

local SEO

SIGNALS YOU
CAN'T IGNORE

DEALERON | WEBSITES+SEO+SEM
UNDER ONE HOOD

LOCAL SEO

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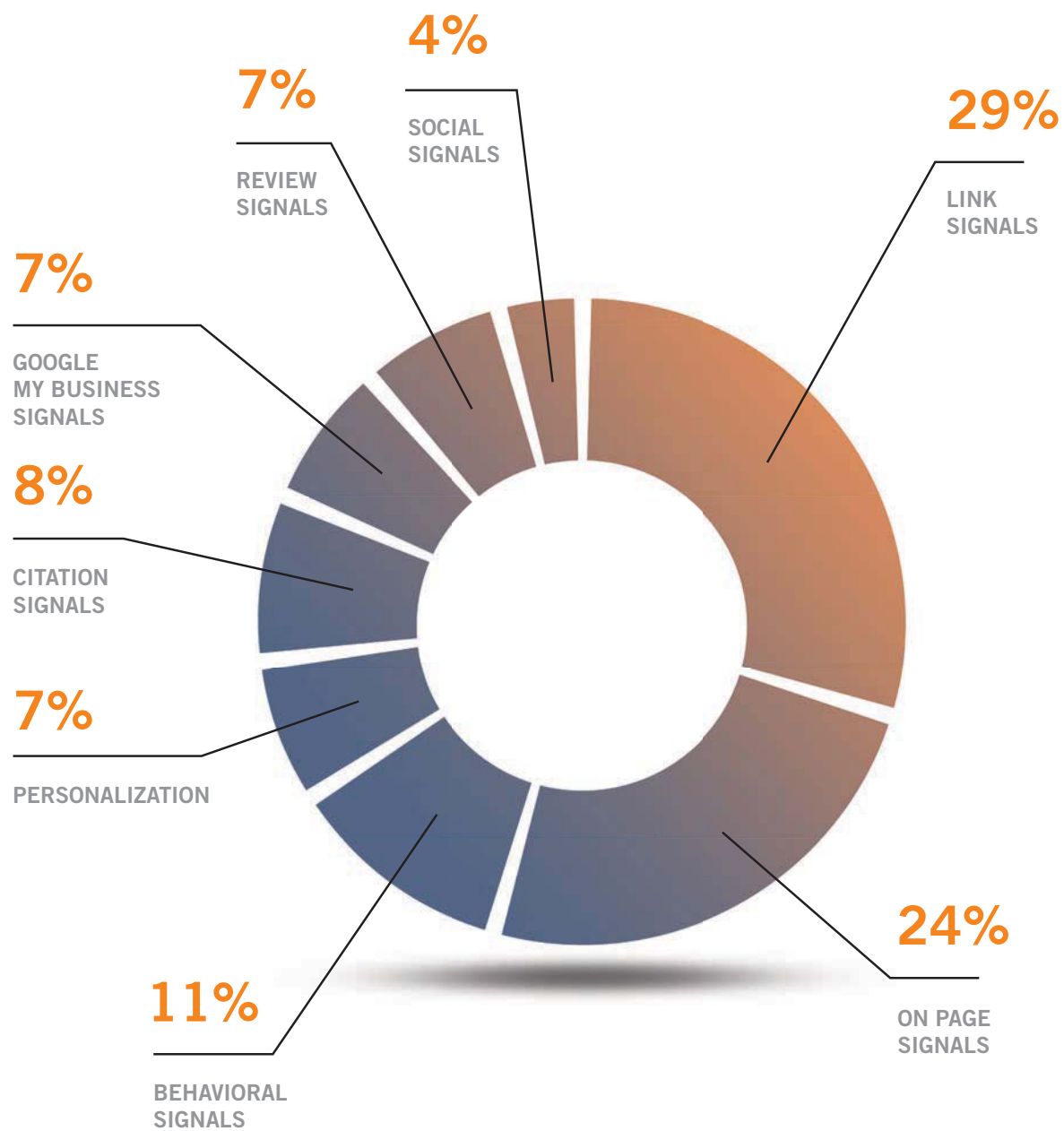
I: ON SITE SIGNALS

GET NOTICED. *get local*

Hardly anyone knows that there are actually two kinds of SEO: traditional SEO and Local SEO. Even though most dealers don't realize it, they rely very heavily on Local SEO to drive sales. If you want to make sure people in your geographic area can actually find your dealership, then you need Local SEO to do it.

In this not-so-little guide, we're going to break down the three essential parts of Local SEO, plus give you some tips on how to avoid shady SEO providers, so you walk away with a ton of new knowledge to show off at your next family dinner.





LOCAL SEO *signals*

How do we know what's involved in Local SEO? An extensive study of Local Search Ranking Factors (LSRF) is conducted every year. The top 40 local search experts in the world are sent an in-depth survey, and the answers are aggregated. The results of the study show which signals matter the most for Local SEO.

As you can see, on site signals, off site signals, social signals, and review signals account for the majority of signal strength in the LSRF. We'll start with on site signals, and work from there. Sound good?

GET *Smart*

So what exactly is Local SEO and how is it going to make your dealership rank well for your city or town? We thought you might ask that.



