



4 Questions

TO IMPROVE YOUR DEALERSHIP'S
DIGITAL MARKETING

The automotive industry has a long history as one of the foundational economic elements of modern society. Like the attention given to gas prices and the housing market, economists look to automotive sales as an indicator for forecasting consumer spending and to gauge current economic health. And, it's easy to see why.

Car sales contribute as much as 3.5% to the overall GDP¹ in the United States alone. Car dealerships employ 527,000 hard-working men and women², and the industry, as a whole, churns out 60 million cars and trucks³ per year.

While demand for new and pre-owned vehicles stays strong, the world of automotive retail is changing and becoming more complicated. As consumers spend more time online, digital marketing tools and tactics are paving the way for new marketing potential. And, what works today, may change tomorrow.

As an example of this change in automotive marketing, traditional advertising, including radio spots, TV ads, and billboard marketing, generates just \$1,702⁴ in profit per vehicle sold. Digital marketing, on the other hand, generates nearly double that amount, at \$2,514 per vehicle sold.⁴

It goes without saying that dealerships need to constantly adjust their digital marketing. But, as with anything new (or anything that changes as rapidly as technology), dealership leaders and team members naturally have lots of questions.

This guide will help you ask – and answer – key questions about digital marketing in the automotive industry, including: how to define your marketing priorities for the digital-first era; how to identify the most productive, efficient ways of finding new leads; and how to overcome challenges in a new era of digital marketing.

As you review the budget, allocation and performance of your own digital marketing strategy, ask the following key questions.

¹ [https://www.investopedia.com/ask/answers/041715/how-important-are-seasonal-trends-automotive-sector.asp#:~:text=The%20auto%20industry%20is%20an,GDP\)%20in%20the%20United%20States.](https://www.investopedia.com/ask/answers/041715/how-important-are-seasonal-trends-automotive-sector.asp#:~:text=The%20auto%20industry%20is%20an,GDP)%20in%20the%20United%20States.)

² <https://datausa.io/profile/naics/car-dealers>

³ <https://www.industryweek.com/the-economy/article/21958422/the-automotive-industry-economic-impact-and-location-issues#:~:text=The%20automotive%20industry%20is%20a,directly%2C%20and%20many%20more%20indirectly.>

⁴ <https://v12data.com/blog/why-auto-dealers-must-embrace-digital-marketing/>



Question:

Are you getting enough digital traffic?

Answer:

Sell where your target audience shops.

Today's consumers are online, at least for some part of the buying journey. When it comes to buying a car, they're looking at local inventory, researching options, comparing colors, and trying to find the perfect car for the perfect price. They're also looking for the right dealership. In fact, car buyers spend an average of 14 hours online⁵ during their search—that's a lot of time and a lot of opportunity to drive traffic to your website.

As with anything else online, car buyers use search engines to find what they're looking for. They input terms that may range broadly, from vehicle type—"new sedan"—to a more detailed query for the make and model of a car—"2021 Honda Civic blue."

With consumers increasingly finding user-friendly paths to the information they need, more know exactly what they want from their next vehicle and how much they're willing to pay for it. While some in-market car shoppers will save their questions for your sales team, more are trying to learn everything they can online; they're searching for cars with good gas mileage, cars that perform well in various weather conditions, or cars that connect with their technology. And if your dealership's website doesn't address or answer these questions, would-be customers may pass you by.

Stand out in a crowd of competition.

Your dealership may have a Search Engine Optimization (SEO) strategy designed to increase visibility from relevant searches. But so does every other dealership. What are you doing that sets you apart from your competition? And, how do you stand out from the crowd, so that customers choose your dealership over dozens, sometimes hundreds or even thousands of different options available on the world wide web?

If you're aiming to just keep up with your competition, chances are your website is getting lost in the shuffle and you're limiting

your opportunity to drive traffic to your dealership's website.

Optimize your SEO strategy.

If you get the feeling that your dealership isn't getting enough digital traffic, it may be time to adjust your SEO strategy. To ensure your inventory and dealership services consistently reach likely buyers browsing search engines, your SEO strategy must be optimized for local reach.



⁵ <https://www.dialogtech.com/blog/18-automotive-marketing-stats/#:~:text=Car%20buyers%20spend%20an%20average,hours%20online%20during%20their%20search.>

Your specific content strategy will vary, depending on your specific goals. It may include custom content designed to help connect you with local buyers such as blog posts, news articles, new make/model pages, and more. This approach is proven to elevate performance across your digital strategy with higher organic rankings, increased website traffic, and more leads from qualified visitors.

