



NATIONAL
AUTOMOBILE
DEALERS
ASSOCIATION

Implement a Web Presence Management Strategy



Brian Pasch

Founder, PCG Companies

Eatontown, NJ 07724

732-450-8200

brian@pcgmailer.com

The views and opinions presented in this educational program and any accompanying handout material are those of the speakers, and do not necessarily represent the views or opinions of NADA. The speakers are not NADA representatives, and their presence on the program is not a NADA endorsement or sponsorship of the speaker or the speaker's company, product, or services.

Nothing that is presented during this educational program is intended as legal advice, and this program may not address all federal, state, or local regulatory or other legal issues raised by the subject matter it addresses. The purpose of the program is to help dealers improve the effectiveness of their business practices. The information presented is also not intended to urge or suggest that dealers adopt any specific practices or policies for their dealerships, nor is it intended to encourage concerted action among competitors or any other action on the part of dealers that would in any manner fix or stabilize the price or any element of the price of any good or service.

Looking Back In Time

Before I outline the job responsibilities for today's Web Presence Manager, let's take a minute to look back over the evolution of Internet marketing in our industry.

"When franchise dealers were first introduced to the Internet, they were told that they had to get their business "on the Internet Highway."

Sean Wolfington, an online marketing pioneer, once showed me a promotional video for automotive marketing services that was created in the early 1990s. I chuckled when I heard the phrase "Internet Highway" but it was a phrase that dealers understood. Dealers wanted more people to drive by their virtual dealership, which was on the web.

In the early days of automotive digital marketing, dealers were told that the Internet was very complicated for them to understand. In fact, the early dealership websites were just plain ugly and difficult to keep up to date. Dealers were not encouraged to understand how the Internet worked but early conferences like Digital Dealer started to break down their walls of ignorance.

Dealers were presented with turnkey websites and third-party solutions that were designed to reduce the potential headaches that the Internet presented. Auto dealers didn't object to being served marketing solutions on a silver platter. Keep in mind that dealers did not think that the Internet would last.

Lead collection websites, being first to develop automotive portals, promised auto dealers a constant flow of leads while the "Internet Gold Rush" was hot. Third party lead providers satiated dealers who did not want to invest in the Internet by publishing their own website.

After some time, dealers understood that they needed to have their own websites to generate what they considered to be "first party leads." Automotive website companies offered website packages to simply get the dealer's business online. Once dealers started to publish their own websites, a host of smaller companies were formed to provide niche services to dealers.

Dealers were bombarded with companies offering compelling opportunities to enhance their online marketing presence. The first wave of services was to get the dealer's inventory online. Dealers were solicited by dozens of companies offering software to photograph vehicles, upload photos and vehicle descriptions, manage online inventory, and even automate vehicle window stickers.

Included in the first wave of online marketing solutions was the creation of third party classified websites. These early pioneers told dealers that by combining their inventory on a centralized web portal, their cars would receive more consumer views and more leads. Dealers were very focused on lead generation strategies, so everyone jumped on board with websites like Autotrader.com and Cars.com.

The second wave of online marketing solutions came in the form of Search Engine Optimization (SEO) and Pay Per Click (PPC). More niche companies approached dealers offering ways to drive more traffic to their website. The focus of their marketing pitch was to drive more "leads" to sell more cars.

The third wave of online marketing solutions included chat software, vehicle merchandising tools, coupon tools, and online finance/lease calculators. The dealer's website became the equivalent of "Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat"!

The fourth wave of offerings for dealers now involve social media targeting as well as advanced targeting for paid advertising channels. Paid advertising has evolved to take center stage over earned media; regardless of whether that is the correct strategy to engage with online consumers. Online paid media strategies include PPC, display, video, and third party classified advertising portals.

Workshop Exercise: What are some of the biggest changes that you have observed over the last 10 years in regards to the dealership's role and knowledge of online marketing?

Online Marketing Investments On The Rise

So with this perspective, the percentage of monthly marketing expenses allocated to online marketing is growing every month. It is not uncommon to see dealers operating with 50-80% of their marketing budget allocated to "all things digital." With this statistic in mind, you would think that dealers understand the ROI of their online marketing investments, but most do not.