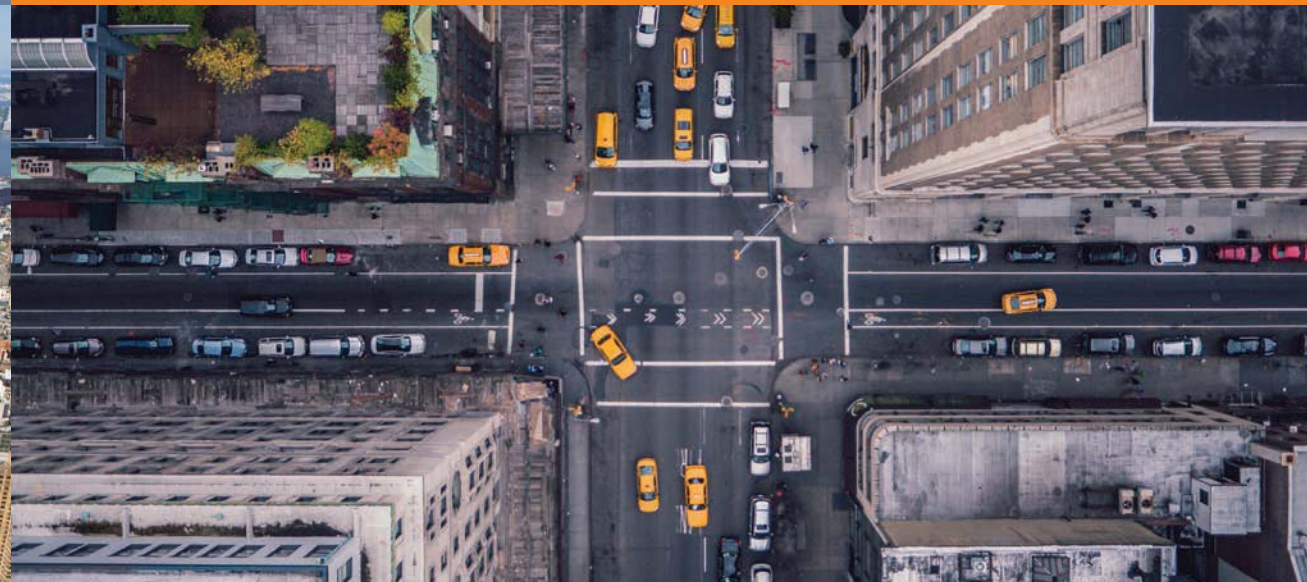
TRADITIONAL SEO

Optimizing elements both on and off a site to influence its relevancy in search engines so that the site will show up when users search for certain keyword phrases.



LOCAL SEO

Optimizing elements both on and off of a site to influence its relevancy in search engines so that the site will show up when users search for certain keywords ...
... in a particular geographic area.



ASK THE RIGHT *questions*

A lot of dealers are worried about rank tracking and whether or not they're ranking well for their favorite keywords. Well, stop worrying about rankings so much, because they're an old-school metric that just doesn't apply anymore.

Every user will see different search results based on their location when they're searching and also what they've searched before. Google uses personalization (your search history and past activity) along with localization (your physical location) to customize your search results, so you get the best possible personal results.

Instead of worrying about where you show up, you should be targeting local visibility. Use Local SEO to show up on as many local searches as possible, and use increases in organic traffic and leads to measure success — instead of tracking rankings.



how does LOCAL SEO WORK?

LET'S TALK PIZZA

Let's say that you're sitting at your desk at the dealership and you type only two words into Google: "pizza delivery". Google will automatically display results that are near the dealership, even though you didn't specify a city (even if you used your phone). If you type the same two words into Google later at home, the search results are completely different — even though you searched for the EXACT same phrase. **That's Local SEO in action.**

Fancy, right?

Google wants you to have the freshest, tastiest pizza in town and knows the next town over isn't going to deliver that far. In other words, Google knows you're looking for local results, even though you didn't ask for them.

Google does this for several different types of businesses, and car dealers are included. Doing traditional SEO will help, but if you're doing Local SEO, you're going to have an edge over your local competition.



proof THAT YOUR DEALERSHIP NEEDS LOCAL SEO

Now that you know how it works, let's cover why it's important for your dealership. We'll use some simple back-of-the-napkin math to prove our point. Imagine that we're talking about the dealerships in your city ...

check it out →

There are 13 available spaces on the first page of search results, including the 3 map pack results. But 5 or 6 of the spaces are typically taken up by third party listing sites like CarGurus or Autotrader. No getting around that.

