

EBOOK

# THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO SOCIAL MEDIA MERCHANDISING

Differentiating inventory across digital channels





## INTRODUCTION

A decade ago social media started as a way to connect people from across the world. As the world transforms how it shares information, so too does the need for social platforms to support how people and businesses reach other.

The automotive industry has seen booming success with the introduction of social selling platforms through Facebook and Twitter. As generations of car buyers grow more comfortable using social media to make purchasing decisions, it's imperative for automotive dealers to adjust their merchandising strategy.

This ebook, "Definitive Guide to Social Media Merchandising", discusses how you can leverage social media to grow your dealership's profitability and the steps you can take to ensure a positive experience for your customers.



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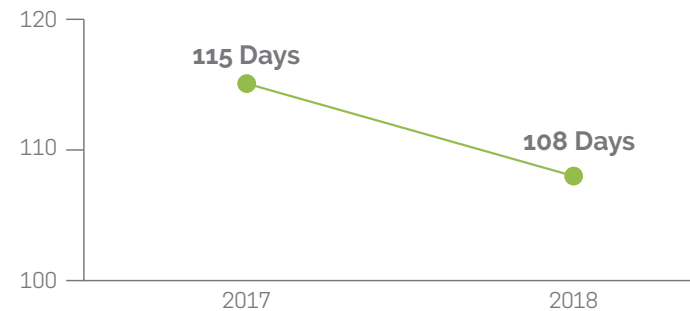
# THE IMPORTANCE OF USING SOCIAL MEDIA



Research shows that the overall time a car shopper spends researching a vehicle online has decreased, with their time in the market down from 115 to 108 days since 2017. This means that there's an even smaller window to engage with shoppers, putting the pressure on dealers to differentiate themselves.

Additionally, shoppers use an average of 24 touchpoints when doing their research – 19 of which are digital.

**Time Shoppers Spend Researching Vehicles Online Is Declining**





# SELLING ON SOCIAL MEDIA

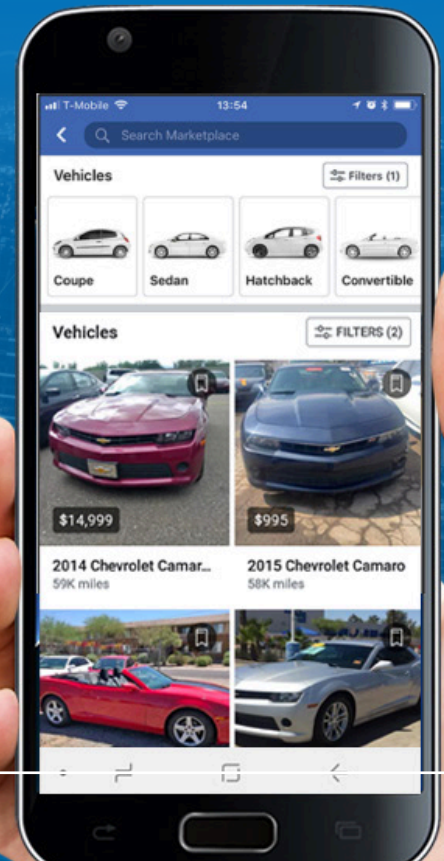
Social platforms are a lucrative new channel to drive leads and increase sales opportunities for your dealership.

Social media platforms, like Facebook, offer marketplace features that attract more than 550 million shoppers per month. This massive audience presents more sales opportunities for car dealers looking to expand their reach and maximize the visibility for their inventory.

Did You Know...

# 40%

of consumers are likely to purchase a vehicle based on images they view online without seeing the vehicle in person<sup>1</sup>.



1 - ©2018 Cox Automotive. All Rights Reserved. - "Power of Pictures Study"  
<https://www.coxautoinc.com/learning-center/every-picture-sells-story/>

# BEST PRACTICES FOR LISTING VEHICLES ON SOCIAL MEDIA

In order to maximize the utility of this channel, a dealership must make sure its listings tell the right story by including the right information in the right online destinations. Before listing your inventory on social media, you need to make sure your data is on par with industry standards



- **Select one partner for merchandising and syndication** - Selecting one provider will enable you to understand attribution and measure performance accordingly.
- **Upload your full inventory of pre-owned vehicles across all price points** - This maximizes your dealership's presence. There are a variety of shoppers looking at your inventory on social platforms. Don't think about Facebook as a Craigslist where only lower-priced, aged vehicles should be advertised.
- **Be sure to provide the complete vehicle description, including condition** - The more information a buyer has up front, the more qualified the lead will be when the customer contacts you. We recommend that you keep your description neat and brief, and be sure to include the dealership phone number.
- **Post the sale price of the vehicle in the designated area, not the down-payment amount** - You can include any down-payment information in the description, as desired.
- **Provide as many high-quality, custom photos as possible** - Posts with at least 15-20 photos tend to perform the best. Vehicles with multiple custom photos receive 349% more VDP views than vehicles utilizing a stock image<sup>1</sup>.

