

# FUTURE-PROOF YOUR DIGITAL STRATEGY

With ARI's Best Practices for Website Maintenance, Effective Digital Marketing & More

**ARI** SELL MORE STUFF!™





## More Consumers Are Shopping Online than **EVER BEFORE.**

More searches for units and services mean more opportunities to connect with potential customers. In order to find success in today's consumer landscape, dealers need to enhance the site-to-store pipeline by appealing to the needs of modern shoppers.

### What are modern shoppers looking for?

- ✦ Ability to browse & interact with dealerships on multiple channels
- ✦ Correct, reliable information from your business at every turn
- ✦ Multiple options to communicate with the dealer - & receive a *rapid* response
- ✦ Streamlined process of browsing to buying & easy transition to in-store visit



### In this eBook,

ARI will share best practices to help your dealer network stand out from the competition and engage shoppers early on in the path to purchase.

## Best Practices:

# DIGITAL STOREFRONTS



Consumers spend **61%** of their time shopping online<sup>1</sup>

*Make sure your dealers are part of their search!*

Is your platform “just a website,” or is it a lead-driving **digital storefront**? What’s the difference? The former gives dealers an online presence, while the latter provides everything dealers need to engage and convert online leads.

In order to achieve perpetually successful digital storefronts, dealers must treat their sites as integral parts of their sales process and continually adhere to best practices.

## Best Practices to Future-Proof a Digital Storefront:

### Don’t “Set It & Forget It”

No matter how great a website is right now, it will need updates and changes down the road. Keep an eye on the relevancy of website content, keywords and design, and be sure to build future website updates into your marketing budget.

<sup>1</sup> Cox Automotive    <sup>2</sup> DealerSocket’s Dealership Action Report

## Add Test Drive Requests to VDP Webpages

Instead of creating a separate, obscure Schedule a Test Ride page, add a request feature alongside inventory listings so that visitors can transition smoothly from the website to the dealership

## Use a Good-Quality CRM

A good CRM program allows dealers to track every customer interaction, monitor customer relationships and even automate messaging to engage customers at certain stages of the path to purchase.

## Create Clarifying Content

When customers have sufficient information about price range and quality, they are willing to pay **10-15%** more<sup>2</sup>. Create website content, blogs and videos that demonstrate the dealership’s expertise, quality guarantees and pricing structures.

# 9.5x

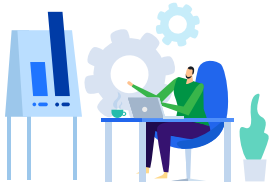
The average customer visits a website **9.5** times before completing a purchase<sup>3</sup>.

*The average customer visits a website 9.5 times before completing a purchase<sup>3</sup>.*

<sup>3</sup> Rakuten Advertising

## Best Practices:

# DIGITAL MARKETING



Omnichannel campaigns produce a **250%** higher rate of purchase frequency than single-channel campaigns<sup>4</sup>

When it comes to digital marketing, do you really need to do it all? Should you invest in organic search optimization **and** paid ads and social media? Yes - all of this and more! Why? Because it **really** works, especially when combined using best practices.

**Digital marketing provides dealers with a strong presence in the online inventory marketplace, where they can influence online shoppers.**

**Using multiple digital marketing outlets drives two specific outcomes:**

- 1 Larger online presence - more exposure - more leads
- 2 Streamlining a strategy across multiple channels (ie, **omnichannel marketing**) ensures shoppers have a consistent, optimal experience *no matter where, what or when*

<sup>4</sup>IMPACT

## Best Practices for Omnichannel Digital Marketing:

- ✦ Understand Your Target Audience
- ✦ View Your Digital Marketing Tools As Pieces of a Whole
- ✦ Optimize Your Tools for Mobile
- ✦ Personalize Your Marketing Messaging



**70%** of consumers perform their purchasing research online<sup>5</sup>.

*Make your brand easy to find no matter where shoppers are looking!*

<sup>5</sup> ClickZ

# Digital Marketing: SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION



**68%** of all clicks go to the first 5 organic results<sup>6</sup>

**Search Engine Optimization (SEO)** traffic converts better than other channels because organic rankings convey trust from the search engines. SEO success secures brand elevation on search results pages, and this is an integral component for dealerships.



## Best Practices for SEO:

### Be the Expert Online

Consumers are **48%** more likely to become customers of brands that deliver educational content<sup>7</sup>. Blogs are an excellent resource for educational content AND better search rankings.

**Note:** 2020 saw a surge in first-time buyers. Bring in brand-new customers by simplifying the path to purchase - break it down step-by-step and create how-to videos that answer basic questions.