If there are 20 dealerships in your city, that means only 8 of them will show up on first page results — pushing 12 dealers back to the second and third pages of results. The problem, of course, is that most metro areas have 10 times this many dealerships, which means a LOT more competition for those 8 spots.

new car dealers: 5

used car dealers: 15

total dealers: 20

spaces on Google's first page: 13

spaces taken by 3rd-party sites: 5

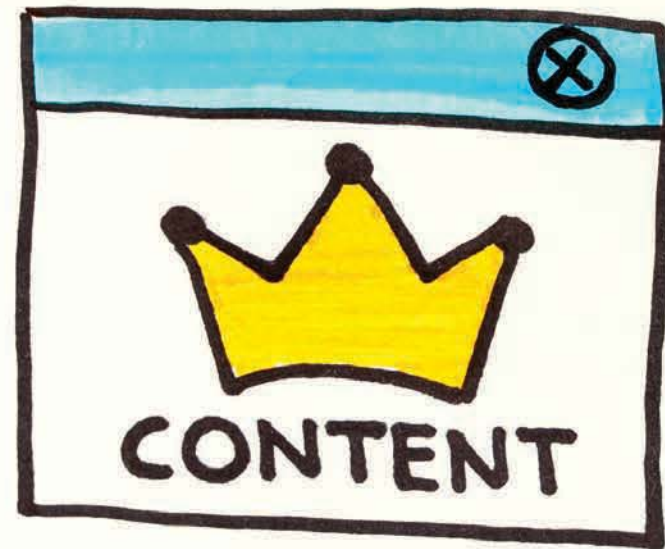
total spaces available: 8

20 > 8

ON SITE *signals*

OK, now we're ready to talk about on site signals. Finally ...

Your website content is the foundation of your digital footprint. All the SEO in the world won't help you if you don't have great content on your site. According to the LSRF study, on site signals make up 24% of the equation for optimizing for local relevancy.



CONTENT: *quality over quantity*

SO SIMPLE TO DO, YET SO MANY WEBSITES GET IT WRONG



GOOD CONTENT IS **UNIQUE**

If someone asked about your favorite car, odds are, you could give them all kinds of details: 2016 Corvette, 7-speed manual, how it looks on the inside, how it handles, etc. That's a unique answer, as opposed to just saying that you like Corvettes. It's the same with your website content. Unique content helps make you stand out and keeps your potential customers on your site.

★ HOT TIP! CHECK IF YOUR CONTENT IS UNIQUE

Copy a sentence off of your site that doesn't include your dealership name, brand, or city. Visit Google and search for that blurb inside double quotes (that makes Google only return exact matches). If that sentence shows on hundreds or even thousands of other dealership websites, you've got a huge problem with duplicate content!



GOOD CONTENT IS **USEFUL**

This is the part that most dealers struggle with. It's easy and tempting to just post a bunch of factoids about your dealership, but that is simply a bad user experience. If your site is truly useful and answers every question a customer might have, they'll have no reason to go anywhere else. If your site's content is useful for customers, Google will love it as well.

★ HOT TIP! CHECK IF YOUR CONTENT IS WELL-WRITTEN

When you're working on your website content, try reading it out loud. If it doesn't sound like something you'd say to a customer face-to-face, then your content has got problems. If it sounds awkward when you read it out loud, rewrite it so that it has a more conversational tone.



BAD CONTENT IS **DUPLICATED**

If your content is simply copied and pasted from another site, that's just lazy. This should go without saying, but Google rewards sites with unique content with better visibility. Duplicate content isn't a "penalty" — but it's a bad idea.



BAD CONTENT IS **RUN-OF-THE-MILL**

Don't bore your customers with used-up phrases like, "Haggle-Free Pricing!" or "Family-Owned!". You'll see the same verbiage on pretty much every dealership website. That's not unique and valuable — you want to be a heavy hitter and those phrases carry no weight.

optimizing YOUR CONTENT FOR LOCAL

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

This is a little more technical, but it's one of the most important aspects of on site Local SEO. If Google's going to return localized results for automotive searches, you've got to optimize your dealership's website with the right local signals.

1 TITLE TAG

The title tag shows up right above the address bar in your browser, and it's the most weighted SEO element on the page. You should NEVER put your dealership name first: you're the only dealership with that name, so you don't need to optimize for it. Use that valuable space to optimize for your important keyword phrases, and make sure you include your City, ST information with the phrases.

3 YOUR CONTENT

Obviously, you've got to have your location info mentioned in your page content. There's no magic number or keyword density score: just make sure your text is natural and conversational. If Google's Hummingbird update taught us anything, it's that conversational is best.

5 PAGE URL

If your website provider lets you set custom URLs for pages, try to include City and State information in the URL. For example, instead of having your used cars listed at [dealership.com/searchused.aspx](#), you're much better off with a URL more like: [dealership.com/used-cars-dallas-tx](#). Don't jump in and start changing all your site's URLs, though; make sure you set up 301 redirects for any URLs you change so you don't lose the value of any links pointed at those pages.

2 H1 HEADING

The H1 heading is the large headline at the top of your text content. It's like the headline of a newspaper article, so it should be conversational and it should summarize the page. It should never be just one or two words. Make sure you're including City, ST along with your targeted keyword phrase.