The average franchise auto dealer in the United States receives over 25 online marketing reports per month. The reports are often emailed but in many cases the dealer is required to view marketing reports through a private website login. The amount of data associated with online marketing investments is not only overwhelming to the average General Manager, but these managers are not sure what they should be inspecting on these reports. The dealer's marketing partners are also to blame; they are not helping to reduce the overall marketing metrics that they expect each General Manager to review.

This reality will require a new role inside the auto dealership; a Web Presence Manager (WPM). The WPM will be responsible for understanding the ROI of the dealership's online marketing investments. The WPM will be required to know enough of the technology, strategies, and Key Performance Indicators (KPI) to hold internal marketing employees and contracted vendors accountable to assisting the dealership sell more cars at a lower cost.

Build vs. Buy

The structure of the dealership's Web Presence Team will always be a combination of internal resources and outside vendor partners. Even the largest dealer group in the United States rely on vendor partners for their website technology, chat software, call recording technology, and other core digital assets. Depending on the size of the dealership, the amount of dealership employees that make up the Web Presence Team will vary.

Single point dealerships will likely have just a Web Presence Manager (WPM), which manages outsourced vendor partners. Larger dealer groups may decide to hire dedicated employees to handle aspects of the dealership's web presence. For example, a dealership group with 8-12 stores may decide to hire a full-time content writer to replace outsourcing costs associated with Search Engine Optimization (SEO) services by third party vendors.

Larger dealer group may also hire a full time videographer to assist each store with their video marketing and communication strategies. Video marketing investments often get side tracked without a dedicated employee handling the production and editing of videos. However, the ROI of video marketing is well worth the investment and it creates a "WOW" experience for local auto shoppers.

The decision to hire dedicated internal marketing professionals will be a function of the dealership's priorities and online marketing strategy. I am an advocate for building an internal marketing team, for larger dealer groups with 5+ locations if the right business case can be made. A strong Web Presence Manager should be able to provide the structure to manage internal marketing resources and save the dealership thousands of dollars a year when comparing the cost of outsourcing select services.

There are some portions of a dealer's web presence that I do not recommend handling internally. For example, dealers should not invest time to build their own websites. There are many great open source CMS platforms but today's auto dealer needs integration with their inventory, CRM, DMS, and OEM specific data that open source platforms cannot easily deliver. Dealers: DO NOT get into the website business!

Dealers who are looking for guidance on robust automotive website platforms should download a copy of our latest white paper entitled "Multi-Screen Content Delivery to Connect and Convert Online Automotive Shoppers."

Dealers should also avoid running their own AdWords campaigns. In both cases, the technology and skills offered by third party vendors dramatically exceeds the skills offered by a single person inside the dealership.

The creation of a WPM does not eliminate the need to employ the services of outside marketing partners. The creation of a WPM role ensures that you are maximizing the investment the dealership is making each month with their WPM team.

Identifying A WPM Candidate

The Web Presence Manager (WPM) must be a “general practitioner” of online marketing data, vendor KPIs, and digital marketing strategy. They must be able to have competent discussions with their vendor partners on the KPIs related to web presence management. They must be able to clearly communicate with the management team at the dealership regarding their online marketing investments.

The WPM must be a person that enjoys marketing data and analytics. They should have a keen sense for numbers and managing monthly marketing data. They will need to organize the dealership’s monthly data in Excel spreadsheets, database files, or in an executive dashboard tool specific to the automotive industry.

Ideally, a WPM candidate will have general understanding and/or hands-on experience with some of these software tools:

- ✓ Google Analytics
- ✓ Google AdWords
- ✓ Google Webmaster Tools
- ✓ Bings Ads Manager
- ✓ Google Tag Manager
- ✓ Facebook Ad Manager
- ✓ Twitter Ad Manager
- ✓ YouTube Account Manager
- ✓ WordPress CMS
- ✓ Automotive Dealership Website CMS
- ✓ HTML editors
- ✓ Photoshop or equivalent
- ✓ Video movie editor (iMovie or equivalent)
- ✓ Website Lead Forms (ADF-XML)
- ✓ Dealership CRM Platforms
- ✓ Microsoft Office Suite
- ✓ Third party reporting tools (Conductor, Vistadash etc.)

The biggest factor for success will be the **stability** of the Web Presence Manager. I do not recommend hiring a recent college graduate for the WPM position. I would recommend a candidate that has successfully completed a number of jobs in online marketing/automotive industry that would appreciate this type of career opportunity.

