

EBOOK

CONQUERING THE CROWDED MARKET WITH BEST-IN-CLASS VEHICLE MERCHANDISING





INTRODUCTION

Vehicle merchandising is becoming more visual than ever. Digital is at the center of your business and your online showroom is the lot that matters to vehicle buyers the most.

Car buyers remain focused on the digital shopping experience, spending a majority of their time researching and finding vehicles online before they visit a dealership. With this in mind, dealers should aim to create a unique, immersive online experience to differentiate their inventory in the market.

Using the techniques and best practices in this guide, you will become equipped with creating a dynamic experience that distinguishes you from your competition. As a result, your dealership will be positioned to reach more shoppers than ever before.



HOMENET
AUTOMOTIVE

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OPTIMIZE ONLINE VISUALS AND EXTEND YOUR REACH

Catching the eyes of shoppers is hard enough, but keeping them engaged is sometimes impossible with all the competition in the market. To make matters worse, consumers are spending less time in market evaluating their next purchase.¹ Meanwhile, 88% of all vehicle shopping starts online, and of the 24 steps in the vehicle shopping process, 19 are digital touchpoints.

Use solutions and data that reveal what shoppers are looking for and buying. This helps dealers put the right vehicle, with the right photos and information, in front of the right buyer.



The automotive presence on Facebook Marketplace grew substantially in 2018, due in large part to the 550 million users that log in to the platform monthly. Dealers today are moving advertising dollars away from traditional forms of promotion and targeting shoppers using Google and Facebook.

¹ - Cox Automotive, "Car Buyer Journey," 2018

59%

of consumers spend
the majority of their
time researching and
viewing cars online.

CREATE AN IMMERSIVE EXPERIENCE

Today's dealers need to leverage enhanced visualization within their online advertising to create greater engagement and transparency with shoppers.

Photos are a big selling point – with nearly half of car shoppers admitting that they'd be willing to make a purchasing decision based on images alone. Interactive media takes this a step further, allowing the buyer to scan 360-degree displays bringing the vehicle to life and offering a new view of the vehicle. Shoppers will feel like they are in front of the vehicle by using 360, instead of in front of their digital devices.

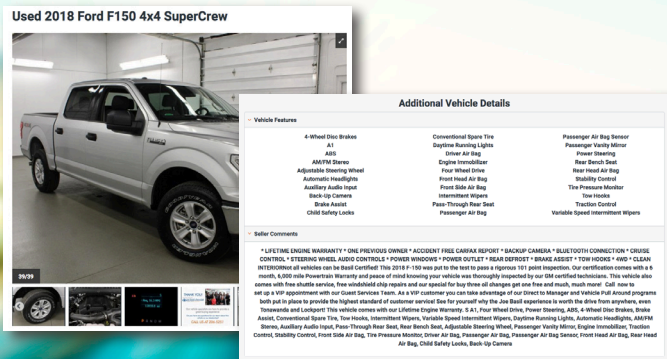
Take them a step further by tagging "hot spots" on the 360 images which will open another layer that highlights specific features and callouts that make the vehicle appealing.



CREATE GREATER TRANSPARENCY

Information is power for car shoppers. By supplying your audience with the specifics, including images, descriptions, video, etc., dealers empower them to make a more informed purchasing decision. In fact, 92% of shoppers said full descriptions included with a listing is extremely important.² Combine detailed vehicle descriptions, content and photography for a more engaging experience that attracts more buyers.

Check to make sure all options and features for a vehicle are highlighted in your listings. The interior color may be all consumers need to know that they've found the right vehicle.



Industry-leading classified sites like Autotrader® and Kelley Blue Book® use merchandising completeness to drive which vehicles display at the top of their “search results” page. **Now vehicles with real photo sets, video and descriptions rank higher on the results page.** This shift is what drives a better shopping experience for consumers and rewards dealers who take the time to provide buyers with more comprehensive information.