4 IMAGE ALT TEXT

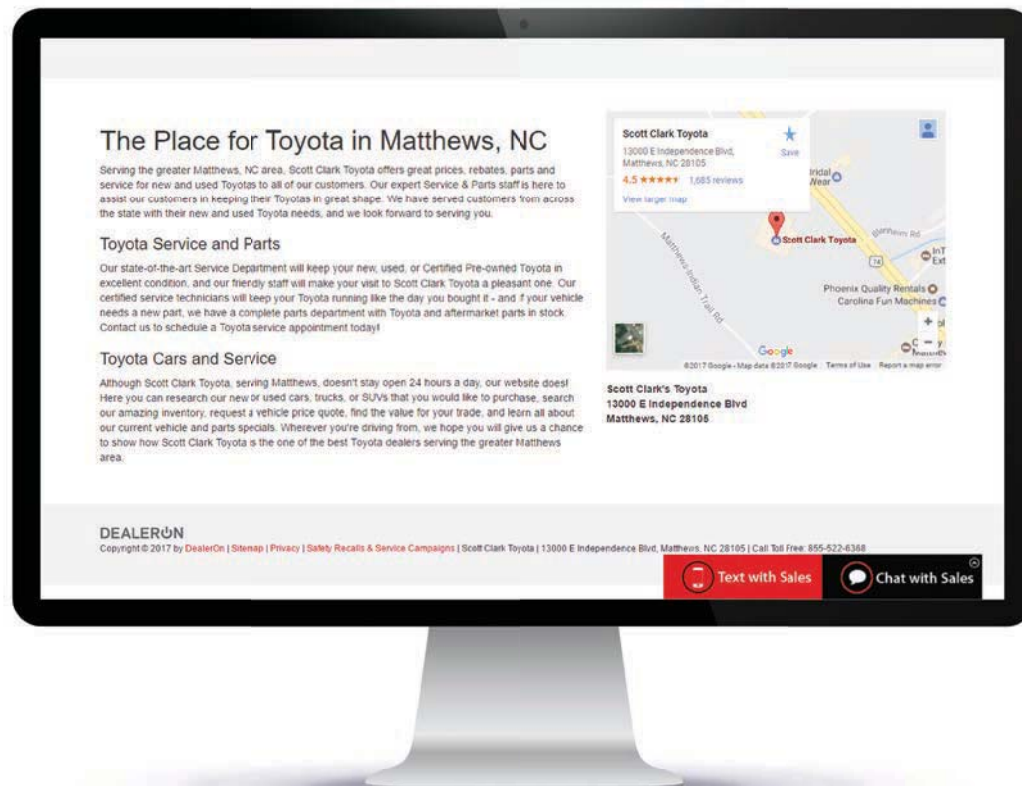
Google can't interpret what's in an image, so every image on your site should use the alt text attribute to describe the image. It's a great place to include City, ST information and push more local relevancy.

6 META DESCRIPTION

The meta description doesn't get counted in Google's algorithm, but it DOES show up as the two grey sentences under your blue link when you show up in search results. If you've got an awesome conversational description that also includes City, State info, you're more likely to get clicks from local users.



don't lose your views EMBEDDED GOOGLE MAPS



Speaking of putting your location on your website, make sure you've got an embedded Google Map on your home page and your contact page, at least. A JPG image doesn't count, it needs to be a live map embed.

Don't just click over to Google Maps and type in your address: click into the map on your Google My Business (formerly called Google Places) listing. Embed that map instead so the map pin info box shows your dealership name and the review stars that reinforce why you're amazing.

it's nap time so **WAKE UP AND PAY ATTENTION**

NAME, **A**DDRESS, **P**HONE NUMBER

Your dealership's **N**ame, **A**ddress, and **P**hone number (NAP) are essential pieces of your dealership's online identity, and should be included on every page of your site.

Now that you're officially "in the know," you can start asking other dealerships if they've got their NAP marked up with Schema. That's right, you don't want to simply stick your NAP on any old spot on your site, you want to first use a coding style called Schema to format your NAP, then put it in the content area of every page. The footer (where a lot of dealerships still put it) doesn't count... it needs to be an actual part of the page.



this is awkward **BUT COULD I HAVE YOUR NUMBER?**

No, not your personal number, your dealership's local phone number. Put it on every page on your site and make sure it's a local area code. *Yep, that means no call tracking.*

Google expects local businesses to have a phone number with a local area code. That 800-number that you're using is wrecking your local relevancy in Google's algorithm. You don't even need a toll-free number anymore. Everyone has cell phones now, including your grandmother, so it's far better for Local SEO purposes to have a local area code phone number than something that sounds like it came from the back of a catalog.



Many dealers are very interested in call tracking, but you might be surprised to find out that most dealers don't use it correctly, or even need it. Only about 2% of dealerships actually look at call tracking reports; the rest are interested in call recordings so they can monitor their sales process.

If you absolutely must do call tracking with 1-800 numbers, then get a local number as well and put both on your site (but make the local number more prominent). Otherwise, get a tracking number with a local area code, make sure you own that number so you can keep it forever, and make sure you're listing that number on your website and on all of your directory listings.



blogging: CONSISTENCY IS KEY

- ✓ You have to have one.
- ✓ You have to post regularly.
- ✓ You have to write things that people actually want to read.
- ✓ You have to write about local events and your city.

Blogging is a crucial part of your content strategy, and if you follow that checklist, then you'll be well on your way to mastering Local SEO. There's not really a "magic" number when it comes to how many blog posts you should be writing, but you need to be consistent.

Don't forget to be interesting! If the bulk of your blog posts are just about test driving your newest models or your dealership's financing options, then you're breaking the "Unique & Useful" rule from earlier. Remember that your readers will only visit your blog because they're interested in what you have to say. So it's like we said: be interesting.

