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Your Dealership.com

By David Kain

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**Special Report**

You likely shop or research online with the expectation that the websites you visit will have the information you seek.

When the sites you select don't have the information, you probably click on another and keep clicking until you find something that meets your needs.

## ADVERTISEMENT



Consider yourself a focus group of one and apply what you learn in your own experience to what you would want if you were visiting your own dealership online.

While you are reading this article, go to your own website and click along with me. Try some simple tasks and put yourself in a "customer mode."

- Look for a new or used car in your inventory.
- Look for specials on vehicles, service or accessories.
- Look for your phone number and address and see if it is easy to see.

Hopefully, you were able to complete these tasks with no problems. If not, do something about it and contact your website builder the same as you would a tradesperson to fix a leaky roof or a heater in your physical facility.

Now, try some advanced tasks:

- Schedule a service appointment.
- Order a part or an accessory.
- Look for how you submit a credit application.
- Look for the dealership team photos or individual contact information.

- Look for a personal description on the used vehicle of your choice (more than the basic specs).

If you think like your customers, you likely have limited time to do tasks of this nature. Most people lack the patience to read and learn at a website. So they click and move on.

Compare your site to simple sites like [Google.com](http://Google.com) where you are instantly acclimated to what they want you to do — search.

Compare [Google.com](http://Google.com) to [Yahoo.com](http://Yahoo.com) and see the difference. One is a utility (Google) whereas the other is a destination (Yahoo). Your site is more similar to Yahoo but should have the clear and easy navigation like Google.

When you design or redesign your site, think of it just like you would your physical dealership.

Make it clear where everything is located and provide the signage (navigation links) to assist your customers in finding what they need right away.

I visit so many dealerships and used to think signage was not necessary because, after growing up at a dealership, it seemed pretty simple.

However, I really appreciate it now when I see a sign that says customer parking or service or parts and know the dealership customers appreciate it too.

Put yourself in a customer state of mind and see if you can navigate your website quick and easy. And if not, do something about it. The easier you make it, the more likely your prospects will contact you to complete the next steps.

We are always asked to mystery shop dealerships and provide feedback on how the Internet or business development team responds to our inquiries and then suggest ways for improvement.

You should do this yourself from time to time both online and offline. Online is easy. Create a fake email account and submit a request for sales, service, parts, etc. and see what happens.

Offline may sound silly, but I recommend telling your team you are going to be a customer this week and walk in and try to talk to someone about what you saw online.

Ask your manager and sales people about the vehicle you saw on the website and see how they respond. Hopefully, they will not say, "Let me get our Internet specialist to help you." You would not want them to say, "Let me get my newspaper specialist" if they said they saw an ad in the paper.

Now that the Internet has become the primary tool of most automotive shoppers, your entire team must become acclimated to the dealership online.

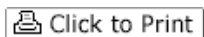
If you need assistance with any of these elements, let me know.

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