1 - ©2018 Cox Automotive. All Rights Reserved. - "Power of Pictures Study" - <https://www.coxautoinc.com/learning-center/every-picture-sells-story/>

# BUSINESS PAGE MANAGEMENT AND OBJECTIVES

Viewing your inventory is only the start of the sales process. Shoppers research dealerships before they ever visit their lot, meaning you need to make a good impression on potential customers you may not know exist yet.

Remember, research shows that the time a car shopper spends in market is decreasing. That makes it imperative for dealerships to take advantage of the few opportunities they are given to engage with a potential client.

Utilizing relevant content on social media positions you as the expert with the right car for the shopper. Building trust and confidence with your followers drives in-store visits.

## Social Media Goals:

1. Building Trust with Shoppers
2. Communicating with Leads
3. Tips for Promoting Your Social Pages
4. Create a Unique Experience





# 1 BUILDING TRUST WITH SHOPPERS

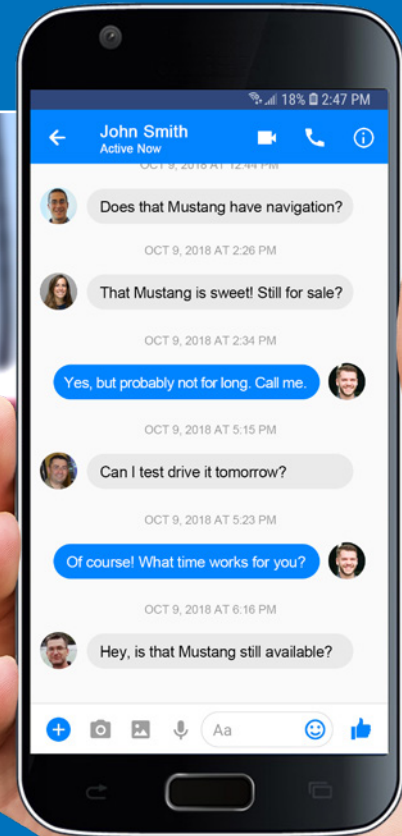
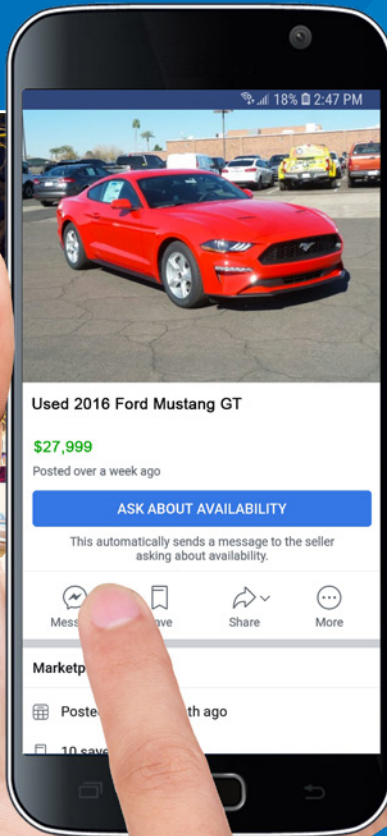
Developing a transparent and trusted presence that is directly monitored by your dealership should be a priority.

Sharing content from popular consumer brands is a great way to begin establishing your business as another trusted source. Posting content that is more personal and informative than sales-focused is a great method to build confidence in your audience. If shoppers feel like you're there to help instead of sell, they're more likely to reach out. Be sure to post content to other platforms, like Twitter and Instagram, as well to cover the broad spectrum of social media shoppers.



## 2 COMMUNICATING WITH LEADS

Responding quickly to messages and inquiries from shoppers on all social platforms keeps them engaged, increases the likelihood of in-store visits, and reduces the risk of disinterest and dropping off.





# 3

## TIPS FOR PROMOTING YOUR SOCIAL PAGES

Social pages are only as strong as their reach on the market. Well-built pages can reach thousands of people nationwide.