It's absolutely vital that you make your blog a local destination. Write about things in the local area, and share things that people in your community will find useful.



wait! **DON'T GO! I NEED IDEAS!**

Here's a list of several local blog post ideas to start you off, but it's your dealership and it's your city. You don't want your dealership to be like your competitors, so use these ideas for local blog posts as a springboard and go write some amazing posts.



LOCAL NEWS & EVENTS

This should go without saying, but people are interested in what's happening around them in their city.

TOP 10 LISTS

You can put just about anything into one of these lists, and thanks to pop culture and BuzzFeed, people are always interested in checking out your list.

LOCAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Blog about the best local businesses in your town. If you like them, chances are your customers will too. This isn't a link exchange, mind you, it's simply a recommendation.

FAQS

We know, what a boring suggestion, right? Wrong. Take your most common questions from the Finance or Service department and create some blog posts out of them. If your customers are asking the questions, then they're going to want to read the blog posts.

If you can't already tell, we're big fans of sharing information, and we think more dealers should be like us. A helpful blog shares the right kind of information & content, which leads to more traffic, which leads to more... well, leads.

EVENT GUIDES

Is Cher coming into town? Is the Thanksgiving marathon right around the corner? Share the best places to watch or where to grab a bite to eat afterwards. If you write a post encouraging people to test drive your new Subaru to a Cher concert, you're doing it wrong.

SPONSOR EVENTS

Get involved in supporting a local charity or sponsor a golf tournament, 5k race or other local event. Not only will you be able to write about it on your blog, but you'll even get links from that organization or school, which we'll cover in more detail in Part II.

SHARE INTERESTING NEWS

If there's something interesting happening in the area or even in the auto industry (and it's not boring), share it on your blog. Don't get too crazy with it, but re-posting or sharing information can be very useful to your customers.

advanced tip: STORE UP LOCAL CONTENT SILOS

What if you want your website to show up in searches conducted in nearby cities?

Let's say you're a Toyota dealership in the suburbs of Chicago, but you want potential customers searching for a "Chicago Toyota dealer" to see you in the list of results.

First of all, you've got to realize that the Toyota dealers that are actually IN Chicago will always beat you. But if you use Local Content Silos, you can potentially show up right below them in searches.

Think of a Local Content Silo like a microsite within your website. It's an almost-isolated section of your site, with specific pages about your dealership and services, but the entire silo is optimized for the city you're targeting. You'll also need to create some blog content related to the targeted city and build a few local links from there as well.

Over time, as you continue to push the right local signals from your Local Content Silos, Google will start to see you as a relevant result for searches in that city — even though you're not there!



II: OFF SITE SIGNALS

OFF SITE *signals*

And now it's time for off site signals. Section I covered all the Local SEO signals on your website, while this next section will focus on external influences.

But we're not just talking about getting links from other websites, you also need to consider how consistently your dealership's information is being cited across the internet. Then there's Google My Business, the foundation for your relevance in Google Maps.