Training is available for a Web Presence Manager (WPM) from PCG Companies. We have a three-day class that is specifically designed to develop the required skills needed for a WPM, however continued training will be needed. For that reason, you must find a candidate that will be willing and able to commit to working at the dealership with 2-5 years. We also have online courses for a Web Presence Manager which would not require them to be out of the office.

Workshop Exercise: What is your biggest challenge in finding, interviewing, and mentoring a Web Presence Manager in your dealership?

Web Presence Manager Responsibilities

In this section I have created a detailed list of tasks related to web presence management. The Web Presence Manager will distribute these tasks to dealership employees or to vendor partners. Some of the tasks the WPM may handle directly or have automated.

The WPM must make sure that the web presence tasks are being completed in accordance with the frequency set by the dealership. The WPM must be able to take action when any of these tasks fall out of acceptable performance guidelines. For example, when a cost per VDP view in AdWords exceeds a predefined “max”, the WPM should be able to contact the SEM vendor and make recommendations to lower the cost.

The owner/manager of the dealership must decide how the WPM will present monthly updates regarding the dealership’s web presence.

I recommend that the WPM and the dealership team work to create a master list of Key Performance Indicators (KPI), for all their marketing investments, which would be reviewed each month. These KPIs can be organized in a spreadsheet for easy editing.

The WPM and the dealership’s management team must be on the same page otherwise the role may be construed as unnecessary overhead. The WPM must review monthly marketing budgets and confirm that the services that are being contracted were delivered properly. The WPM is the best suited to identify areas of waste and to eliminate products/services that are not delivering a strong ROI.

The WPM will be the primary contact for marketing vendor communications, escalations, and changes to contracted services. The WPM should simplify the management of the dealership’s web presence for the Dealer Principal and the General Manager.

Off-Site SEO Checklist

- ✓ Check your Google My Business listing to make sure it has correct contact information, updated pictures and videos, and that the profile is 100% complete.
- ✓ Visit your YouTube channel and see if new videos have been posted and that they are properly tagged for SEO. Make sure that every video is properly described and has a link back to a relevant page on your website.
- ✓ Read and respond to all customer reviews on Google+ using the Google My Business dashboard.
- ✓ Visit your blog to see that you are posting new articles each month and that the articles are properly tagged for SEO and that each article has appropriate use of hyperlinks.
- ✓ Using Webmaster Tools and/or Open Site Explorer check the source and the number of inbound links to your website and identify any suspicious links.
- ✓ Inspect inbound links back to your website from local organizations that you support or local media outlets to ensure that they are placed in context.
- ✓ Find people in the dealership or your customers to guest blog and to create content for your website. The articles should support your brand and community outreach initiatives.
- ✓ Review Google Analytics to see trends in organic traffic and referral traffic that are related to your SEO strategy.
- ✓ Check that all referral traffic that you control, like newsletters and blog posts, utilize Google URL tracking (UTM) codes. This will make Google Analytics easier to read.
- ✓ Review the key Webmaster Tools reports that show index pages and search queries. Take appropriate action if downward trends are spotted.
- ✓ Identify 404 Not Found errors and work with your website provider to set up 301-redirects, when applicable.

On-Site SEO Checklist

- ✓ Validate that Google Analytics and Webmaster Tools are properly installed and collecting data on the site.
- ✓ Using Webmaster Tools, check the number of duplicate page titles and Meta descriptions and create a plan with your website provider to reduce duplicates.
- ✓ Using Webmaster Tools, verify that your website sitemap is registered and properly lists the number of pages on your website. Check if your video sitemap and mobile sitemap are set up properly as well.
- ✓ Review Webmaster Tools reports that show index page trends and search query trends. Take appropriate action if downward trends are spotted.
- ✓ Read through all new pages added to the website navigation bar and ask yourself if the page was well written and helpful. If it's not consumer friendly, edit it to engage your local customers.