**Below are easy steps you can take to ensure your page is appealing and insightful to followers:**

- **Ensure your business social page profiles are complete with the right information** - This will make it easier for people to find you and it helps to get started off on the right foot.
- **Be the expert** - Post informative, little known pieces of content to educate your audience without selling your brand.
- **Engage with your audience** - People love sharing their opinions on social media. By asking engaging questions, followers interact with you and indirectly promote your page with their friends. This is also a fantastic way to build rapport and relationship with your communities.
- **Make your social sites easy to access from your website** - If customers are searching for you, your website is usually the first to pop up in the search results. Make it simple for them to find the social networks that you're on.
- **Use the tools on your social sites to target the audiences you want** - For example, take advantage of Facebook's tools to determine audience data to target interest groups of your choosing. This is a great way to get a focused message in front of the people most likely to take an interest in your business.

# 4

## CREATE A UNIQUE EXPERIENCE

Don't let your shoppers believe they'll get that same old buying scenario they dislike at your dealership. Create a new, exciting way to buy a car for a quick way to get people talking and coming back in the future.

### Here's an example of a dealer finding success with social media:

**Dani's Auto Sales**, an independent location in Philadelphia, leveraged the popularity of social media hashtags to develop a unique campaign that celebrates the milestone of buying a car.

Dani's Auto Sales popular **#POPTHATTRUNK** campaign is designed to showcase the new owner of a car opening their trunk for the first time to reveal a prize. The trunk openings are photographed and shared across social media by the dealership and often by the customer.

As the photos are shared across social media, awareness of Dani's Auto Sales grows. This campaign proves that a little thought, ingenuity and fun can go a long way in creating a positive, long-lasting effect on your audience.



# ANALYTICS AND REPORTING

## Measuring the metrics that matter

### Measuring Success

Platforms are constantly changing their algorithms and what is classified as successful. Staying up-to-date on their changes allows you to accurately track and modify your methods to remain successful.

### Handling Reviews

If shoppers are searching, inquiring, and buying from your dealership – chances are they're talking about their experiences, both good and bad. If you receive a negative review, the best course of action is to acknowledge it as quickly as possible. Apologize for any miscommunications or poor experience then offer to make things right with a customer. Going out of your way to make a customer feel better about their experience with your business is just good management.

### Managing the Dealership Experience

Managing your reputation is key for developing rapport, identifying opportunities for improvement and managing the dealership as whole. There are several tools available that allow you to go one step deeper and look at individual departments across your dealership. Tracking key words in reviews like “sales” and “service” can display insightful feedback about your dealership operations that leads to growth and development.





# MEASURING SOCIAL METRICS THAT MATTER

If your dealership is serious about making a lasting impression on social media, the right metrics must be measured. Remember, what is measured, is managed. What is managed, receives results. Below are the specific social media metrics that have the closest correlation to success for your dealership.



- **Followers** - The number of followers you have is just as important as the number of clients you have in your CRM. It represents the size of your dealership's audience.
- **Impressions** - This number represents how many people have seen a specific post. Think of this as a Search Results Page (SRP) metric for your social media presence.
- **Engagement** - Every time a user interacts with information on your social media platform, it is recorded as an engagement. Likes, shares or comments are all considered engagements. Engagements are important because they increase the relevancy of your content to other social media users.
- **Click** - The most important metric on social media as this drives VDPs for dealers. It is a direct representation of the demand and interest of your inventory. This metric can tell you if it is merchandised correctly or if the information needs to be revised to attract more attention.

## CONCLUSION

By taking the steps outlined in the ebook, you can begin to use social media to differentiate your dealership's inventory online.

Put your inventory where shoppers are already looking. Social media platforms offer the ability to expand your market and put your vehicles in front of those searching for them. Build trust through the use of engaging content that stamps you as the expert and offers transparency with your customers by engaging directly with them – even if they're being critical.

By using the tips outlined in this resource, your dealership will be positioned to maximize it's visibility with online shoppers.



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## ABOUT HOMENET

HomeNet Automotive is the leading retail automotive authority for online vehicle merchandising insights and services to help dealers and partners maximize inventory visibility and profitability. Founded in 1999, HomeNet's suite of efficient, simple-to-use products import and syndicate inventory data, photos, and other content for 19,790 dealership rooftops across the U.S. and Canada, to more than 2,100 online destinations every day. Our vehicle merchandising solutions include comprehensive data and photos – mapped from multiple sources – to efficiently showcase inventory with rich, engaging content that today's vehicle buyers expect. Headquartered near Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, HomeNet Automotive is a Cox Automotive Brand.



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