



Sean V. Bradley

Internet Sales 20 Group IV

Hello everyone, and again thanks so much for all of your e-mails. I have a lot to go over with you this month. First, I'm going to change gears — instead of giving away Flip Video cameras, I'm offering pre-paid registrations (retail value \$590 each) to the 2008 Synergy Sessions Event in New Orleans (May 13 - 14). A lot of people have already registered, and this is shaping up to be another sell-out event. Now let's jump right into this month's letter. We've edited part of it to maintain focus for our readers:

Hi Sean:

My name is Tom Pion. My family and I run a Pontiac, Buick, GMC franchise in Chicopee Massachusetts (www.pionauto.com). I am 23 years old, and have been working full time for two years at our dealership. Right now, my main job is to be the Internet and Used Car Manager, responsible for buying and selling vehicles at auctions. We're a smaller GM franchise, sell about 55 vehicles a month (30 used, 25 new) and don't have a big budget when it comes to advertising or Internet expenses. Since I've been there, I've doubled the traffic to our Web site.

My father still has reservations about the Internet and technology, but I've been able to get him to use third parties such as AutoTrader.com and Vehix. My dilemma seems to be quality leads. I keep our Web sites fresh, with different banners and backgrounds every couple months and update new and used specials every week, but I don't see as many Internet leads as I'd like.

It's also hard being in a smaller store, where not only do I have to do the Internet which means I have to keep three sites updated with pictures, comments and prices, but I still need to go to the auctions, which are two days a week, and make sure our cars have current Kelley Blue Book stickers and are priced correctly.

Now, I know realistically I can't compete on the same level with bigger dealers, because they have a bigger budget to work with. I saw your article in AutoSuccess and I thought you had some great ideas and tips. My main question for you is, "If you were a dealer with a small budget, where or what would you use it on?"

What Web sites or lead providers do you think would give me the biggest bang for my buck? I need to show a good ROI to make

my father a little more comfortable before taking that big leap.

Sincerely,

Thomas F. Pion, Internet Manager

Bob Pion Buick Pontiac GMC

This letter from Thomas mirrors the concerns of thousands of smaller dealerships across the United States, and hopefully I can provide some ideas on where to get a good bang for the buck.

Based on your e-mail, Thomas, it seems as though you have the basics already down. You have a Web site and some leads. As far as technology goes, the only other thing I would highly recommend is a lead management tool or CRM.

I truly believe that implementing an Internet Lead Management (ILM) and/or CRM program is the most important tool for a dealership. A bad ILM/CRM process can drastically hinder a department. What you want to look for are tools that have a **strong** "Internet" component. Traditionally CRM tools have a weak Internet Sales component. One very cost effective ILM/CRM to consider would be AVV WebControl.

You said that your biggest challenge is quality leads and the two lead source providers you have are AutoTrader.com and Vehix. First things first; you need to identify exactly what type of units you are trying to sell. Are you focusing on new, used or Special Finance units? You can find lead source providers & aggregators that specialize in each of those categories?

CarsDirect and Dealix are great for new car leads, AutoTrader.com and Cars.com for used, and Interactive Financial and 1-800 communications for special finance leads. I do believe that a dealership should diversify its lead source portfolio. The truth is, however, that the absolute best-quality leads are those coming from traffic to your own Web site. Historically, these leads close at double the closing ratio over third-party lead providers.

There are three main ways to drive traffic to your Web site. In order of importance, they are:

- Video Search Engine Optimization (VSEO)
- Organic Search Engine Optimization (SEO), such as focus or micro sites
- Pay Per Click/Search Engine Marketing (SEM)

Hands down, VSEO and Organic SEO is the way to go — especially if you are looking for the biggest bang for your buck.

I want to give you some FREE suggestions:

- Post your pre-owned inventory anywhere and everywhere on sites such as Craig's List (www.craigslist.org). Used cars are inventory-based opportunities. You need to get as much visibility as possible for your inventory.
- Utilize Web sites like Best Place (www.bestplaces.net). This site is **very strategic**. It allows you to focus your energy with clinical precision, versus the "shotgun" approach. Just plug in your ZIP code, or the ZIP codes that you are trying to target or conquer, and you'll get a powerful demographic breakdown of the area.

Now, armed with those demographics, you can begin to create targeted campaigns. If, for example, your ZIP code has a large African-American population, you can find FREE social networking Web sites like www.blackplanet.com (the African-American version of MySpace), and create profiles for your dealership toward the African-American community. You can do the same for any demographic. There are social networking Web sites for ethnic groups, gender and religion.

The absolute best idea I have for you really isn't an "Internet" idea — it's a "BDC" idea. You need to target your customer base, creating campaigns via, e-mail, direct mail, text messaging and, of course, phone calls. Prior customers have a higher closing ratio than your fresh opportunities. Plus they are FREE! So put data mining on your radar. I would look to create campaigns not just for sales, but also for service, as well.

Thomas, I truly want you to be successful. I am going to give you two free passes to attend this year's Synergy Session in New Orleans. You will have two days of **very powerful** information by our industry's elite. You will be my personal guest and we will have time privately to sit down and go over a plan for your dealership.

Sean V. Bradley is the CEO and founder of Dealer Synergy. He can be contacted at 866.648.7400, or by e-mail at sbradley@autosuccessonline.com.