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Lead Management Best Practices

Your Ultimate Guide to Lead Handling & Management to Maximize Success & Drive Lasting Customer Relationships

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Lead Management Tips

A lead represents the first "real" touchpoint a consumer has with your dealership and is a strong indicator of the type of customer experience they can expect when doing business with your store. A stout lead handling and management process helps you communicate with shoppers and encourages them to visit your lot instead of the competition. E-leads, sales calls, text messages and live chat are the biggest opportunity for pipeline development and sales growth for most dealerships today. To help you bring your "A game" to the frontlines every day, we've put together an ultimate guide to lead management and handling.

Speed

In the contemporary digital landscape, where information moves at the speed of light, businesses must adapt and respond with equal swiftness. This need for rapid response is particularly crucial in the automotive industry, where potential customers often explore their options online before setting foot in a dealership. Follow the tips below to develop your response strategy.

- Speed is key, especially with digital channels. Answer e-leads within 5 minutes. If a prospect walked onto the dealership lot, they would be greeted immediately by dealership sales personnel. The same should be true of an e-lead.
- Reply to all leads, as about 3-in-4 buyers contact a dealer through various channels before a visit.[1] If you ignore their inquiry, you might miss out on a sale.

Did You Know?

When given the option, 40% of car shoppers prioritize a fair price and amazing customer service over a great price with lackluster service.[1]

- Create a speed reply. This can be as simple as one or two sentences acknowledging you've received their message. For example:

  Hi [Prospect First Name],

  Thank you for your inquiry. My name is [Dealership Personnel First Name], [Position /Title] at [Dealership Name]. I am gathering all the information requested and will be back to you shortly.

  [Email Signature]

- If an e-lead provides a phone number, phone them immediately. For example:

  "Hi [Prospect First Name]. It's [Dealership Personnel First Name] calling from [Dealership Name]. Thank you for connecting with us. To provide you with a value on your car, I have a few questions to get you the information quickly…"

- Have dedicated representatives for each communication channel – Internet Specialist, Digital Specialist, Internet Team Leader, Digital Sales Manager, to name a few.
- Get each lead booked in for an appointment, moving them down the sales funnel faster. Offer choices when booking the appointment, *"Would later today or tomorrow work best for you?"*

Source: (1) Dig Insights, Vehicle Path to Purchase, July 2022, n=1369.