- ✓ Do the images on your website have alt-text? Alt-text appears when an image doesn't load properly; it's also what a search engine uses to understand what the image is when it crawls the site.
- ✓ Make sure all content pages appropriately use H1 and H2 headers. H1s should only be used about once a page, H2s twice, and so on.
- ✓ Identify any "mass produced" content on your website that can be customized. Grab a sentence or two from any page and drop it in Google. Do other websites show up in search with the same content?
- ✓ Verify that cities in your Primary Market Area (PMA) are included in your onsite content strategy and page tags.
- ✓ If your blog is part of your main website, inspect that new content is being added each month. Verify that the posts comply with best practices for SEO.
- ✓ Test that all social icons, that are displayed on your website header or footer, are properly linked to your dealership accounts.
- ✓ Make sure that your blog posts have social sharing buttons that are visible on the content page; ideally buttons that move with the scroll.
- ✓ Utilize unique thank you pages based on different submitted forms (i.e. Contact Us, ePrice, Make An Offer) so that you can better track web leads in Google Analytics. Make sure the thank you pages have rich information and links to popular pages on your website.
- ✓ Verify that internal links on your website are natural and helpful. Confirm that internal links take visitors to the proper page and that the anchor text is natural.
- ✓ Verify that your "About Us" page is current and customized to your dealership. Discuss the history, community involvement, and even awards you've received. People do business with people so it's important to humanize your dealership.
- ✓ Verify that your customer reviews posted are visible on your website are current and/or that your RSS feed of reviews is working.
- ✓ Check that your website content is using micro-formatting tags as defined by Schema.org.

Google AdWords Checklist

- ✓ Check spending throughout the month to make sure it's within target budget range – often it may come in lower than expected so you'll have to raise it towards the end of the month to reach your goal, but remember to lower it back down the next month.
- ✓ Always check ads a couple days after making any changes to make sure they're not disapproved.
- ✓ Make sure that the offers or specials being advertised are accurate and up to date.
- ✓ Check your primary keywords to make sure that none have fallen below 1st page position or whatever your target position is.
- ✓ If you are running AdWords internally, check daily that the account is actually running. Sometimes billing issues or lack of funds cause AdWords to stop and you may not realize for a few days, losing a lot of potential traffic.

- ✓ Check for any messages from Google in the AdWords dashboard – some of these are important, like updates or changes to the system. They also will periodically offer the chance to speak to an AdWords adviser, which can be a good opportunity to have them look at the account and offer suggestions for improvement.
- ✓ Check landing pages being used in ads to make sure that they're active and match the specials being advertised.
- ✓ Inspect your impression share and see if it has remained steady. If it is low, discuss increasing your budget with your AdWords manager.
- ✓ Is the average CPC rising or falling? How sharply? Check your AdWords change history for any adjustments made that may have caused the change.
- ✓ Make sure Adwords account is properly linked to Google Analytics.

Remarketing

- ✓ Check ad approval status
- ✓ Check audience list size/if code is still active
- ✓ Bid adjustments for frequency increase/decrease

Video Marketing

- ✓ Check video approval status
- ✓ Make sure YouTube account is linked to AdWords
- ✓ Always double check budget since the video dashboard is separate from the AdWords main dash.

Vehicle Merchandising & Syndication Checklist

- ✓ Check how many vehicles are on your website with stock photos. If too many are showing, escalate a conversation about the reconditioning process.
- ✓ Inspect that all cars have 20-30 photos per vehicle and that the photos are high quality and showcase the car properly.
- ✓ Check that each vehicle has a unique description that helps attract consumers to visit or call. Unique descriptions must be present for new and used cars.
- ✓ Verify that reconditioning details are included on the VDP like new brakes, tires, or battery.
- ✓ Verify Vehicle Detail Page (VDP) trends for new and used cars in Google Analytics. Are VDP views up or down?
- ✓ Verify that the lead forms on the VDP pages do not require more information than needed.
- ✓ Verify that inventory counts on your website closely match the number of vehicles that are being shown on your 3rd party classified websites.

- ✓ Submit a test lead on your 3rd party classified partner's websites and verify that you receive the lead and that it populates the lead source properly in your CRM.
- ✓ Take a Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) from a vehicle that has been in stock for 30+ days. Type in that VIN number in Google search and see which websites show that vehicle. Notify sites that are not authorized to display your cars to remove your inventory. You own the copyright to your vehicle photos in the US.