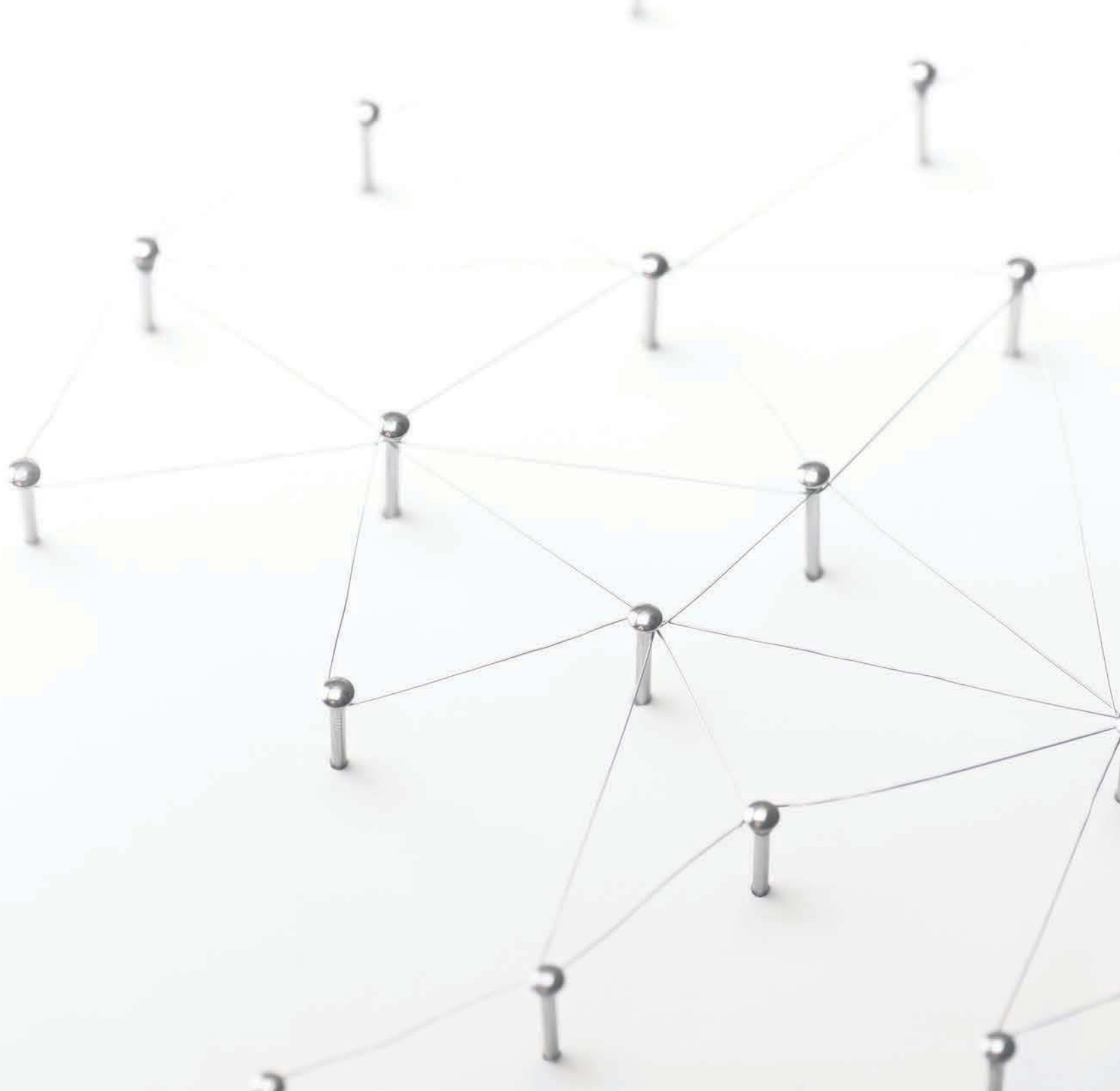


LINK *signals*

Let's start this off with a simple explanation. According to the LSRF study, inbound links are the most important signal of local relevancy (a full 29% of the algorithm).

The basic concept is simple, yet it's surprisingly easy to be spammy. Google has electronic "spiders" that crawl through the internet, taking note of what's on your site... or indexing it. Like we said in the first part, your on site signals are the most important signal that Google indexes. But inbound links are a close second, and this is where most dealers fall flat.

After Google's Penguin update, links are no longer simply a numbers game. Now, it's not quantity of links that matters, it's the quality of links pointing at your site. In other words, the relevancy of the link matters. Because of this, traditional link builders will only go after links from sites with a lot of authority (like CNN or Forbes, for example).



local links SIZE DOESN'T MATTER

Here's a top secret link building tip for you: Google uses a different search algorithm to determine local results, and in the local algorithm, local links carry a TON of weight.

When looking for links, don't be scared off if a website doesn't have a lot of authority. Typically, smaller local sites won't have much authority, or even much traffic. BUT, if you can get a link from a local website in your dealership's area, it can make a huge difference in your relevancy to Google. That basic HTML church website may not look like much, but it's going to do more for your Local SEO efforts than a link from CNN. And it will be easier to get.

In general, getting local businesses to link to your site should be one of your top priorities. If there's a local organization that your dealership supports or sponsors, for example, having them provide a link to your site will immensely help your Local SEO signals.

It's like saying to Google, "Hey, this business thinks that our dealership is great and they want the rest of the internet to know about us!" This ought to be the result of a natural relationship that your dealership has with that business or organization, leading to their site linking back to yours.

Of course, you want to avoid second-rate, low quality links, especially if those inbound links were bought, not earned. Google is explicit about wanting sites to link to each other in a natural way, and not for money. That's right, you can pay for websites links, but it won't get you anywhere. In fact, it might even get you penalized by Google.

Think about reading recommendations for a new restaurant in town while knowing none of the reviewers actually ate at the restaurant. If they were just paid to give good reviews, you're probably not going to give them much thought.

