



NATIONAL
AUTOMOBILE
DEALERS
ASSOCIATION

Automotive SEO Is Serious Business



Greg Gifford

Director of Search and Social

DealerOn

Dallas, Texas

877.543.4200 x5316

ggifford@dealeron.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.

SEO is no laughing matter...

Organic search traffic is your website's largest source of traffic and leads, so you should definitely be investing in Search Engine Optimization. The days of "just having a website" are long gone – now that every dealership has a website, you've got to do SEO if you want people to see you.

Stop making excuses – you've got to have someone at your dealership handling SEO, or you need to hire a provider to handle it for you.

If you're going to hire a provider, remember that SEO is a manual process – so quality SEO isn't cheap. Remember – it's going to influence your largest source of traffic and leads, so it's worth investing in.

Local SEO and why it matters to your dealership

Most dealers don't realize that there are actually two kinds of SEO – Traditional and Local. With Traditional SEO, you're doing things both on and off a website to influence how that site shows up when a user searches for particular keywords.



With Local SEO, you're doing things both on and off a website to influence how that site shows up when users search particular keywords in a specific geographic area. For certain business types, Google automatically returns local results, even when users don't include a geographic term in their search query. Local SEO includes additional signals and takes more work.

Use pizza delivery to demonstrate Local SEO



The best way to demonstrate how Google serves local results is pizza delivery. When you're sitting at your computer at the dealership, open Google and search for "pizza delivery" – you'll get a list of pizza delivery spots near your dealership.

If you go home and again search for "pizza delivery", Google will serve up a completely different set of results. Google knows where you're located, and it knows that you need a pizza delivery spot that's near your current location.

Google treats several business types in the same way, including restaurants, doctors, lawyers, plumbers, and car dealers. For most terms related to your dealership, Google will serve local search results to users – even if they don't include a city or metro as part of their search query.

Doing 'some' SEO is better than doing nothing, but the best thing your dealership can do to increase visibility online is Local SEO. If you're including the additional local signals, you're putting your best foot forward.

6 Ways to avoid shady SEO providers

Whether you're looking for a new SEO provider or simply taking a fresh look at your current provider, this list will help you spot the shady providers who won't do anything but take your money.

1. **Duplicated default content**

Some Automotive SEO providers use the same boilerplate content for every dealership, but they'll update dealership name and location information so it looks like it applies to the dealer. Duplicate content sends a bad signal to Google, so it's important that the content on your website is unique.

To check if your content is unique, copy one of the sentences (or a portion of a sentence) that doesn't include your dealership name or city, then do a search in Google for that sentence – but do the search inside of double quotes so that Google only returns exact matches. If the content is unique, you'll only see one result. If you see hundreds or even thousands of sites, your provider is being shady.

2. **Outdated SEO tactics**

Some SEO providers will go for years without updating their tactics. While everyone that does SEO will do things differently, they'll all agree on current best practices. If your provider is using tactics that you think might be outdated, check with other dealerships or providers to check on those tactics.

One of the best signs of outdated tactics is a provider who uses the meta keywords tag. The search engines stopped paying attention to meta keywords over 6 years ago. If the content on your home page is mostly a bullet point list of cities or models, that's another sign that your provider is outdated. You might also see keyword stuffing, where your provider uses the same keyword so often that the text doesn't sound natural.

3. **All you get is model research pages**

SEO is so much more than simply adding a few pages of content to a website. If the entire SEO strategy of your provider is adding model research pages, you're not getting SEO – you're getting content.

4. **All you get is blog posts**

Yes, a blog is a vital part of your dealership's SEO strategy – but if all you're getting from your provider is blog posts, you're getting content, not SEO.

5. **You get X pages of content per month**

Several providers guarantee a large number of pages per month, citing the fact that Google loves fresh content. Yes, Google loves fresh content, but it also loves RELEVANT content. If you add 20 pages of content to your site every month, that's 240 pages you've added to your site at the end of a year. What's the strategy there? There's no possible way that a dealership website needs that many pages of content.

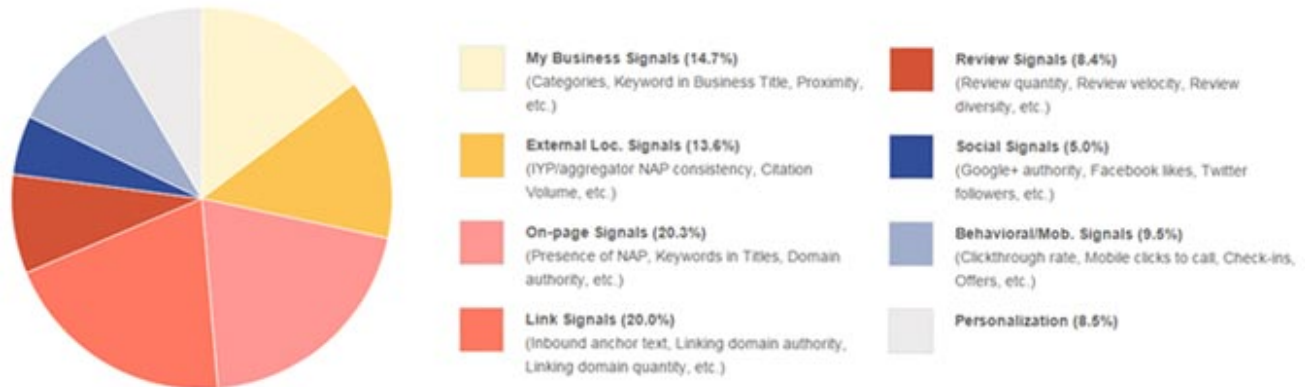
6. **Guaranteed ranking**

Some of the shady providers will guarantee that your dealership will rank for a certain number of terms. What they'll actually do is get your dealership to rank for obscure long-tail terms that no human will ever search for. The provider can give you a report that shows that you rank number one for hundreds of terms, but you won't see any increase in traffic or leads.