Website Checklist

- ✓ Verify that you have your Google Analytics and AdWords conversion code installed on your website.
- ✓ Verify that your dynamic phone tracking numbers are being used on the website.
- ✓ Test your SEM ads to confirm dynamic phone numbers are triggered for your digital advertising campaigns.
- ✓ Review homepage banner/slider and make sure all promotions are current and that they link to the proper pages.
- ✓ Inspect all specials pages on the website to make sure they are current and that they have proper disclaimers, if required.
- ✓ Inspect your most popular pages and see if they have a clear "Call to Action."
- ✓ Check your staff page to verify that any new employees or terminated employees are reflected on the page.
- ✓ Review OEM compliance guidelines and inspect your marketing and advertising pages on the website for compliance before a warning or violation is issued.
- ✓ Inspect new content that has been added to the website for readability, links, and compliance.
- ✓ Verify that your "Why Buy From Us" message is tastefully integrated into your website content. If you have associated "Why Buy From Us" videos, make sure they are installed properly on key pages.
- ✓ Inspect that all links to your social media accounts are current and working.
- ✓ Verify that all of your custom content pages are being displayed properly on a smartphone screen.
- ✓ Submit a test lead on your sales, finance, and service forms and make sure that it appears in your CRM with the proper source code.

Social Media Checklist

Facebook:

- ✓ Ensure page lists dealership website, address and phone number.
- ✓ Profile photo highlights dealership logo or brand logo.
- ✓ Cover photo showcases an aspect of the dealership, such as a lineup of models, exterior shot of the building, happy staff, etc.
- ✓ Like other Facebook pages of businesses in your local area.
- ✓ Your page has regular daily posts that attract engagement.
- ✓ Posts are a blend of text posts, links and photos that are relatable to the dealership/brand.
- ✓ Be selective when posting about inventory offers or sales; these posts should be infrequent. Keep this word.
- ✓ Proper hashtags are being used within posts.
- ✓ Dealership is sharing photos of happy customers with their new purchases.
- ✓ Dealership is sharing photos of the staff.
- ✓ Offer exclusive offers, such as service coupons, for Facebook fans only.
- ✓ Offer tips for drivers, such as how-to's.
- ✓ Post about current events/pop culture and tie it into the brand.
- ✓ Link back to website to drive traffic.
- ✓ Monitor reach and engagement of every post to see what fans are engaging with.
- ✓ Monitor what customers and fans are saying in the comments and reviews.

Twitter:

- ✓ Twitter bio has phone number, website and hash-tagged geo-targets.
- ✓ Profile photo highlights the dealership logo.
- ✓ Cover photo showcases an aspect of the dealership, such as a lineup of models, exterior shot of the building, happy staff, etc.
- ✓ Tweet multiple times a day, ideally 2-5.
- ✓ Tweet relevant information to your dealership, including text, links and photos.
- ✓ Be selective when posting about inventory offers or sales; these posts should be infrequent.

- ✓ Offer exclusive offers, such as service coupons, for Twitter fans only.
- ✓ Offer tips for drivers, such as how-to's.
- ✓ Utilize hashtags within tweets; hashtag brand and geo-targets.
- ✓ Retweet relevant accounts with valuable information or insight.
- ✓ Follow many accounts in your area, brand-related, etc.
- ✓ Mention other accounts within tweets.
- ✓ Tweet photos of happy customers in the dealership.
- ✓ Tweet photos of the staff within the dealership.
- ✓ Videos work well within the Twitter platform; take short videos within the dealership.
- ✓ Link back to the website to drive traffic.
- ✓ Monitor what people are saying by checking "mentions" and searching for the dealership name within Twitter search.

Call Tracking Checklist

- ✓ Review monthly call tracking reports to see if any significant variations in call volume have occurred.
- ✓ Inspect that all new marketing initiatives are using assigned call tracking numbers.
- ✓ Review random calls to inspect compliance with call scripts and company policies.

Chat Checklist

- ✓ Review chat transcripts to ensure that chat leads are being handled properly.
- ✓ Inspect that chat transcripts for sales leads are being populated into the CRM.
- ✓ Review agent availability reports to ensure that chat session started by consumers receive prompt engagement.

CRM Checklist

- ✓ Review monthly lead performance reports to see that purchased lead counts match with what was delivered in the CRM.
- ✓ Review monthly lead performance reports to see if the lead quality delivered by third party services is out of normal range.
- ✓ Inspect the cost per sale of vehicles sold through any third party lead source.
- ✓ Ensure that duplicate or bad leads are submitted for credit with appropriate third party vendors.