You may also consider partnering with a proven team (comprised of knowledgeable copywriters, strategists, and SEO specialists) to enhance your site's overall visibility. This method of outsourcing SEO can be highly effective. In fact, after one year of running a leading premium SEO service, dealers experienced an average of:⁶

- **30% more website visits**
- **52% more VDP views**
- **59% more phone leads**
- **14% more form leads**

⁶ Based on a study of 43 franchise dealerships with Premium SEO and Dealer.com Advertising from December 2018 – May 2019 VPP.



Question:

Are you getting *quality* digital traffic?

Answer:

Attract *quality* over *quantity*.

When it comes to choosing between low digital traffic and high digital traffic for your dealership website, most business owners would select is the latter. Yes, website traffic is important, but if none of your website visitors are turning into actual leads, you have may have a problem with the type of customers you're attracting. Is your target audience browsing your site, or are you attracting random passersby who mistakenly found something of interest, perhaps even from the other side of the country, before moving on?

Average time on site and pages per visit are a big indicator of quality traffic. If time spent on your dealership's website is less than 30 seconds and pages per visit hover around

one⁷, you may be attracting the wrong kind of digital traffic.

Digital Marketing is an art.

One way to speak directly to your target audience is through a creative, coordinated digital marketing campaign. If your website isn't attracting the right audience, your campaign creative and messaging may be off. In other words, the copy, design and overall appeal of your marketing aren't resonating with your intended customers.

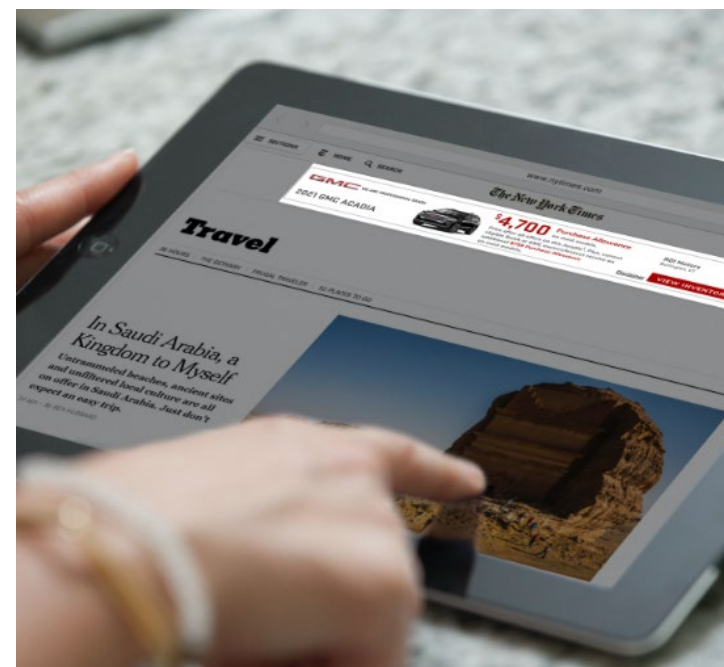
Poor click-through rate is another indicator that your campaign creative isn't speaking to your intended audience. It may also suggest that your digital marketing strategy, as a whole, isn't coordinated, meaning your social, organic, and paid promotions aren't working in harmony to engage your target audience and drive quality traffic to your site.

Deliver compelling, strategic campaign creative.

If your customers aren't truly engaged, they're not spending enough time on your site or resulting in actual leads, implement consistent, cohesive campaign creative, designed to engage customers and drive traffic to your site.

Partnering with professional campaign coordinators and graphic designers can help your dealership deliver compelling, strategic campaign creative every month. With deep understanding of the automotive industry, these professionals can align your dealership's strategy, brand, and manufacturing guidelines with a coordinated creative effort that may include a mix of digital advertising, homepage slides, banners, and specials.

Be sure to constantly follow-up and review your creative to ensure that your campaigns are performing and changing to meet needs of your customers. A successful, coordinated digital marketing strategy drives an increase in website engagement, as well as VDP views and leads.



⁷ <https://www.business2community.com/digital-marketing/signs-your-digital-marketing-strategy-isnt-working-02282465>

Question:

Are negative reviews, or simply having too few reviews, discouraging potential customers?

Answer:

Actively manage your digital reputation.

