

# DIGITAL Dealer™



The recent [Social Media Trends study by Digital Air Strike](#) revealed that car shoppers, for the third consecutive year in a row, ranked social networks as more important than a dealer's website when choosing which dealership to visit. The study, which was based on research findings from 2,000 car buyers and 2,000 service customers, found that:

- 75% of car buyers and 68% of service customers say internet research, including social media and review sites, was the most helpful medium when selecting a car dealership.
- 83% of service customers surveyed say online review sites substantially helped them in their dealership selection process.
- 66% of car buyers or owners who have seen a Facebook ad say they have clicked on it, up from 33% in 2014.
- Consumers looking to purchase or service a vehicle are doing their research primarily online, with 50% of recent car buyers and 69% percent of service customers saying they only visited one dealership before buying/servicing.

The [2014 CMO Council report](#) on social media within the auto industry revealed similar findings.

- 23% or one out of four car buyers use social media to discuss or communicate a recent purchase experience.
- 38% of consumers report they'll consult social media next time they purchase a car.

- 84% of all automotive shoppers are on Facebook and 24% used Facebook as a resource for purchasing their last vehicle.

When it comes to car shopping, social media sites are clearly a major influencer in a buyer's decision making process. At this point, most marketers understand that social sites should be integrated in some way into a marketing strategy. For some, this may be simply having a Facebook page and posting content or pictures, while other brands have a fully integrated social marketing approach to generate leads and engage with customers. However, with more and more consumers turning to social, the automotive industry needs to get fully engaged with social selling.

Here are 10 **Social Media Strategies for Car Dealerships**:

1. **Target Consumers on Facebook**

This is a must, especially with 84% of your consumers on Facebook. Place ads to reach people who have indicated they are in the market for a car. You can narrow down these selects to geographic areas near your dealership, by vehicle type, gender, consumer interests, and more. The investment is well worth it. Research by [Unified](#) shows that auto ads have 2 times higher click-through rates than the average Facebook ad.

2. **Use Twitter to Drive Sales**

[Marketshare](#) research discovered that in 2013, Twitter drove \$716 million in car sales. Twitter continues to be a popular choice among auto consumers. Recent research by [Canvs](#) found that more than 327,000 auto-related tweets are sent out daily, and 75% of these are directly related to owning or shopping. Using keyword targeting, these signals can be picked up and direct messages and advertising can be sent to those consumers who have displayed purchase intent.

3. **Market to Millennials on Instagram**

A [survey by Facebook](#) discovered that millennials are leaving Facebook and are turning more of their attention to Instagram. Instagram, primarily used on mobile devices, is all about taking, sharing, and uploading pictures and videos. Instagram provides a great platform to creatively share your brand's story. For example, share pictures that allow consumers to imagine themselves in the moment – a picture of one of your vehicles at the beach, tailgating at a sporting event, camping, near a lake, or any creative way you can imagine to showcase the lifestyle your vehicle represents.

4. **Video Marketing with YouTube**

According to [Force Marketing](#), 84% of car shoppers plan to watch auto video the next time they are in market for a car. Car consumers are seeking information on model

comparisons, safety features, connected devices, workarounds, and other content to help them make a decision. While videos should be embedded into your website, they should be hosted on a channel such as YouTube for more organic visibility.

#### 5. **Add Pinterest to Your Social Strategy**

Most marketers think of some of the more popular social sites like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube as channels for social marketing. Pinterest is known for having a larger female base, with recipes, beauty tips, and decorating ideas. However, Pinterest is great for the automotive industry in several ways. One, because it has such a large female audience, what better way to appeal to female shoppers? Pinterest is also great for building your SEO presence by sharing landing pages, pictures of your inventory, or pinning blog posts. This creates social signals which will in turn drive more traffic to your site.

#### 6. **Story Telling through Social Media**

It is no longer simply enough to post and broadcast content, social media is about the human connection. Storytelling on social sites is a perfect way to interact with your audience to develop relationships and brand loyalty. Use social platforms as a conversation channel rather than an advertising channel. Share experiences and humanize your brand. For example, post videos of staff members – the face of your business. Share pictures showcasing your support for local charities.

Starbucks has done an excellent job of storytelling on social. Coffee is more than just a caffeinated experience; it is about time with friends, relaxing, and indulgence. And the automotive industry can do the same. The company Purple featured a great blog, "[How Storytelling is Shaping the Automotive Industry](#)," which showcases 7 examples of excellent storytelling campaigns by auto brands.

#### 7. **Remember that Social is a Two-Way Conversation**

You have posted great content, are telling stories, sharing fun pictures and more. But are you interacting with your social fans? Be sure you are responding to tweets, thanking those who share your content, answer questions, and respond to and answer complaints. Social media is fast-paced – an in-the-moment medium. Don't wait a week to respond. Consumers expect quick responses to their questions on social media. If you aren't monitoring continuously, you may be losing out on valuable opportunities.

#### 8. **Offer Social-Specific Contests and Promotions**

As we discussed, social media is not about blatantly advertising how great you are but rather should be geared towards creating content to engage consumers. However, that doesn't mean you shouldn't promote your sales and promotions. Everyone loves a deal

and discounts so promote away. Be creative and reward your social followers with promotions and contests only available on your Facebook page or other social accounts.

#### 9. **Social Reviews Matter**

Encourage your customers to share reviews on your social sites. Car shoppers are 90% more likely to visit your website and 5.3 more likely to visit your dealership if you have positive reviews according to a study by [DealerRater and Dataium](#). Beyond the traditional third-party review sites, consumers are also checking reviews on social media so encourage your satisfied customers to share their great experience. Just as important, respond to negative reviews. Consumers who have had a bad experience want to be heard and prompt and swift attention will mitigate damage. Be sure you are monitoring review sites and social channels, especially during weekend hours. Negative reviews are 19% more likely to be written on a Saturday, Sunday, or Monday after a bad weekend experience and you don't want these complaints to slip through the cracks.

#### 10. **Be 100% Committed**

Social media marketing clearly offers huge benefits to the automotive industry – more brand visibility, more leads, and ultimately, more sales. But you must be 100% committed to maintaining a social media strategy. Once you start building up a fan base of social followers, you must continually engage and interact. If you go several days without posting or responding to comments, you will quickly lose your social credibility. When it comes to your digital presence, you only have a small window of opportunity to engage with online car buyers. If you don't, you can be sure your competition will do so.

When done correctly, maintaining a social presence will get you more appointments, help you sell more services and vehicles, and boost your brand's revenues. What other social tips do you recommend for marketers in the automotive industry?



#### **About the Author**

Leland Brewer is Director of Sales for Relevate Auto, the industry leader in cross-channel auto intelligence. Leland has deep industry experience in the automotive industry, helping dealerships identify the best strategies and solutions to optimize customer retention and acquisition.