

Best Practice Series: Internet Lead Handling (Part 2)

Internet Leads represent a significant retail opportunity for automotive dealers. A lead submission is a low funnel, high purchase-intent activity. As such, all Internet leads require timely, professional and thorough follow-up by the dealership.



✓ CRM Utilization

Effective utilization of the CRM tool enables dealership personnel to contact customers with greater frequency and create a more personalized customer experience.

- Build professional, dealership-specific, Kia branded templates.
- Pre-program the CRM tool to schedule activities that match the dealership's response process standards.
- Record all contact activity in the CRM – including phone call attempts and call notes.
- Filter out sold leads from bulk sales emails. Instead send these customers periodic emails related to service and vehicle ownership.

✓ Auto-response Feature

Sales staff should strive to provide customers with a personalized response in one hour or less. The Auto-response feature should only be turned on outside of business hours.

- Create a robust template that sells the unique benefits of your dealership and sets clear expectations for when the consumer will receive a personal response.
- Ensure the Auto-response signature is from the dealer GM/GSM.
- Use a subject line that is relevant to the customer, e.g. "Your Kia Optima Price Quote from "Dealer Name." Customers who submitted a third-party lead, may not know their lead is going to your dealership.
- Always provide a link to your website within the body of the auto responder message.

✓ Pricing Strategy

Use the following pricing strategy practices to increase internet sales, while maintaining gross profit goals.

- Pre-determine a pricing strategy. Internet Sales Staff must be empowered to quote price.
- Examine and evaluate the pricing strategy often. As inventory levels change, market pricing fluctuates, and customer demand goes up or down, your pricing strategy may need to be adjusted.

✓ Staffing Levels

It is recommended to staff your dealership using the following guidelines for lead volume per person, per month.

- Internet Sales Managers (ISM): 75-100 leads per person.
- Dedicated BDC: 100-150 incoming leads handled across the staff.
- Distributed Sales Model: It is recommended that each individual be responsible for 25-50 incoming leads.

✓ Staffing Models

The objective of any staffing model is to balance the need for fulfilling customer expectations with the talent and operating practices of the dealership.

Dedicated Internet Sales Manager (ISM)

A Dedicated ISM manages the sales process from lead receipt to vehicle delivery. When properly trained, ISMs can devote their full attention to responding to leads quickly and with consistency.

- Management can have tighter control over the online pricing policy when dedicated representatives are providing price quotes.
- Institute policies and lead ownership rules to ensure the ISM is "Deal Protected". This will reduce sales channel conflicts between the showroom and internet sales teams.

Distributed Sales Model (DSM)

A DSM gets the entire sales team involved in lead response.

- Given both floor and Internet leads, sales personnel tend to prioritize floor leads over internet leads. This reduces response speed, quality, and robust follow-up.
- DSM staffing requires heavy management to ensure Internet leads are prioritized equally with floor leads.

Business Development Center (BDC)

BDCs consolidate all forms of lead follow-up into one department.

- Incentivize BDC staff for setting appointments and/or any sales that close.
- Implement procedures to streamline the hand off process from BDC to salesperson.