<sup>6</sup>IMPACT <sup>7</sup>Conductor

### Use Location-Based SEO

“Where to buy” and “near me” queries have grown more than **200%** in the past two years<sup>8</sup>. Dealers can capitalize on these searches by targeting location-based website keywords, claiming their Google My Business page and ensuring their store information is correct on digital directories.

### Get Featured in Position Zero

“Position Zero” refers to suggestion boxes at the top of the search results page that satisfy search intent without requiring a website click. Websites that appear in Position Zero gain greater credibility and exposure.

### Optimize the Website for Voice Search


As much as **47%** of people who use voice searches are trying to find a local business<sup>8</sup>. By considering the questions prospects might ask, dealers can optimize their online content with longer-tail keywords that reflect these questions.

### Exercise Emotional Intelligence

Create SEO-focused content on relevant topics but be mindful of tone. Consumers are less trusting of sales pitches and instead want to see transparency, integrity and content that aims to educate.

<sup>8</sup> Think with Google

# Digital Marketing: GOOGLE ADS

 **85%** of people use search engines to find local businesses<sup>6</sup>

**Google Ads** is the most popular paid search ad network due to the billions of searches per day that take place on the Google search engine.

*Note: While paid search produces results quickly, it performs best when paired with SEO strategies, which add credibility to paid ads.*

## Best Practices for Google Ads:

### Identify Trending Keywords

Know what customers are searching for right now. Paying attention to commonly searched keywords will help dealers adjust to how customers are shopping. Be sure to target these keywords in ad copy to draw in buyers.

Contactless

Delivery

Appointment

*Note: Target long-tail keywords, too. These offer a narrower focus, causing them to be less competitive, lower in cost and more likely to drive conversions.*

<sup>9</sup>SmallBizGenius

### Personalize Ad Campaigns

Personalized ads achieve **30%** greater marketing spend efficiency<sup>10</sup>. Segment the target audience based on demographic, purchase history and browsing behavior to get ads in front of highly promising leads.

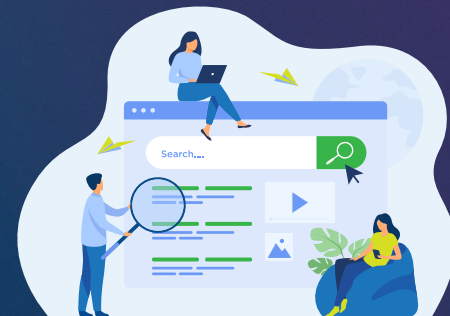
### Keep Online Inventory Updated

This may seem obvious, but even in 2021 we encounter dealerships that advertise little to no inventory listings. Feature all in-stock items online, and include photos (and videos, if possible) of each item.

### Automated Online Ads

Integrate an automation platform that creates and pauses ads according to the dealership's online inventory levels. This way, dealers don't have to worry about wasting ad spend on out-of-stock items!

*Note: No inventory on the lot? Create ads to promote pre-orders and drive buyers to inventory that's "coming soon"!*



<sup>10</sup>McKinsey & Company

# Digital Marketing: **FACEBOOK ADS**



**1.6 BILLION**

people worldwide connect to small businesses on Facebook<sup>11</sup>

Using hyper-targeted **Facebook Ads**, dealers can get in front of highly qualified Facebook leads by appearing prominently in their newsfeeds.



## Best Practices for Facebook Ads:

### Minimize Text on Graphics & Posts

Facebook users scroll quickly, so the best way to capture their attention is to use more imagery and less text. Image ads that are **20%** text perform better<sup>12</sup>.

### Take Advantage of the Carousel Format

Get the most from ad spend by using the carousel format. This allows dealers to show multiple photos without an additional cost, and is a great way to showcase lots of units, parts, services and/or promotions.

<sup>11</sup> Facebook

<sup>12</sup> Oberlo

### Use Videos or Animation

Stand out in newsfeeds by adding movement to Facebook Ads. If dealers don't have the resources to create a traditional video ad, they can get creative with a boomerang video, timelapse or animated text.

### Create Vertical Videos

**98%** of Facebook users are viewing ads on a mobile phone<sup>13</sup>. Since most viewers hold their phones vertically, using a vertical or square aspect ratio will cover more of their screen.

### Boost Engagement Through Calls to Action

Facebook Ads offer a range of calls to action to inspire specific reactions from viewers. Choose a CTA that aligns with the nature of the ad (eg, "Preorder Today," "Shop Now" or "Schedule a Ride"). Experiment with different CTAs to determine which ones drive the most action.



<sup>13</sup> Facebook

# Digital Marketing: **TARGETED DIGITAL ADVERTISING**



**1 in 3** shoppers visits a website  
after seeing its display ad<sup>14</sup>

**Targeted Digital Advertising (TDA)** hyper-targets paid ads based on shoppers' online and offline behaviors, allowing dealers to create custom audience lists based on desired criteria.



