federated Digital Solutions was the next step to move forward into a modern era of marketing."**

-Megan Bennink, Marketing Manager for D&R Sports Center



## The Result:

D&R Sports Center has been consistently running targeted display ads and SEM for the past several years, which provided several data points D&R Sports Center could use to make small adjustments to target their audiences.

"I think it's a good way to stay consistent with marketing those things — it's ongoing. If we can constantly be reaching people as a boat dealer in Michigan, that's important to us," Bennink says. "It's the simple consistency of SEM and targeted display ads that makes them so valuable to us."

From 2019 to 2021, FDS helped to double the amount of actions taken to D&R's website by consumers with the use of SEM.

In fact, in 2021 the top keywords for the outfitter's SEM achieved outstanding click-through-rate percentages, ranging from 12 to 13%. By comparison, the national average is 1.91%. Equally as impressive, D&R Sports Center owned a massive percentage of the impression share for those four terms — between 40 to 50% of the market.

By optimizing their campaigns for their target audiences during peak seasons, FDS was able to help reduce the Cost Per Click (CPC) for the outfitters SEM terms by more than \$1. Most other businesses were seeing a rise in their CPC during that time due to high demand. That means D&R was seeing more quality leads.

**“For people who don’t use digital advertising right now, it really puts them behind by not having that modern marketing method. If businesses are trying to reach younger or newer audiences, they’re not going to reach them by printing in the newspaper or posting billboards. It needs to be a more modern way of reaching new clients.”**

-Megan Bennink, Marketing Manager for D&R Sports Center

### **The Result (cont):**

D&R Sports Center’s branding campaign centered around shuffling and reallocating their digital budget. Traditionally, their budget only allowed them to market one manufacturer and one line of boats. FDS helped optimize D&R’s display ads so they were able to market more products that reached a more diverse audience, rather than dedicating all of their budget to one or two products.

“I like that targeted display ads and SEM are such simple things to do. You set them in action and it moves forward for you,” Bennink says. “It’s been good for us to reach a little further away from our home base. We’re not just reaching people down the road, we’re reaching people further away who we wouldn’t normally have the opportunity to because it’s not in our neighborhood. It’s helped us broaden our reach.”

The Facebook Targeting campaign during the pandemic was geared toward directing people to D&R’s ecommerce store. It allowed people to continue to shop, social distance, and participate in their favorite outdoor activities during a time when all three had a greater emphasis. Facebook advertising allowed D&R Sports Center to quickly pivot their marketing dollars to reach their target audience where they were spending their time.

The posts received 607 reactions and 70 shares. The campaign drove 1,656 people to click through to the website and it garnered 200 check-outs on the website. It was a huge success.

“The strategies from FDS helped us to be more focused in our advertising. Sometimes we’re just wanting to reach the general outdoorsman, but that isn’t necessarily the best way to increase awareness or sell products,” Bennink says. “The nice thing about Federated Digital Solutions’ strategies is that we’re able to reach people who are more actively interested in making a purchase.”