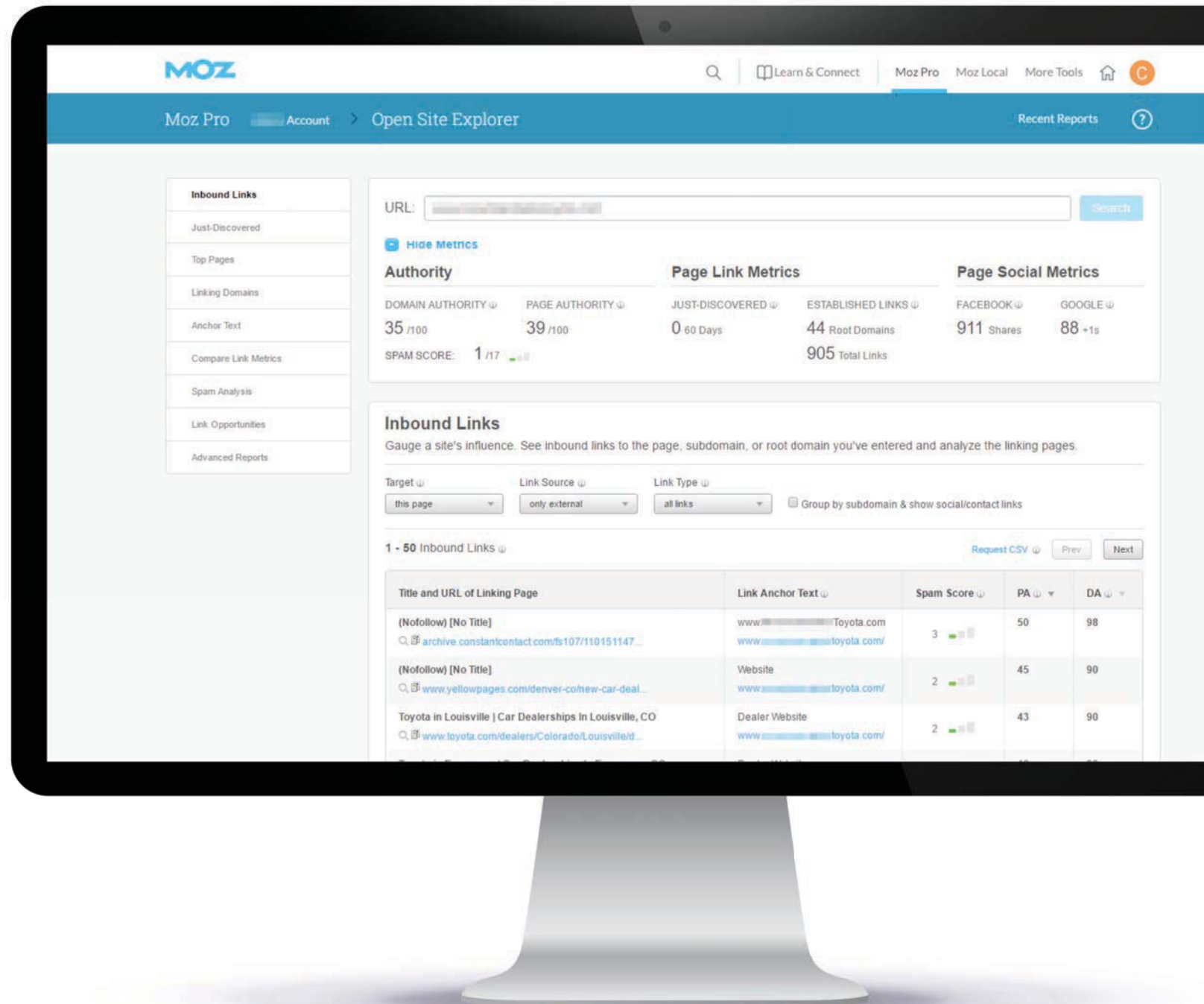


LINK *research*

Before you start working on acquiring new links, you'll want to check out your dealership's link profile. Use Moz's Open Site Explorer to pull a list of your inbound links. Simply enter your URL, and the tool will spit out a list of every site that links to you.

While a lot of folks will focus solely on the domain authority, you can use this tool to look at a site's spam score and determine whether or not it's a helpful link. And, like we said, it may end up being a good thing for your dealership to get a low domain authority link from a local business.

You can also pull your competitor's links to see what they've got. While you don't want to spend 100% of your link building efforts on going after your competition's links, they're typically easy to get. If a website links to your competitor, they'll likely link to you as well. Moreover, unique links are more valuable. That means that if all the dealerships in your area have links from the same sites, those links won't matter as much.



DIY *link building*

Here are some other examples of tried and true ideas for local link building

1 HOST A COMMUNITY EVENT

Host a community event, like a holiday cookout, which will put your dealership in the public eye. Social mentions and links will often follow.

3 SPONSOR A LOCAL EVENT

Try sponsoring a local event in your area, like a golf tournament or a 5k race. It's a good way to get your dealership's brand in front of faces.

5 GET BLOGGED ABOUT

Start relationships with local bloggers and network with them. That can easily turn into blog posts about your dealership.

7 INTERVIEW A LOCAL FIGURE

Consider interviewing a local figure in your community and posting it to your site.

2 SPONSOR A YOUTH SPORTS TEAM

Sponsor a Little League or any youth sports team. You can get a nice link from the team's website.

4 GET RECOGNIZED BY YOUR CITY

If your city gives out awards to local businesses, see what you can do to get your dealership nominated for one. Winners typically get links.

6 SHARE RESOURCES

Create a resource page on your site that's solely for promoting local businesses in your area and sharing awesome links. This is not link-trading, but rather a chance to share resources with your community.

★ HOT TIP!

When building links to your site from local businesses, don't point all your links to your home page. Linking to internal pages will help them gain more visibility. Make sure you're getting links to service pages, inventory search pages, and even individual blog posts.

If your dealership has multiple locations, you should be using a content silo strategy, like we discussed in Part I. Pointing local links to your local content silos is a vital part of helping your silos to show up in local searches.

A WORD OF *caution*

We can't overstate this enough: it's very easy to do this link building thing wrong.

As a whole, your dealership's Local SEO strategy needs to be naturally reflective of your dealership, of course. In other words, the goal should be to have natural relationships with other local businesses that result in links pointing your way. Having spammy links or using blackhat techniques to get links will lose your dealership major SEO points with Google. Plus, it's just an expensive way to get bad results.