Engagement

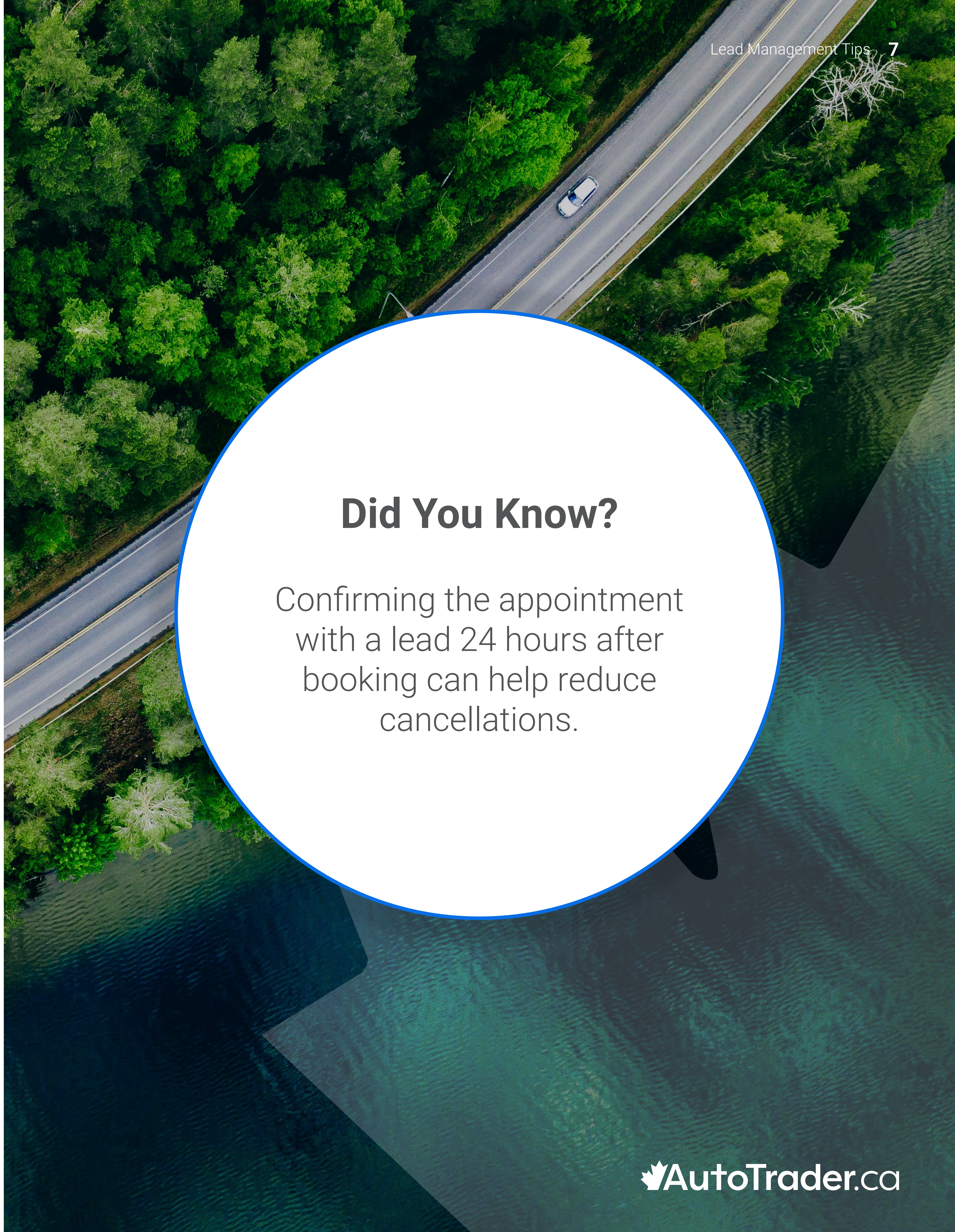
Engagement serves as the groundwork that transforms leads into satisfied customers. It's about offering answers and alternative solutions, even when a customer inquires about a sold vehicle. Customer engagement becomes a vital component of long-term success by cultivating trust, securing loyalty and maintaining friendly, ongoing dialogue.

- Capture all the consumer's information, including the vehicle of interest, full name, lead intent, and contact information, within your first conversation.
- Connect with the lead 3 times in the first 24 hours. Each message should contain new information not just a simple 'Following up, are you still interested?'. Refer to the Response Recommendations on **page 8** for additional details.
- Answer all your prospects' questions – don't make them come into the dealership to get the information they're looking for.
- If a consumer inquires about a vehicle that is already sold, do not consider this a dead opportunity. Reach out with other options and understand what they liked about the vehicle they were originally interested in to make alternate vehicle recommendations.

Consider incentivizing lead conversion by offering them something that ties into the purchase of the vehicle, such as a $100 credit towards accessories. Develop a standardized set of lead questions:

- How can I make this the best possible experience for you?
- What are your must have features from a car?
- What do you like about the [Year/Make/Model]? Why this specific trim package?
- What are you most looking forward to from your new vehicle?
- Are you familiar with our manufacturer incentive and customer loyalty program?
- Do you have a vehicle that you are interested in selling us? If so, can I provide a valuation for your current vehicle?
- We have access to a slew of accessories for your new vehicle. Are you interested in running boards, a box liner, a tonneau cover, or a lift kit? We can include these items in your monthly payment.
- Are there other vehicles you are interested in?
- What do you do for fun? The reason I ask is that we have access to a lot of accessories to outfit your vehicle to align to your needs preferences.
- What do you like about your current vehicle? What don't you like?
- Would you allow us to potentially buy your vehicle even if you don't purchase from us? Could we make you an Instant Cash Offer?

At the 30-day mark, adjust your strategy to keep them engaged and pivot them to a team with a different approach that is more conversational in approach.



Response Recommendations

01 "Hello" Video

A "Hello" Video is a 20-30 second video. It is a "thank you" and a simple introduction to the prospect. It personalizes the contact and makes the reply stand out from the competition.