92%

of shoppers said full descriptions included with a listing is extremely important.²

2 - HomeNet Market Research, "HomeNet Foundational Research," 2017

USE PHOTOS TO TELL THE STORY OF YOUR INVENTORY

According to Cox Automotive research, used vehicles with a set of custom images receive 349% more Vehicle Detail Page (VDP) views than similar models with stock photos. And that includes interactive photos, which allow shoppers to receive a live, showroom-like experience without having to leave their house.



Catching the eye of a shopper is hard enough and keeping them engaged is sometimes impossible with all of the competition in the market. Using overlays to highlight special features like heated seats and heads-up display can be the key to standing apart from your competitor's listings.

You can also stand out from the crowd by backgrounding your images. This technique transposes your vehicle onto a clean, uncluttered background that eliminates distractions and makes your car the star of the show. Vehicles with backgrounded images receive up to a 5% lift in VDP views than those with non-backgrounded images.

Used vehicles with a set of custom images receive

349%

more Vehicle Detail Page (VDP) views than similar models with stock photos.

USE SMART AUTOMATION

There's enough to do in a dealership day to day. While having manual control over tasks may bring a sense of security, details are sure to be missed or sacrificed to save time. Automated solutions and tools can leverage rich build data to reduce the amount of manual effort you need to put into efficiently running a dealership.

Where possible, leverage technology to minimize time-consuming manual tasks like:

- **DMS integration**
- **Vehicle data consistency**
- **Targeted syndication**

Changing tools, processes and even data feeds are all things dealers tend to be resistant to. It takes time, money and a great deal of effort to get things switched over. Simple tools that seamlessly blend with other solutions are key to optimizing efficiency and are going to be the most beneficial in the long run. Evaluate a tool's ability to increase efficiency while minimally disrupting your current service and processes.



UNDERSTAND YOUR TIME-TO-MARKET

Measure how long it takes your dealership to acquire a vehicle, then get it online, conditioned and fully merchandised with pricing, comments and photos. Keep the bigger picture in mind, and note that it can take auction purchases over 10 days to arrive on your lot. These delays can eat into your holding costs and impact your margin for profit.

Having a process to help you track from auction to online can help you capture a customer's interest earlier in the process, making your dealership more efficient.

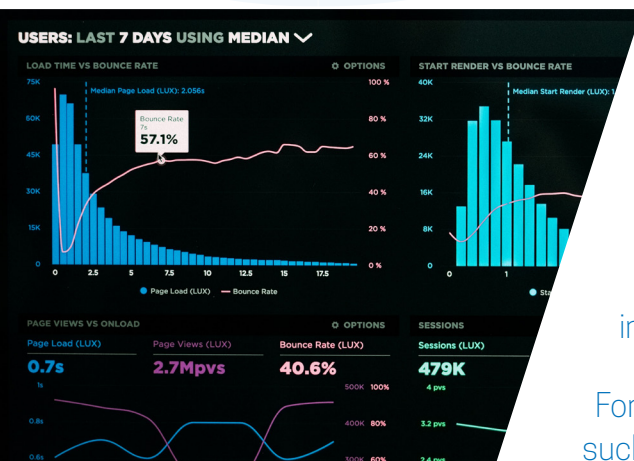


MEASURE MEDIA ENGAGEMENT

Measuring the overall effectiveness of your online listings starts with tracking search-result and vehicle-detail page views. Having an idea of the online engagement your inventory receives allows you see the impact your merchandising has on attracting shoppers.

When certain vehicles are failing to reach the benchmark of the rest of your inventory, you can dive into why this may be happening by addressing the merchandising or lack thereof.

For a deeper understanding of online engagement, track views for specific aspects of merchandising, such as videos, photos and 360 spins.



CONCLUSION

With car shoppers changing to a digital-first shopping process, the time to develop an immersive online experience for your dealership is now. Putting an emphasis on the success of your digital showroom will drive the success of your physical one.

Adapting to digital as the new normal will allow you to gain faster, more efficient engagement and visibility for your online inventory, and set the stage for increased sales velocity and profitability.



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