No one can guarantee number one rankings for valuable keyword phrases – so avoid any providers making false promises.

2015 Local Search Ranking Factors

Each year, the SEO tool company Moz sends a detailed survey to the top 40 experts in Local Search. When they aggregate the answers from these experts who work in Local Search on a daily basis, they're able to come up with a comprehensive list of the factors that most influence local search results.



The Local Search Ranking Factor study is basically the bible of Local SEO. The study will show how signals change from year to year and provide a solid guide for your Local SEO strategy.

Optimizing on-site signals

The content on your website is the most important signal of local relevancy. You've got to have unique content that's relevant and answers the questions your customers might have. Think about what makes your dealership unique. Think about the common questions you hear from your customers.

Read your content out loud – if it doesn't sound like something you'd say to a customer over the phone, then you need to rewrite it.

Once you've got great content, make sure you're including the right Local signals by including your city and state abbreviation in the following locations on each page:

- **Title tag** – the most important SEO element of any page. Never put your dealership at the beginning – you don't need to optimize for the name of your dealership.
- **H1 heading** – the headline at the top of each page is also incredibly powerful. Make sure it's conversational and isn't the same text as the button that leads to that page.
- **Page content** – obviously, you need location information in the actual page text.
- **Image alt text** – since Google can't interpret what's in your images, alt text lets you describe what's in each photo. It's a great spot to include additional location information.
- **URL** – If you're able to set custom URLs for the pages on your site, try to include location information whenever possible.

- **Meta description** – while it doesn't count in the ranking algorithm, it shows as the link description whenever you show up as a search result in Google, so location information can help increase clickthrough rate.

Local phone numbers are vital

Google uses local area codes as additional proof that a business is located in a particular area. With Local search, Google expects that local businesses will have phone numbers with a local area code.

Auto dealers love to use call tracking numbers, which are typically toll free – and these send a negative signal to Google. In most cases, dealers don't really look at their call tracking reports, so the numbers aren't really necessary. What's more important to you – getting lots of information about the calls you already receive, or getting more phone calls because you're ranking better?



It's not impossible to rank well with a toll free number, it's just much harder. Some OEMs require that dealers use toll free tracking numbers, so if you're in a similar situation, be sure to also include your local number on the page so it's still visible to Google.

Optimizing off site signals - Links

Inbound links (other sites linking to your dealership's site) are the second most important signal of relevancy to Google. Unfortunately, links are no longer simply a numbers game – the links have to be relevant to your dealership.

Most traditional SEO providers will only target links from sites with a lot of authority, since those links tend to carry more weight. With Local SEO, it's important to try to acquire links from low authority sites – as long as they're local businesses. Even if the site doesn't have much authority, a hyper-local website like a church site or a little league site carry a huge amount of relevancy for local.

When you're building links to your dealership's website, remember to point your links to multiple pages. Most dealerships only point links to their home page or inventory page, but you should actually try to build links to every important page on your site.

Think about the relationships you've built in your community, along with the things your dealership already does in the area. Mine these relationships for links – you'll find that it's incredibly easy to get local links if your dealership already has a relationship in place.

Optimizing off site signals – citations

Citations are mentions of your dealership's name, address, and phone number on other websites. Dealers typically think of citations as directory sites, but citations can be free-form blog posts or news stories as well.

It's incredibly important that your citation information is consistent everywhere it appears online. Your dealership name, address, and phone number should match character for character. If you've got incomplete, inconsistent, or duplicate citation information out in the ecosystem, you're sending a bad signal to Google.



Use the [Moz Local](#) tool to do a quick check of your dealership's top 15 citation sources. Enter your dealership's name and zip code and check the resulting list of possible matches. If you don't have any citation problems, you'll only see one listing. If you see several listings that include different information, you know you've got some problems to address.

Once you click on one of the listings, the tool will display a list of the top 15 citation sites and how complete your citation information is on each site. If you click on any of the bars, you'll jump directly to your listing on that particular site.

Once you've updated your information on the 15 most important sites, you can get more advanced and check every citation that exists using the [Whitespark Local Citation Finder](#). The tool will locate every citation that exists for your dealership, and it's an invaluable tool for citation work if you've got call tracking numbers to cleanup.

Optimizing review signals

Reviews are also an important part of Local search. You should concentrate on Google reviews – they're the first thing that customers will see, and they'll also pay in the ranking algorithm.

You need 5 reviews to see an aggregate score, and you should get at least 10 reviews before you try to get reviews anywhere else (there's a slight rankings bump at 10 reviews). Ultimately, you should get more reviews than any of your competitors – but not too many more. If you have hundreds more reviews than your competitors, it looks fake and customers won't trust the reviews.

It's important that you make it easy for customers to leave reviews, and you should ask every customer for a review. Don't try to get reviews on Yelp unless you know a customer uses Yelp often – Yelp will filter out reviews from non-users.

It's important to monitor the review sites every day, so you can catch reviews as soon as they happen. It's important to leave timely replies, especially to negative reviews. Make sure your replies are well-written and sincere.

Stay up to date on Google updates

Whenever Google rolls out an update to its algorithm, you should update your SEO tactics. Keep an eye on [Search Engine Land](#), the web's premier source of information and news about SEO, PPC, and online marketing – it's got an excellent Local SEO section as well.

If you're handling SEO internally at your dealership, it's important to send your SEO staff to at least one or two SEO conferences every year. There are wide variety of conferences across the country to choose from – as long as it's a conference that's dedicated to several days of SEO training, it will be worth attending.

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.