You already know your target audience is online. Remember the 14 total hours⁸ of online car buying time? Part of that time is spent reviewing dealerships to determine whether they want to do business with you. In fact, 93% of consumers⁹ say online reviews impact their purchasing decisions. If your dealership's average online rating skews more negative, whether the negative ratings and feedback are merited or not, they can—

and probably will—negatively impact future sales opportunities.

A surprising 91% of people¹⁰ trust online consumer reviews. And, yes, that includes the untrue and misinformed ones. Even if your dealership does everything it can to cater to your customers and deliver a positive customer experience, negative reviews still pose a risk to your business. Research shows that 71% of consumers¹¹ have ended a relationship with a company due to poor customer service. So, it's important to begin the process of optimizing your digital reputation by recognizing where your dealership stands today. Do you know your dealership's Google My Business rating?

Customer reviews go both ways.

Just as negative customer reviews can leave a bad impression on would-be buyers, positive reviews can convince customers to shop at your dealership. It's just a matter of harnessing the influence of your customers for good. And sometimes it's as easy as asking. In fact, 77% of people⁹ would be

willing to leave a review, if asked.

In short, your dealership's reputation matters. What is said online about your business eventually becomes your brand. As much as 59% of car shoppers¹¹ say that dealer reputation is the single most important factor when choosing a dealership to work with. Having a reputation management strategy in place to generate reviews can help your dealerships elevate the voices of positive customer reviews.

Leverage customer reviews as a marketing tool.

The right reputation management strategy requires two parts, and the first is developing a comprehensive review and response plan with your dealership team. For instance, there should be understanding and buy-in for who will read the reviews and how often, what are approved on-brand responses, and how quickly a response should be made.

The second part of your strategy involves taking action by cultivating a steady stream

⁸ <https://www.dialogtech.com/blog/18-automotive-marketing-stats/#:~:text=Car%20buyers%20spend%20an%20average,hours%20online%20during%20their%20search.>

⁹ <https://www.thedrum.com/news/2017/03/27/online-reviews-impact-purchasing-decisions-over-93-consumers-report-suggests#:~:text=request%20your%20extension,Online%20reviews%20impact%20purchasing%20decisions,93%25%20of%20consumers%2C%20report%20suggests&text=Further%2C%20the%20study%20suggests%20that,will%20have%20a%20better%20experience.>

¹⁰ <https://www.thechatshop.com/blog/other-topics/impact-online-review-customer-decision>

¹¹ <https://www.dealer.com/products/managed-services/social/>

of positive customer reviews and dealing with the negative ones promptly. Rather than passively wait for a satisfied customer to leave positive feedback, invite their feedback with Review Generation technology and watch your dealership rating increase. When this is done effectively, you'll build trust with your customers and establish your brand as a leader in your marketplace.

When negative reviews come up, research the cause internally and address them quickly, taking care to avoid sounding defensive. Then, leverage your reviews as a viable marketing tool to boost sales and bottom line. Inform your strategy – for both positive and negative reviews – through best practices, including using an always-on review solicitation tool to make it easy for your customers to leave feedback.

Of course, it helps to partner with a company that understands both best practices and the automotive industry. Seek out a trusted partner that employs a team of social marketing experts, who understand your audience and know how to engage happy customers, encourage positive reviews, and keep your dealership top-of-mind online.



Question:

Is your website meeting the needs of digital shoppers?

Answer:

Enhance the total user experience.

Even if you've done everything you can think of to drive visitors to your website and attract engaged buyers through positive reputation management and coordinated creative, you have to ensure your customers are having a good experience once they get there – whether they are looking for a new vehicle, researching trade-in options, or searching for vehicle service specials.

¹² <https://www.protofuse.com/blog/details/outdated-websites-10-perceptions-damage-credibility/#:~:text=78%25%20of%20>

