

# Thrive, Not Just Survive

## How the Fittest Dealers Win in 2019

### Smart Ways To Create A Digital Strategy With Physical Interaction

New technologies are changing the world of dealerships and OEMs. Digital transformation has changed the world of selling and servicing automobiles. Buyers are now more educated than ever, spending only 20 percent of their total shopping time at the dealership, including the paperwork and sales processes.

While a majority of their research is done online, 80 percent of U.S. auto buyers still rate conversations with salespeople as the most useful information channel, according to Deloitte Insight. In 2019, the fittest thriving dealers will be the ones to recognize and motivate the customer base with a seamless digital strategy integrated with virtual and physical interactions.

All media — digital or print — must include a call to action that allows the customer to “enter” the dealerships virtually, and convert those clicks into eye contact, to build trust and to result in an in-person final purchase visit.

Running a dealership in the modern age is like steering a ship. There are many knobs and instruments to tune while navigating the unpredictable economic weather, employing new technologies to increase revenue and lower customer acquisition cost. New car sales are projected to reach 16.8M units in 2019, slightly down from 17M units for 2018; meanwhile, used car sales and supplies are projected to go up while the price is projected to come down due to the influx of newly released used car inventories.

The digital transformation for the auto industry gained a tremendous amount of momentum in 2018, with the emphasis on creating a personalized customer experience. Building trusted relationships with your customer for an on-going basis with every touch point becomes a critical key element for continued success. It seems easier than ever to execute with the onslaught of the availability of all sorts of communication “talk tools” — or is it? As a plethora of new technologies are coming on like a tidal wave, it’s easy to be sent into a tailspin.

It’s important to have the following elements for a winning formula:

- **the right real-time “talk tools”**

- **the proper WiFi/internet infrastructure**
- **the needed training and supporting business practice upgrade**
- **the monitoring analytics for necessary adjustment.**

### REAL-TIME “TALK TOOLS”

Many dealerships have implemented chat solutions either recommended by a CRM system, digital agencies or others as an effort to create a delightful customer experience; however, many are not meeting the expected benefits due to complex integration and/or application download requirements. Further, chat tools often fall short of the real-time communication.

To stand out and thrive in this new economy, it is important to choose an easy one-click communication tool that employs all the modern modalities, such as video, audio and text chat to delight customers and let them choose what is comfortable for them. Of course, video and eye-contact are the best means of building trust for the dealer, so we must break the myth that “it is all going to digital” and understand that bots are not equipped to handle unique human questions. A real-time human video chat takes care of that and the needed visual communication to build that needed trust.

### PROPER WIFI/NETWORK INFRASTRUCTURE

A lot of dealers have updated their software but have neglected to update their network infrastructure. An efficient network is the backbone of modern business. There is nothing more frustrating than having an inefficient network, which impacts the quality of communication.

According to Forester Research, one minute of video content is worth 1.8 million words. The message here is: invest

in good internet speed and a few good webcams — it will make a great impact in connecting you with your customers.

### TRAINING AND SUPPORTING BUSINESS PROCESS UPGRADE

Once all the digital tools are implemented, it is critical to modify and upgrade the dealership processes to support the change.

First, make sure to include a virtual visit to the dealership as the call to action of your digital and print media, but more importantly, make sure that you answer all incoming calls in real time. A joint effort to create the adjusted and simple business processes from the team, including GSM, or GM, and the appropriate service and sales staff, is paramount. Make sure real-time response with eye contact is engrained into your DNA.

### REAL-TIME MONITORING ANALYTICS FOR NECESSARY ADJUSTMENT

An easily understandable real-time monitoring analytics coupled with an at-a-glance dashboard allow for quick issue identification and speedy solutions to maximize the customer experience. With the customer in the center of the focus, the key performance indicators yield insights into the effectiveness for the implemented solution.

In summary, create a smart strategy that converts web clicks to customer relationships on your digital and print media. It will build lasting trust, and result in a physical showroom visit. Maintain that contact beyond the first visit and allow your customers to get back to you any time — that is how you will keep selling.

Bringing the human touch back into the digital strategy will crown the fittest winners of dealerships in 2019. **PC**



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