



A weekly compilation of franchised dealership-specific news, events and information for Internet sales professionals

Drive business by embracing social media marketing

by Chad Polk

You don't have to be a Gen-Y blogger to take advantage of the latest Social Media Marketing techniques. For auto dealerships, the network of people has historically been the greatest asset of the store, right? John bought a car and told Rick, then Rick bought a car, Rick buys his wife a car, then she drives it to soccer practice for all to see....you know the rest.

So why not recreate that cycle on the Internet in this day of online social networking?

Start a blog

Many times Internet sales managers do not have ultimate control over their dealer Web site for constantly refreshing content, heavy search engine optimization, and lead capturing as you would think. But, with a blog you do! Setup can be as simple as getting an account with Blogger, Typepad, WordPress, or others. More importantly, a blog should be the centerpiece of a dealer's social media marketing initiative. Why?

- You control 100% of the content and look
- Lots of fresh content to index by the search engines (they like new content)
- It can be updated daily (or as your schedule permits)
- Publish dealership news in real-time
- Show testimonials
- Create a badge or links to your photo hosting services (Flickr, Snapfish, etc.)
- Embed your YouTube channel
- Visibility into your social networking accounts (Facebook, MySpace, etc)
- Add your press releases
- Include some of your posts to social bookmarking sites (Digg, del.icio.us, Technorati, etc)
- Add links to your eBay Store, Cars.com, or AutoTrader inventory
- Consumers can subscribe and bookmark your blog
- Showcase internet specials through a blog post

The blog platform is the one place where you can bring all of this together. And the best thing is that it's highly indexed by search engines. The more consumers know about you or your dealership the more trust is established. And we all know how big trust is when shopping online.

Online Networking

Probably the biggest, most important technique that successful social marketers use is networking. Networking with the community should be common practice for dealers. There are hundreds of blogs on automotive reviews, consumer auto shopping, OEMs, and vendors, along with other car chatter on the internet to comment on, link to, and network with.

Also, part of networking is creating a LinkedIn and/or ZoomInfo account. These are professional social networking sites to hook up with colleagues, friends (who tell other friends), and customers (who have friends). Sell a car, look the customer up on LinkedIn and request a connection.

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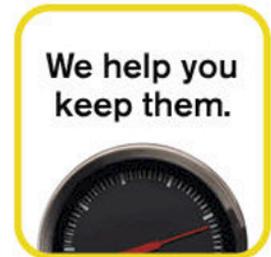
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Use Technology to Get the Word Out

Blogs have a technology called Really Simple Syndication (RSS) which is just a feed used to publish frequently updated content. RSS content is read through an easy "RSS Reader" such as Google Reader, Newsgator, MyYahoo, and many more. Corporate America is online all day long. You don't think they're working 8 hours a day do you? They're reading the news online with their RSS readers! People simply subscribe to your blog and get immediate updates of your posts, etc.

By embracing online networking and adopting the latest practices in social media marketing, an auto dealership can be visible and build a reputation with the consumers. Through all of these social marketing channels you gain valuable traffic and visibility with the search engines, and ultimately build a community of buyers.

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