
How to stage your vehicle.

a vehicle marketing guide
by **AutoRevo.**

A picture is worth a thousand words...

Take a look at one of your vehicle photographs. Now, take the car out of the picture - what do you see?

Is there a trash bin in the background? Stains on the concrete? Snow on the ground and it's now summer?

There's lots of "information" in your photos besides your vehicles, and that information creates the first impression of your dealership in the eyes of the customer.

Pay attention to the details, and be sure your customers are seeing what you want them to see.



So you've decided to get serious about selling cars on the Internet? Great choice! Today, more than 85% of consumers start their car buying process online. With just a little work and dedication, you have a fantastic opportunity to increase sales at your dealership. This guide will teach you how to present your vehicles in a way that attracts more customers to your inventory. Listen up - if you follow these simple steps, you will drastically increase your chances at being successful.

Buying the correct vehicle is essential

If you've got the wrong inventory, you aren't going to generate any leads. It all starts with proper inventory selection, based on your dealership's niche market and your price point. Competitive pricing is essential when selling on the Internet. There's always room for improvement, and the more effort you put into inventory selection, the more likely you are to move the unit in a timely fashion.

Recondition for the win

It doesn't matter how nice your vehicle is or how much money you spend on your showroom; if your vehicle isn't ready to sell, then it's just not going to work. You have to be sure to recondition your vehicle appropriately. Make sure that all of the buttons work, that the car rides and drives smoothly, and that you'd be willing to hop in with your family and take it out for a Sunday drive. Always be sure that your inventory is ready to sell.

Make sure your unit is clean. Online photos often replace an in-person dealership visit when customers are "browsing" for the right car, truck or SUV. The way that you present your vehicle is essential to getting a customer to want to purchase. You need to clean seats and floors, dress tires, and clean engine compartments. Never use paper floor mats.

Remember, while you may be able to sell around small scuffs and dings, there's no excuse for having a dirty car. If the exterior and interior look like they have been neglected, customers worry about internal components as well. All of your vehicles need to stand tall and look their very best when photographed.

Photo staging - make your best first impression

Now you've got the vehicle fully reconditioned and cleaned up. You're proud of the way it looks, and you're tempted to drive this one home as your demo for the weekend because it just looks *that* good. Now you're ready for photographs.

Where you shoot your photos plays a huge part in dictating your online success. If you can see a garbage dumpster in the background, *STOP!* Your potential customers can see that too - and clutter and trash doesn't convey the message you are trying to send about your dealership.

Look for a simple, uncluttered background that looks nice. You might even want to buy a couple of potted trees and put a dealership sign in the background. Let's face it - **I don't care how good the price is... if it looks like I have to travel to the ghetto to buy a car from you, then I'm probably going to visit your competition.**

When taking your photos, look what else is captured in the frame. A common mistake that we see all the time is oil stains on the ground. There's no excuse for this. If you've got stains, just paint the area where you take your photos. Take a step back and look at it from a customer's point of view - Lots of stains must mean you sell leaky vehicles. Presentation, presentation, presentation!

Take the right photos - and take a lot

Ok, so you've got a clean car, and a nice place to take pictures... What's next? You need to make sure it's the right time of day and that you've got adequate lighting. What do you take pictures of? Everything that you'd want to see if YOU were car shopping! It's *EASY* to take 40-60 pictures per vehicle. If you're not sure what to shoot, think about what you'd want to see if you were interested in buying the vehicle. A customer would want to see the entire exterior, all of the interior, and lots of close up pictures of important features.

Remember - a picture is worth a thousand words. Does the car have a back up camera? Heated seats? Bluetooth? A customer should easily be able to determine all of this and much more from your photographs and description alone. If not, you're missing out on potential customers.

Build value through photographs. Grab your camera and walk around the next new piece of inventory that you get, but don't take pictures. Slow down and think... where do your eyes go? On the outside: exterior, wheels, tires... On the inside: buttons, floor mats, sunroof, touch screen, stereo system... Let your mind act as the camera lens. Now, use the camera to capture those shots.

Figure out a pattern of how you want your photos to be presented and shoot every vehicle the same way every time. When you develop a standard order, it not only ensures that you don't miss photos, it allows you to photograph every vehicle in a timely manner. If you're unsure of a shot, take two or three. It's much easier to delete the ones you don't need than to go back out and reshoot a shot that doesn't turn out well.

Do your best to put the pictures in the same order for every vehicle. Figure out an order that you like. Driver to passenger, outside to inside; whatever works best for you. Always start with the same shot. Always shoot the VIN sticker and odometer. Matching numbers in a photograph solidify that you are presenting exactly what's there.

Check out our ***Vehicle Photography Guide*** for detailed examples.

Don't forget your written descriptions

Describe the vehicle with emotion. Every customer knows that your car has 4 doors, 2 exterior rearview mirrors, and interior lighting. VIN decoders are boring! Describe the car in a conversational manner-just like you'd describe it to a customer over the phone.

Did you drive that big lifted truck? Talk about how heads turned when you drove by, or how it's a blast to drive, on-road or off-road, thanks to the four-wheel drive.

What about that sleek sports car? Mention how it accelerates so smoothly that you didn't even realize you were going... well, maybe you'd better not tell how fast you were going...

Or that smooth-riding SUV? Talk about how you'd take a road trip anywhere in that SUV because the ride is so smooth!

Do you get the idea? Describe how the vehicle makes you feel, talk about what builds value and what sets it apart from the competition. We know you're busy, and we know you've got things to do, but dedicating just a bit more effort here will make a huge difference.

Select your vehicle options

Check off your options in AutoRevo so that when someone on AutoTrader or cars.com searches for a car with a sunroof, your car stays on the radar. Come on, we've all seen the commercials where they guy on AutoTrader says he wants a black car with a sunroof... and all the red cars without a sunroof slide off the screen. Don't let your black car disappear from the results because you didn't check off that it had a sunroof!

Use all of the free tools at your disposal

We can't stress that enough. We realize everyone has a budget for advertising, but if something is FREE the return on investment is obvious. Enable videos via YouTube on your account. It'll help your Google placement. Download AutoRevo's Craigslist application... NOW. It'll make your life easier and drive more customers to your website. Did I mention it's free? Not cheap, but FREE!

These are just two of the great tools we offer to help you succeed. There's no secret sauce, no magic formula; it just takes hard work and dedication. We're not saying that it will be easy, we're saying that it will be worth it.

I'm Zach, AutoRevo's Dealer Trainer, and I'm here to help any way I can. I have an extensive background in marketing vehicles exclusively on the Internet. I'm not a software guy - I'm a car guy who experienced first-hand the value in the tools that AutoRevo provides.

The tools you currently have as an AutoRevo customer are everything that you need to be successful... if you're willing to learn to use them. Feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns. I look forward to helping you be more successful.

We hope you enjoyed this guide...

Unlike other providers who forget about you until you complain about a technical problem, AutoRevo is dedicated to helping each and every dealer succeed.

This marketing guide is one of many free guides that we provide for our dealers. We've worked with thousands of dealers through the years, and we want to share our knowledge and experience to help dealers be the best they can be.

Real data, real solutions, and real success. From vehicle acquisition to point of sale, we're with you every step of the way.



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