## Best Practices for TDA:

### Create Narrow Audience Groups

Don't advertise to shoppers en masse; instead, generate audience lists according to demographics, interests and preferences of shoppers. This allows dealers to target highly qualified leads and generate content that really resonates.

<sup>14</sup> Simpli.fi

### Target In-Market Audiences

Widen the reach to shoppers who have a high buying intent. "In-market audiences" are the shoppers actively researching similar units and services, even if they are unfamiliar with the dealership. These individuals can be identified by past searches, keyword activity and browsing behavior.

### Remarket to Website Visitors

Website visitors have proven they are interested enough in a dealership to browse its offerings. Because **98%** of web traffic doesn't convert on the first visit<sup>15</sup>, dealers need a strong remarketing strategy to engage previous visitors with relevant ads wherever else they browse online.

### Embrace Geo-Targeting

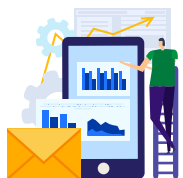
While digital marketing can reach shoppers around the globe, dealers should ensure they are connecting with local, promising shoppers who will travel to the dealership. Geo-targeting targets consumers within a selected circumference, such as a zip code, trade show even or competing dealership.



<sup>15</sup> GoSquared

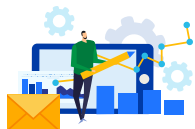


# Digital Marketing: **AUTOMATED EMAIL MARKETING**



Email marketing generates an average return of **\$42** for every **\$1** invested<sup>16</sup>

Email marketing remains one of the best marketing strategies, due to the high volume of consumers who check their email regularly. **Automated Email Marketing** is even more successful because content goes out automatically to leads based on their actions.



Automated emails generate **119% MORE** clicks than regular emails<sup>17</sup>

## Best Practices for Automated Email Marketing:

### Humanize the Message

An automated email should never sound automated. Create natural-sounding copy and take steps to personalize the message using merge tags (these are unique labels tied to the information leads submit to generate personalized copy such as their name and email address).

<sup>16</sup> HubSpot

<sup>17</sup> OptinMonster

### Create Multiple Campaigns

Each shopper is on their own unique journey, and a singular email campaign won't resonate with everyone. Create multiple campaigns based on actions (eg, visited the website vs. made a purchase), and keep the workflows dynamic so that a lead can be tipped into a different campaign if their behavior or interests change.

**Note:** To avoid spamming inactive audiences, create a re-engagement campaign that encourages leads to re-engage after a series of unopened emails. Be sure to include the value of WHY leads should connect with the dealership.

### Routinely Optimize Campaigns

Automated email campaigns will continue to run as long as their conditions are met, so it's a good idea to review the content, audience and triggers to ensure everything is optimal and up to date.

### Make Campaigns Accessible

About **15%** of people live with some form of a disability<sup>18</sup>, which can impact the accessibility of email content. We encourage dealers to make design choices accordingly, such as using a font size and weight that can be viewed on mobile at arm's length.



<sup>18</sup> World Health Organization

# Digital Marketing: **SOCIAL MEDIA**



**57%** of consumers will follow a brand to learn about new products & services<sup>19</sup>

**More than half** have purchased a product they first heard about on social media<sup>20</sup>

Having an active **social media presence** helps dealerships stand out from the crowd, differentiate their brand and connect with specific groups of shoppers.



## Best Practices for a Strong Social Presence:

### Automate Your Social Calendar

Many dealers have little time to post consistently across social media channels. Using an automated posting tool allows dealers to schedule posts in advance and ensure their content goes live at the *optimal time for each social channel*.

<sup>19</sup> Sprout Social    <sup>20</sup> JungleScout

### Exercise Social Listening

“Social listening” means tuning into what your prospects and customers are saying on social media. Follow relevant industry pages, discussion groups and hashtags to stay in the know on shoppers’ wants, struggles and evolving interests.

**Note:** *What are shoppers saying about dealership competitors? Knowing where competitors are lacking allows dealers to step in and fill the gap, driving more buyers to their dealerships instead.*

### Optimize Your Customer Service

The quality of a dealership’s online customer service can boost or break page follows. More than half of customers expect brands to offer customer service via social media, and **42%** expect a response within an hour<sup>21</sup>. Dealers should regularly monitor their comments sections and direct messages and respond quickly to any inquiries.

### Sell on Social Media

Social commerce is on the rise, especially following the launch of Shop features on platforms like Facebook and Instagram. Selling directly on social media significantly shortens the customer journey from search to conversion.



