

# The dealer's guide to digital marketing

David Levett, Autoweb Design's head of digital marketing, outlines his top tips

**Q** What would be your number one piece of insight into how dealerships can make the most of their digital marketing spend?

**A** First and foremost, having a well conceived strategy, something that is realistic in terms of objectives, timely and well thought-through. Consistent reporting across the channels is important, as we are seeing disjointed digital marketing activities in some cases, which ultimately leads to budget being wasted. It is important to make sure everything is managed.

**Q** What is your view on the evolving introduction of e-commerce?

**A** I think it's an exciting time for automotive – it's an exciting time in digital, full stop. In terms of a marketing silo, the automotive industry has been behind the curve, certainly behind retail, in adapting to an e-commerce arena. It's exciting, because emerging technology brings new players into the market, so – particularly for dealerships, which deal with aftermarket items – it could be a bit of a game-changer.

Also, the audience is undergoing a behavioural change generally, so steering away from, or shortening, that buying cycle to a few clicks will be great. That's something that will take time and people will need to adapt to it, but these are exciting times.

**Q** How important is search engine marketing for car dealerships? What do you think dealerships should be doing in that space?

**A** Search engine marketing is vital; you can spend thousands on a website, but ultimately you need people coming to your online shop/your online presence. A well optimised site is worth its weight in gold – it will transition people through your site appropriately, it will bring people back, it will grow with your business.

In terms of what dealerships should be doing – embrace the technology and embrace new ideas. As technology moves on, the need for search engine optimisation (SEO) and conversion rate

optimisation (CRO) becomes more and more important. Dealers need to work out and understand how channels work together, and appreciate that an audience in automotive is not a one-stop, one-channel approach. It's about understanding your audience and how they interact with your site, and fundamentally giving the audience what they want, rather than forcing something on them.

**Q** What would you say to dealerships that have never done search engine marketing? Where should they start?

**A** Be realistic about what you want to achieve. Ultimately, most things are possible, but there are time constraints, budgetary constraints, and technological constraints that we have to take into consideration. First and foremost, understand what you are trying to achieve, speak to a good agency about it if you're not sure yourself, get a strategy together and go from there.

**Q** How does a dealership website affect digital marketing activities?

**A** In the current digital age, having a technology that sits on a modern platform, SEO-optimised, mobile-first, they are all givens. The importance of the website is how it interacts with your strategy. If you are using a multi-silo approach, your content has to be good, your website has to be well conceived, it has to give a dynamic audience what it needs straight away, and that can be a bit tricky. In terms of the website itself, that's where CRO would come into it, to tailor the site accordingly. There is no such thing as the perfect website, so we need to be able to work with the data we have to evolve the website through time.

Another point to make is the website has to work for all the different marketing channels – pages that work very well for search engine marketing are not necessarily the same pages that would be effective for social media advertising.

**Q** What are you looking forward to in 2020?

**A** Probably technological advances – there have been so many things that have come out and have been spoken about recently. So, everything from machine learning, to augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR). Facebook, for example, is doing a lot of work in the AR arena and spending a lot of money on technology. If these channels come together in the next year or two, it will be interesting to see that introduced to the marketplace so that it becomes a little bit slicker. Ultimately, everyone wants a tailored experience, and if that whole technological revolution can come together and produce something like tailored content, tailored layouts for individuals according to what they've searched for in the past, it would be a game-changer within automotive.

There are websites outside automotive that use similar technology around personalisation, and we are big on getting this introduced more within automotive retail, to make the content on the website more useful to the user and, ultimately, generate more enquiries and sales.

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David Levett is the head of digital marketing at Autoweb Design and his team looks after digital marketing activities at the agency, including SEO, PPC, web analytics and CRO

## COMPANY PROFILE

**Key products:** Website and marketing solutions exclusively to the automotive industry  
**Founded:** 2004  
**Based:** Selby, North Yorkshire  
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