> *"Hi [Prospect First Name],*
>
> *I'm [Dealership Personnel First Name], [Position/Title] at [Dealership Name]. I just received your e-mail and I wanted to take a moment to introduce myself by video. I really appreciate the opportunity to provide you with the information you've requested. I am working on it now and I will follow up with you shortly."*

02 Content Reply

The Content Reply provides the information the prospect requested. This approach attempts to create a two-way conversation and strives to set an appointment for the prospect to view the vehicle at the dealership. Here are some ideas to keep them engaged:

- Images and videos of the vehicle
- CARFAX vehicle history report
- Warranties and incentives
- Third-party vehicle reviews or awards
- Content about the vehicle (how to/ educational videos, vehicle key features, etc.)
- Details about your store's trade-in appraisal process
- Other vehicles they might be interested in
- Why buy from us
- Manufacturer vehicle introduction and fun facts

03 Vehicle Video

A Vehicle Video is a 2-3-minute sequence that can be filmed on a cell phone, providing an overview and highlights, (or the most sellable aspects), of the vehicle.

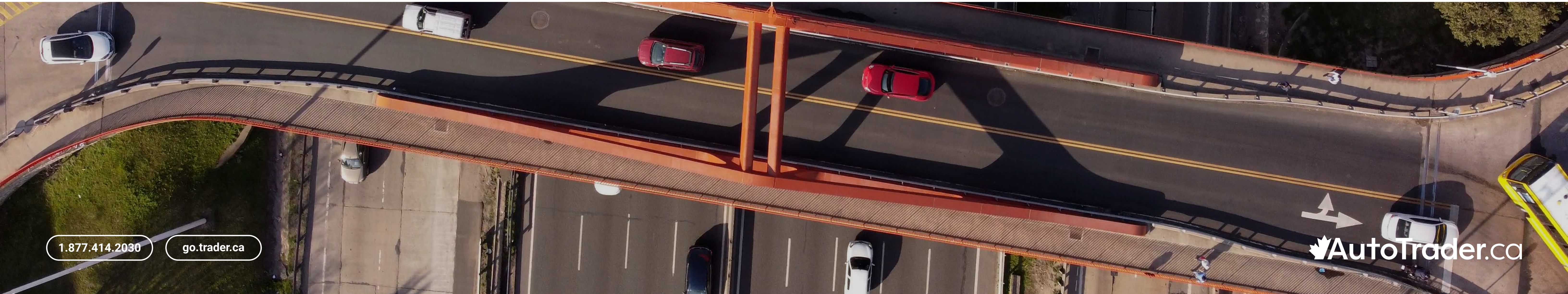
04 Sales Manager "Hello" Video

A Sales Manager "Hello" Video is a 20-30-second segment that can be produced on a cell phone. It is an introduction to the prospect and a thank you from the Sales Manager. It demonstrates a high level of customer service and attention. This personalizes the contact and differentiates from the competition.

> *"Hi [Prospect First Name],*
>
> *I'm [Sales Manager First Name], Sales Manager at [Dealership Name]. We really appreciate the opportunity to help you through your car buying journey. Along with your [Principal Dealership Point of Contact Position/Title], I am also at your service. I would love to meet you in person, have a coffee and answer all your questions about the vehicle you're interested in, along with any other information that would make your car buying experience hassle- and worry-free. Are you available tomorrow to visit us at [Dealership Name]?"*

05 Appraisal Offer

Offer to have the prospect's vehicle professionally appraised at the dealership, their home, or their place of business. Also, offer to bring a new vehicle to them via your Concierge Service, (if available). Leverage solutions such as AutoTrader.ca's Instant Cash Offer to provide a seamless vehicle valuation or trade-in experience for your prospective customers



Tools

Equipping your dealership staff with the right lead management tools helps facilitate efficient and successful management of leads. It assists in ensuring every lead is attended to and every interaction your staff has with prospects is meaningful and productive.

- Ensure the lead handler, either a Sales Manager or General Manager, fully utilizes your Customer Relationship Management (CRM) tool, if your dealership has one. Consider managing your leads with a platform tailored to the automotive industry, such as Activix CRM. If your dealership doesn't use a CRM, decide what tool or platform you will use to track and route your leads.
- Collect more than one method of contact to optimize your chance of connecting with your prospect.
- AutoTrader's Used Vehicle Listings - Superior subscribers should make full use of the Consumer Insights and Enriched Lead features to ensure that your dealership staff have the details to effectively follow-up throughout the consumer's car shopping journey.
- Consider installing video apps on all cell phones of dealership staff who respond to e-leads.
- Add calls to action to the email signature of all personnel that reply to and handle e-leads, to allow prospects to engage quickly, for instance:

What's My Car Worth?