<sup>21</sup> Smart Insights

## Best Practices:

# DIGITAL CUSTOMER SERVICE



**68%** of consumers have much higher expectations for businesses' digital capabilities post-pandemic<sup>22</sup>

With online shopping now more popular and mainstream than ever, many customers are shifting toward digital channels for customer service needs. As a result, businesses are taking strides to personalize the online customer experience.

Shoppers connect with your dealers long before they set foot in the dealership. Providing digital communication channels creates sustainable communication that begins the moment a prospect interacts with a business and continues through the entirety of the shopping journey.

<sup>22</sup> Salesforce

## Best Practices for Digital Customer Service:

- Provide a variety of digital communication tools for two reasons:
  - Shoppers can use their preferred channel to connect with the dealer
  - Leads can contact the dealership at any stage of the path to purchase
- Gather user data across your channels to analyze & identify preferred channels
- Connect online & offline experiences - make sure your digital channels provide a clear path that leads shoppers to the dealership
- Choose communication platforms that are optimized for mobile, as many shoppers are communicating on their phones
- Utilize channels that provide real-time responses, such as website chat and texting



# Digital Customer Service: LIVE WEB CHAT



**75%** of consumers prefer live chat over any other channel<sup>23</sup>



**44%** consider live chat to be the most important feature of a website<sup>24</sup>

**Live web chat** connects a dealership's support team with online shoppers who are actively browsing the website.



## Best Practices for Live Web Chat:

### Provide a Rapid Response

The appeal of live chat lies in its real-time pace, and 60% of customers expect live chats to provide an immediate answer\*. To ensure dealers can maintain a realistic response time, we recommend setting live chat hours to a reasonable level and making the hours clearly visible on your website.

<sup>23</sup> TechJury

<sup>24</sup> HubSpot

**Note:** One of the benefits of a website is 24/7 availability to visitors. Live chat can support this by providing auto-responses to FAQs during off-hours or providing a phone number for visitors to leave their information and receive a call back from a team member.

### Use a Natural Tone & Words

Live chatters expect to interact with a human and may be put off if the responder comes across clunky and robotic. Aim for a balance of professional and natural. You may find it helpful to review your chat transcripts for examples of great connections with customers, and share these with the team.

**Note:** If your live chat feature is programmed to auto-respond to FAQs during off-hours, ensure the responses mimic a natural, human tone.

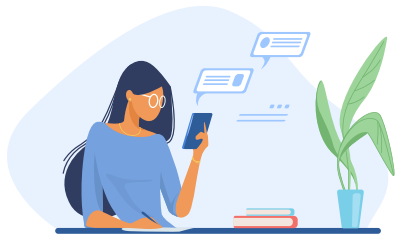
### Create Standardized Chat Guidelines

This is especially important if multiple team members respond to online chats. Live chat is part of a dealership's brand voice, and it should maintain a high level of professionalism and consistency. Create a standard guide for greeting chatters, breaking down long or detailed replies and knowing when to transition to an email or phone call to resolve a complex issue.



## Digital Customer Service:

# TEXTING



**75%** of consumers want to receive text messages from businesses<sup>25</sup>

**Texting** has become one of the most popular communication channels thanks to the high level of mobile phone users. Brands have begun using text to engage with customers throughout the path to purchase.



## Best Practices for Texting Customers:

### Set a Friendly & Casual Tone

Texting is more personable than other communication channels, which means team members should adopt a relaxed tone. Simple sentences and common vocabulary keep the conversation moving forward toward a resolution.

<sup>25</sup>TechJury

### Keep Content Short

Texting is an ideal medium for short, concise messages. If dealers need to share a large amount of information, we recommend using links to deliver more content (eg, directing leads to a unit listing).

### Use a Professional Texting Solution

To maintain professionalism and privacy, we advise against texting customers from personal phone numbers. A professional texting platform ensures security for customers and team members, improves the dealership's image and creates a singular source to maintain any customer data.

### Choose a Dynamic Text Tool

The potential of text messages goes beyond conversations. Dynamic text platforms allow dealers to send appointment and service reminders, notify customers of unit pickups, collect payments through digital links and receive feedback on the customer experience.



*Connect with ARI to see how we can help you and your dealer network optimize your online strategies.*

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## **About ARI**


For over 40 years, ARI Network Services, Inc. (ARI) has offered an award-winning suite of SaaS, software tools and marketing services to help dealers, equipment manufacturers and distributors in selected vertical markets increase sales – online and in-store.

***Business is complicated, but we believe our customers' technology tools do not have to be.***

We remove the complexity of selling and servicing new and used inventory, parts, garments and accessories (PG&A) so that our client base of more than 23,500 equipment dealers, 195 distributors and 3,360 brands worldwide can leverage our web and eCatalog platforms to Sell More Stuff!™

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