

Best Practice Series:

Internet Lead Handling (Part 1)

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.



✓ Dealer Engagement

Management must be involved in the dealership's lead management activity. This includes establishing department structure, process development, and personnel management. Management should:

- Clearly define all roles and responsibilities of personnel, pertaining to involvement in lead management and customer contact.
- Define objectives and review metrics and performance reports regularly, at both the department and individual level.
- Be involved with defining and approving an internet lead response pricing policy for the department.

✓ Email Follow-Up Process

Best-in-class dealerships respond to unsold leads for a minimum of 90 days, and up to 180 days. To follow-up consistently, each dealership must create a customized short-term (days 1-30) and long-term (days 31-180) follow-up process. During this process:

- Treat all leads initially as immediate buyers, with heavy follow-up, including multiple pricing options for the first 7 days.
- Consider your leads as researchers around day 11 and respond accordingly with more brand awareness and Why Buy your dealership messaging.
- After 90 days, implement long-term follow-up content (e.g. bulk marketing emails) unless the customer opts out of communication with your dealership.

✓ Tools

Every employee needs the right tools to be effective at their job. Internet lead handlers are no different. Set your employees up for success by providing:

- A designated/private work spaces, computers, phones, and a quality CRM tool.
- Necessary ongoing training on dealership process/policy, CRM utilization, reporting dashboards, etc.
- Access to dealership marketing materials, creative and promotional material for internet lead follow-up content.

✓ Department Staffing

Successful dealerships typically have dedicated staff for internet lead response. This staff spends 100% of their efforts managing leads. Dedicated staff allows:

- Dealership management to hold one person/department accountable for internet lead response and performance.
- Dealerships to ensure 100% of leads are responded to quickly and consistently.
- The dealership to have tighter control over online pricing policy.

First Quality Response Checklist:

- Provide Formal Greeting
- Thank the Customer for their consideration
- Answer the Customer's Questions
- Confirm Vehicle Availability
- Provide a Price Quote
- Include a Call to Action & Next Steps
- Include Full Signature
 - Dealer Name
 - Email Address
 - Dealership Address
 - Telephone Number
 - Dealership Website Address/URL

Quick Tips:

- With a dedicated Internet department, lead responders can focus on creating opportunities for the sales floor, while salespeople can focus on selling cars.
- Having the right number of employees in your Internet department allows your dealership to have the capacity for robust follow-up.
- Initial lead response should contain additional price quotes on alternative vehicles unless the lead was VIN/ Stock #specific.