

**auto**revo

PHOTOS & FIRST IMPRESSIONS

## Photos & First Impressions

Not only are photos quite possibly the most important sales tool a dealer has, they're also the most neglected. I often ask dealers, "If photos are so important for showcasing a car, why farm it out to a lot services company that only takes 9-15 photos?"

I have yet to get a convincing answer.

Sure, I know it's not fun to get out in the freezing cold or the 100-degree heat to take photos but tell me, who's going to care about your inventory's representation as much as you?

Dealerships – both franchise and independent - have the ability to presell a vehicle well before that "up" ever walks onto the lot or calls. Think about it, when shoppers look at cars on your website or classified site, they're basically taking a virtual test drive. They're scouring images and making buying decisions based on the features they see. Only after reviewing all the photos will the customer move on to read the description and vehicle features.

### Five Essentials for GREAT Photos:

- Camera
- Lighting
- Staging
- Number of Photos
- Highlights

## Camera

Let's get this out of the way. You DO NOT need a \$1,500.00 camera! For just a couple hundred bucks, you can get a good camera that takes quality web photos. My personal favorites are SLR cameras because they're more robust and can usually handle a beating from getting in and out of vehicles. (trust me, your camera will take a beating). Also, you will not get better photos from cameras with higher resolution. I found that 800 x 600 or 1024 x 768 resolution works great for web photos and will dramatically decrease the time it takes to upload to your website provider. Most providers resize these images anyway to help the end user download photos faster. Finally, take into consideration that your customers might want to see your photos on a mobile site so make sure they're also sized correctly for 3G loading.

### Lighting

Believe it or not, lighting can make or break your photos. In order to get a customer to click on your car, that first photo has to grab attention. If you don't have a photo bay, don't worry. Most dealers don't and quite often natural light works just fine – sometimes even better than pre-set lighting. But no matter which environment you use, be sure to always check for shadows and reflections.

Also, a good rule of thumb is to pretend you're the one interested in purchasing this vehicle and looking at it for the first time. What would you need to see that would convince you to drive 500 miles to get it? THOSE are the money shots that'll sell cars. Remember, **YOU ONLY GET ONE CHANCE TO MAKE A FIRST IMPRESSION!!**



Actual dealer photos

*Which photo would you click on?*

### Staging

But why bother taking photos if you're not going to take the time to clean the vehicle? I know it sounds simple, but you'd be surprised how many dealers don't take the time to clean things up before taking photos. Plus, if you don't have a photo bay, staging your vehicles becomes even more important.

Make sure the exterior is spotless. Throw away the water bottles and coke cans. And, oh yeah, take the cigarettes out of the ashtray. Signage or photo overlays will also make your photos pop. Finally, nothing makes your inventory page look more professional than photos that are staged consistently.

## Number of Photos

Successful dealers have learned that the more photos, the better the customer's experience. Great photos take the mystery out of the buying process. 40-60 photos should be the minimum per vehicle. Sound like a lot? Trust me, it's not. Make sure you take pictures of everything (Appendix A) and do it in a sequence so the customer experience is like a virtual walk around. This allows the customer to see what is most important to them.

## Highlights

Always highlight the coolest features. For instance, badges, motor, book and keys, DVD, close up of the console, trunk space, rims, VIN plate. But don't try to hide any negative issues (scratches, dents, over spray). Take pictures of both the flash and the flaws. Your credibility is at stake.

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## Payoff

In summary, photos are the best way to showcase your inventory. You work very hard to find the right inventory and make your vehicles ready for sale. Don't sell yourself short with less than the best. Take the time to do it right and you'll dramatically reduce the turn time on your lot and give yourself a competitive advantage over other dealerships.

If you have any further questions about photos or any of AutoRevo's dealer management tools, please call one of our Dealer Consultants at **888-311-7386**.

### Appendix A - Suggested Photo Order

Source: eBay Motors

1. ¾ driver side front
2. ¾ passenger side front
3. ¾ driver side rear
4. ¾ passenger side rear
5. straight shot front
6. straight shot rear
7. full driver side
8. full passenger side
9. ¾ driver side front - close up on lights
10. ¾ passenger side front - close up on lights
11. ¾ driver side rear - close up on lights
12. ¾ passenger side rear - close up on lights
13. ¾ driver side front - close up on tire
14. ¾ passenger side front - close up on tire
15. ¾ driver side rear - close up on tire
16. ¾ passenger side rear - close up on tire
17. inside shot - front driver side door open
18. inside shot - front passenger side door open
19. inside shot - rear driver side door open
20. inside shot - rear passenger side door open
21. inside shot - front drive side seating area
22. inside shot - front passenger side seating area
23. inside shot - rear driver side seating area
24. inside shot - rear passenger side seating area
25. inside shot - front seating area - from rear seat
26. inside shot - rear seating area - from front seat
27. straight shot - hood open
28. straight shot - trunk open
29. inside shot - close up - steering wheel area
30. inside up - stereo console area
31. inside shot - close up - temperature controls
32. inside shot - close up - cruise controls
33. inside shot - close up - instrument gauges
34. inside shot - close up - mileage
35. inside shot - close up - shifter