



# Dealer Controlled Marketing Services

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## DEALER SPOTLIGHT



How do you maintain your DealerConnection website? Do you have any tips for driving more leads from your site?

We use the upgraded Premier Customization Service available through FordDirect. For the cost there is nothing that has been as good for that site as that service. I can't recommend this service highly enough. They're tremendous in working with us. They've also been very helpful in adding videos and keeping me up-to-date with all the new features that are available to me on the site. I use them at least a couple times a month plus I will go in and change wording and make sure everything is up-to-date on informational things on the back end of the site like staffing and such.

There are three things we are doing to drive traffic from our site. One: we use a crawler to promote specials. Two: we put our newest TV commercial up every time we do one. Three: There is a specials column on the right side where we list the oldest vehicles from our inventory. I don't know if it's the market or what, but our 90-day plus units have significantly decreased over the past several months.

– **George O'Sullivan, Internet Manager**  
Thoroughbred Ford, Kansas City, MO

The good thing about the DealerConnection site is it's dynamic and as incentives, rebates and programs change, the site updates automatically. I'll go through and make sure information about our dealership (hours, staff, inventory, etc.) is kept up-to-date.

All search engines crawl text when they're searching the Internet. So the main thing I do to drive traffic, that I think is unique, is make sure keywords that are important are on our home page. For example, 2009 Ford Edge, 2010 Fusion Hybrid, things of that nature that are hot right now that people are searching. Ford's getting so much positive press I want to make sure when people are searching on those things that we're popping up first.

– **Daniel Maselli, Business Development Center Manager**  
Will Tiesiera Ford Mercury, Tulare, CA

I maintain the site myself and try to put a fresh look on the site about every three months. Of course, every time there is a personnel change we go in and update the information. We have an outside source that updates our inventory and that is done on a daily basis. That keeps our inventory fresh and removes sold units so that we have new vehicles included daily online.

We try to have a promo for each vehicle on our site. It's important to have actual pictures, price, mileage, and a good promo in addition to the actual VIN decoded and additional equipment. The description is an important part because you want to set your vehicle apart from other things that are listed on the Internet.

– **Roger Ellsworth, Internet Sales Director**  
Tallahassee Ford Lincoln Mercury, Tallahassee, FL

I've been fortunate to learn HTML and how to use photo bucket, upload videos and use links to open features in the site so I can pretty much handle changes myself. I try to update the site once or twice a month depending on if there's a new program or model that has come out.

I give visitors on the site multiple ways to contact me and the service and parts department. I've put tabs across the top for drop down menus to let people know we service limousines and motor homes and give information about the body shop that more than generic text. DealerConnection sites have been designed to work and if they're used correctly they'll improve your business and Internet presence.

– **Steve Perna, Director Internet Sales & Marketing**  
Safford Lincoln Mercury, Silver Spring, MD

## WHAT'S NEW AT FORDDIRECT

### June FordDirect net sales up

Internet sales in June were up 17.2% from June 2008 – or 18,357 vehicles. Overall sales from your FordDirect Internet referrals now represent 19.7% of total Ford retail sales.

### DealerConnection enhancements continue...

**Widescreen Layout** – FordDirect has introduced five new homepage layouts that take full advantage of the high resolution, widescreen layout. We are also introducing interior pages in the widescreen look, including a new Maps & Directions page. We will continue to add new pages and layouts to increase dealer customization opportunities.



**Build & Price 2.0 Integration** – All 2010 Model Year vehicles are live on the new Build & Price application, which provides an enriched customer experience.

**Premier Customization Service** – The video gallery and custom specials pages have been redesigned to the widescreen format, continuing to leverage the best available designs and technology to add value to participating dealers. YouTube integration has been added to the video gallery to provide Dealers more options for integrating their content to the DealerConnection sites.

**Ford Credit Application** – The fully redesigned FMCC credit application tools are integrated into your DealerConnection website. This provides updated Pre-Approval, Payment Estimator, Trade-In and Full Credit application shopping tools throughout the DC site.

**Central Theme Image Rotation** – Upgrades to the homepage automatically create a rotating banner to enhance the visibility of multiple national and regional campaigns.

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(What's New at FordDirect continued...)

**AXZ Pricing Integration** – Inventory displays were updated to allow deep-linking of customers from the AXZ site to DealerConnection in order to display in-line AXZ pricing of inventory units.