Buy Now!

Bring the Car to Me

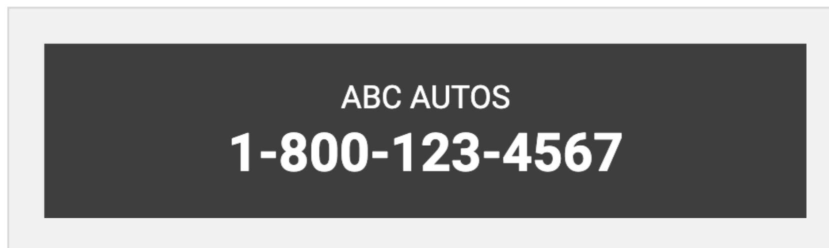
Get Pre-Approved Now!

Book a Test Drive Today!

- To increase inbound leads, incorporate various communication channels on your Vehicle Details Page (VDP) such as lead form, e-mail, telephone, text message, and live chat. The communication process for each lead should be tailored accordingly.

Lead Management by Channel

Phone



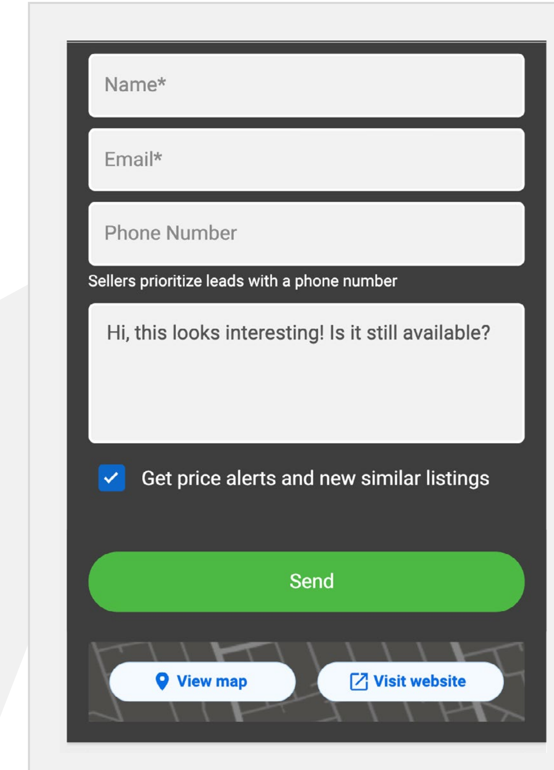
- Answer all phone leads within the first few rings! If you miss a call, your prospects will likely move on to the next dealership. If a message is left after hours, have a process for who will reply to these calls first thing the following morning.
- Verify their phone number early on in the call and get their email to send them more information related to their inquiry.
- Ensure all phone leads are assigned to sales representatives on rotation, or the Business Development Centre (BDC).
- Create a call script for your representatives that begins with an introduction stating who they are and what dealership they're from. Let the prospect know that they have reached the correct department.
- Train your staff on first-call resolution so that you can provide your prospects with the solutions to their inquiry from the very first touchpoint.
- To provide a tailored offering, ensure you ask the lead questions that deepen your understanding of their inquiry. Rather than providing one-word answers, keep it conversational. Refer to Reply Tactics for more information on **page 8**.

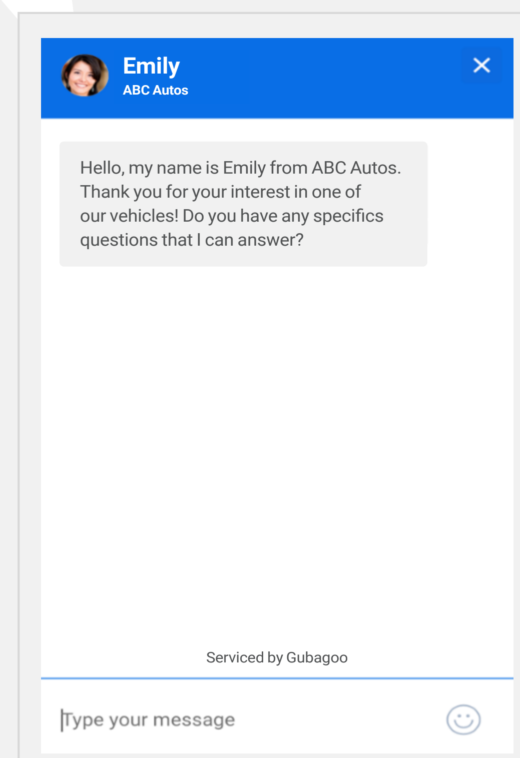
Reminder!