¹³ <https://www.elasticpath.com/blog/customer-expectations>

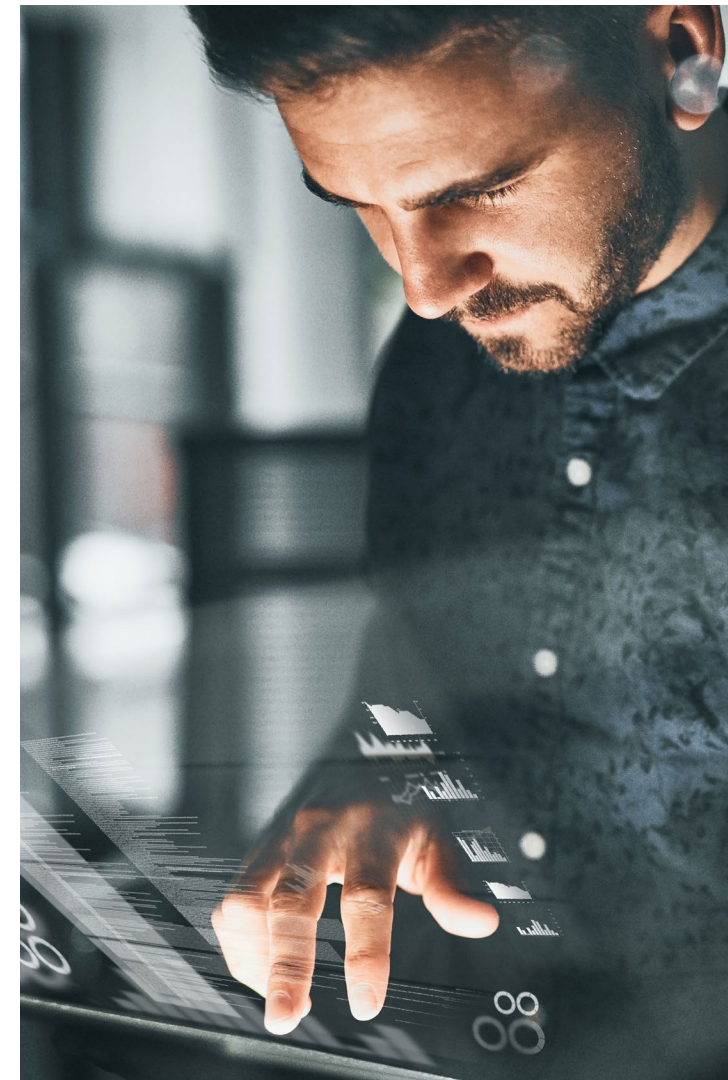
Nothing is more frustrating for a customer than finding discrepancies between what's true and what's on your website. That includes differences in actual inventory and online inventory, differences in sales personnel information, incorrect contact information, and differences between advertised special offers and what's actually stated on your website.

According to an American Express survey, 78% of consumers¹² have decided not to go through with an intended purchase because of poor service experience. An outdated, non-optimized website can stop them in their tracks.

An outdated website costs your dealership money.

Your customers use multiple devices. They search for cars and research your website using their computers, tablets, and phones. Websites that appear outdated or aren't optimized to give the user a great experience across all their devices can lead to loss of trust, poor brand perception, and loss of sales.

Optimization is a big deal for consumers. As much as 76.5% of people¹³ say that the look and credibility of a website are among the top factors in deciding to make a purchase. And, according to Sanford's Persuasive Technology Lab, 46% of people¹² say website's design is the number one criterion for discerning a business' credibility.



Build and maintain a consistent, optimized shopping experience.

Align your website content with your overall digital marketing and sales strategy. Ensure that your content is consistent with the messaging and promotions you use to attract your target audience through social and other marketing channels. And keep your site up-to-date and relevant, which can be accomplished by frequently posting quality content, uploading new images of your team or business, noting business hour changes, simplifying navigation, making timely changes to the featured vehicle configuration, and more.

Partner with a trusted website management provider that knows the automotive sales industry and can enhance your dealership's operational efficiencies by providing monthly site compliance review, frequent site audits, and make necessary on-site changes to align your creative and content strategy with your site.



Conclusion

The automotive industry will continue to evolve to incorporate more digital elements, and successful car dealers will lead the way with innovative solutions to attract customers and close deals.

As the industry and technology continue to improve, it's important to evaluate your digital marketing strategy and continue to ask the right questions to identify new leads and overcome new challenges in a new age of digital marketing.

About Dealer.com Managed Services

Dealer.com Managed Services deliver specialized digital marketing for car dealers, and helps you stand out from your competition and optimize your digital marketing results. Our tiered Search Engine Optimization, Content & Creative, Custom Video, Social Media, and Reputation Management services ensure agency-quality results and a custom automotive digital marketing strategy that drives sales and service opportunities.

To learn more about our digital marketing solutions for your dealership, and to book a demo, connect with your Dealer.com Performance Manager or visit Dealer.com Managed Services.

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