**Pre-Owned Inventory Enhancements** – Model year restrictions were lifted so... that Dealers may now display their entire used inventory on their website, instead of just the last 10 years. 15,000 additional vehicles are now accessible online. Vehicle trim information was added to the search results to enhance the vehicle data set and drive conversion. We also worked with DMI to transition their VIN explosion provider to AutoData – resulting in a far richer set of vehicle standard and optional equipment that will be displayed in the vehicle record.

**Dealer Alerts** – A new message board was added to the Maintenance Tool to centralize notifications for common site customizations. Prompts are added to the Dealer's Gateway Page to inform them of unpublished changes, expired content and new campaigns.

## INDUSTRY UPDATE

### Ford's small cars top Cash for Clunkers sellers

According to the National Transportation Safety Administration, the Ford Focus was the most popular vehicle purchased under the Cash for Clunkers program. The Ford Escape crossover SUV hybrid came in as the sixth best seller. In total, compact cars and hybrids were the top selling vehicles under the government's trade-in program, according to government data.

Critics had feared that consumers would use the program to buy trucks. However, 83% of the vehicles traded in have been trucks and SUVs while 60% of vehicles purchased have been passenger cars, according to Secretary of Transportation Ray LaHood. The top-selling list indicates people are buying more fuel-efficient vehicles.

According to the government list, the average combined city/highway fuel economy of the top 10 selling cars ranges from 27 to 33 miles per gallon, depending on which versions of the vehicle people choose.

### Internet and TV favorite leisure activities

According to Magid Media Futures, the Internet is the top choice over TV and other leisure activities for men in the 18-24 and 25-34 age categories. For those in the 35-44 and 45-54 categories TV is the top choice. Men in the 55-64 age group were evenly split between the Internet and TV. For women, the Internet is a favorite in the 18-24 and 35-44 age groups. Females in the 45-54 and 55-64 group preferred TV, and those in the 25-34 category were again evenly split between the Internet and TV.

### Online ad spending to expand at double-digit rates

Contrary to the global economic recession, Internet ad spending is expected to rise to \$56.8 billion or 12.6% of global ad spending in 2009 according to ZenithOptimedia's latest quarterly forecast.

## COMMENT ON SUCCESS

### Two Rivers Ford, Mount Juliet, TN

Ask Luke Davis, Internet Coordinator at Two Rivers Ford to describe his dealership and he'll say, "Our focus is to maintain consistency on processes and procedures like quoting prices and follow up on leads. We're all working off the same page. So when a customer comes in sales managers know exactly what I've done because we all follow the same process."



That may sound too simple to be effective, but in June that process helped Two Rivers Ford realize an 18.9% closing ratio.

"I think our success had to do with our follow-up consistency," said Luke. "It also had a lot to do with inventory. With inventories getting sparse around the country people are looking

for specific items or vehicles. Our inventory managers are very good at researching what our customers want."

"When a lead comes in, I'll give a price quote to every customer," said Luke. "But I'm not a product specialist, so when the customer has a question I turn that lead over to a salesperson. They know the product. And to make it fair, we rotate leads to all of our salespeople. They'll do a follow-up call and email to see if the customer has gotten everything they need, to see if they have any questions and to make an appointment for a test drive. Our follow-up process is not a high pressure process. It's probably not the process you'd recommend for other dealerships but it works for us."

"Another thing that makes us different," Luke said, "is we have a lot of people who have been here for a long time. But we're not 'old school' like a lot of dealerships. Everyone here embraces the Internet customer. We're straight forward and honest with them. Even our finance department has online applications to provide the convenience the Internet customer is looking for.

And that acceptance of a new way of doing things on the Internet is the kind of thinking that has to start at the top. You can't have success unless you have the buy-in and support of the owner, so everybody gets onboard."

Luke said, "The big thing I suggest is to be honest from the get go with your customers. And be prepared to be shopped, not just by customers but by other Dealers, as well. We're in a very competitive market and I think it's the other Dealers that have helped make us successful. They're very good at what they do. And if you don't pay attention to what you're doing and how you're doing it, and just sit back and put it on auto pilot, come the end of the month you're not going to be there."

#### TWO RIVERS FORD INTERNET METRICS

June Closing Ratio	18.97%
Average Internet Sales as a % of Total Vehicles Sales	mid 20%

#### Enrolled in FordDirect:

- New Vehicle Marketing Services
- Pre-Owned Vehicle Marketing Services
- Call Tracking
- DealerConnection

## CONTACT US!

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