The objective of answering a lead is to book an appointment and keep engagement high!

Email or Lead Form

- Automated responses are a thing of the past – an actual person should reply to all e-leads.
- Aim to respond in 5 minutes or less with a personalized email that answers all their questions to secure the lead and keep them engaged by posing a question, (refer to Response Recommendations on **page 8**).
- Be persistent and craft a meticulous follow-up schedule. Reply up to 3 times within the first 24 hours with unique topics in every individual email.
- When possible, reply to your prospect's inquiry with a video response for added engagement, trust and transparency. Refer to **page 8** for video examples.





Chat or Text Message

- Start by tending to their inquiry, then capture their contact information in case you lose contact with them.
- AutoTrader.ca Used Vehicle Listings - Complete & Superior provide Chat integration on your Vehicle Detail Pages (VDPs) to talk with prospects in real-time.
- Through most chat platforms, you're provided visibility into the vehicle they are interested in; use this to follow-up with questions you may have about what they are looking for.
- Send a variety of relevant content to the lead about the vehicle or type of vehicles they are interested in and leverage the opportunity to see if they are looking to trade their existing car.
- When possible, reply to your lead's inquiry with a video response. Refer to **page 8** for video examples.

Dealership Walk-In

Although most prospects come in with an appointment, knowing how to handle walk-ins is key to capturing all potential leads.

Have a Sales Manager or the General Manager, (preferably not the dealership receptionist), welcome prospects to the dealership and ask context-setting questions such as:

- "What brings you in today?"
- "What vehicle would you like to see/drive today?"
- "What vehicle can I provide you more information about?"
- "What pieces of the puzzle can I full in for you?"

Match the prospect with a suitable dealership representative who can assist them with their inquiry and create a personalized shopping experience.

Capture their contact information and promptly enter it into your CRM so you can follow-up with a summary of the dealership visit and next steps.

Lead Follow-Up Process

- Ensure a General Manager or Sales Manager confirms the prospect's appointment within 24 hours of booking.
- Personalizing your prospects' experience incentivizes them to follow through with their appointment.
- Use the follow-up process to see if they have friends or family in the market for a car. If you're already providing a superior experience, they are more likely to drive more potential purchasers to your dealership.
- Follow up regularly and offer a variety of channels to increase your lead response rates.
- For dealerships on AutoTrader's Used Vehicle Listings - Superior, leverage the insights gathered by Enriched Lead to understand who your most serious prospects are and connect with them accordingly. Knowing more about every prospective customer without doing the extra legwork to understand their needs goes a long way in trimming down the sales cycle.

- Utilize Consumer Insights for an instant view into the specifics of each lead's car buying journey, helping you make more informed decisions regarding your follow-up process.
- Create a documented follow-up process for training purposes and as a resource for the BDC team to refer to.
- For dealerships with a robust social media presence and dedicated content creators, the following titles are examples of videos or assets created over time for e-lead follow-up, social media posts and the dealership's YouTube channel:

- A Message from the Dealer Principal
- Our Dealership's Purchase Experience
- Our Dealership's Finance Pre-Approval Service
- Our Dealership's Appraisal Process
- Our Use of Leading-Edge Technology (vAuto)
- Our Dealership Facilities
- Custom Accessories
- Reviews and Testimonials
- Our Certified Pre-Owned Program
- Our Dealership's Inspection and Reconditioning Process
- Introducing Our Banking Centre and Our Lenders
- The Benefits of Financing Your Vehicle with our Dealership's Banking Centre
- Special Financing Service for Credit-Challenged Customers
- Do I Need an Extended Warranty?
- Protecting Your Vehicle with a Rust Control Module, Paint/Interior Protection

Did You Know?

On average consumers visit 3 dealership lots during their purchase process; your lead handling and management process can be what helps you make their shortlist of where to go and the store to buy from![1]

Source: (1) Dig Insights, Vehicle Path to Purchase, July 2022, n=1369.

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