The truth is, getting quality links takes significant time and effort. In fact, link building is arguably the most difficult part of SEO. You can't take any shortcuts, and you simply can't buy your way to success.

You've got to build great content, you've got to cultivate relationships, and you have to put in a lot of hard work.



CITATION *signals*

Your citations are mentions of your dealership's location information on other websites. Of course, if you want to be fancy about it (and you remember our tips from Part I), your dealership's contact info is also called NAP, or Name, Address, and Phone number.

When most dealers talk about citations, they're really talking about directory listings. Those are called "structured citations," where your NAP information is listed in a structured format. There's a second kind of citation known as an "unstructured citation." These happen when a blog post or news article mentions the NAP info of a business, but it's spread throughout the article.

Citations are like your ante that lets you sit at the table and play Local SEO poker with the big boys. They're not a silver bullet that will jump you to the top of local results, but if you don't have your citations right, you're going to have a VERY hard time competing with other dealerships.

Your dealership needs to be where Google expects it to be. If Google thinks a dealer in your town should be listed on 40 citation sites and you're only on 20, that could be a huge part of the reason you're not showing up in local searches. There's no perfect list of citation sources for car dealers (that number was just an example). Each city will have different local websites or directories that matter.



CITATION *signals*

The graphic on the right shows how the internet's citation ecosystem functions, and helps demonstrate how important your citation signals are. The thickest lines are the four major data feeds (Infogroup, Acxiom, Nuestar Localeze, and Factual) that take the information and send it to the second-tier sites, which then feed it to lower-level sites.

If you've got a messy citation profile, then a site that's in the second or third tier might receive conflicting information. The site won't know which feed includes the definitive version of your data, and the confusion only compounds further down the chain. If your dealership's NAP isn't exactly the same across all your online listings, then expect trouble.

The Local Search Ecosystem (United States)



how to check YOUR CITATIONS: MOZ LOCAL

1

This tool is available from Moz for free, and it allows you to check your citations across the top 15 citation sources. In a flash, you can tell where your dealership's NAP is inconsistent, duplicated, or incomplete.

Simply enter your dealership's name and zip code, and after thinking for a minute, Moz Local will display a list of possible matches. Ideally, you only want to see a single listing that matches your dealership — if you see multiple listings, that means you have citation problems.

Can your customers find you online?

Check your listings on Google, Bing, and other local search engines.

Choose the most accurate listing

Anytown Toyota
1234 W 70th Ave, Denver, CO, 80221
(888) 555-1234

Verified

Anytown Toyota
1234 W 70th Ave, Denver, CO, 80221
(800) 555-5832

Verified

Anytown Toyota
1234 W 70th Ave, Denver, CO, 80221
(844) 555-9582

Verified

Anytown Toyota
1234 W 70th Ave, Denver, CO, 80221
(301) 555-8517

What does "Verified" mean?

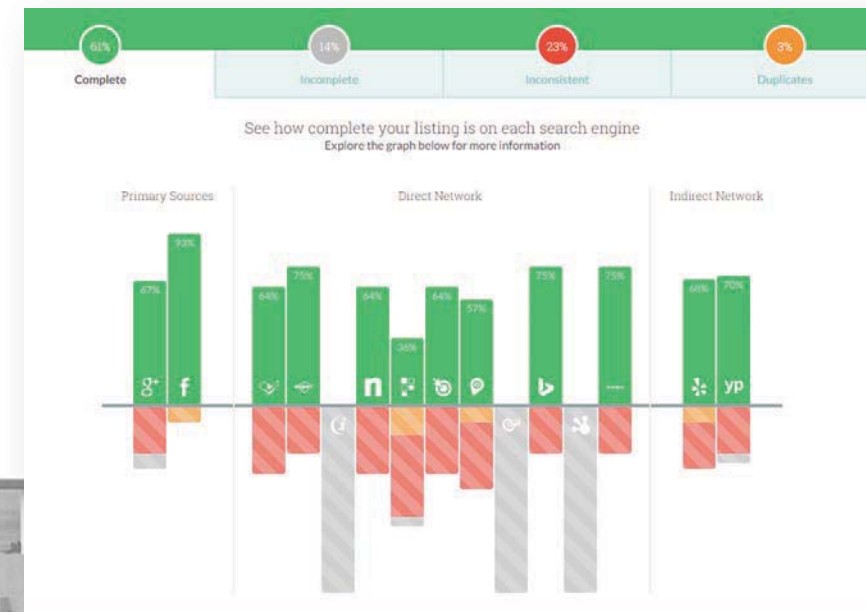
A verified listing is one that can be found on Google or Facebook. To prevent spam submissions, Moz Local will manage only listings that have been verified.

2

Let's get practical. Since your dealership's citation signals are getting thrown every which way on the internet, you can use these tools to see where your citations need work, or where they need to be deleted.

Once you click one of the listings, you'll see a graph with a percentage score. As long as you're 80% or higher, you're fine. The important data is listed below.

Each colored bar represents one of the top citation sites. Any sites with no listing information will show as a negative grey bar. Any negative red bar signifies inconsistent or incomplete data, and any negative yellow shows duplicate listings. You can click on any of the green sections of the bars to jump directly to each listing. Get in and update your info to get rid of yellows and reds!



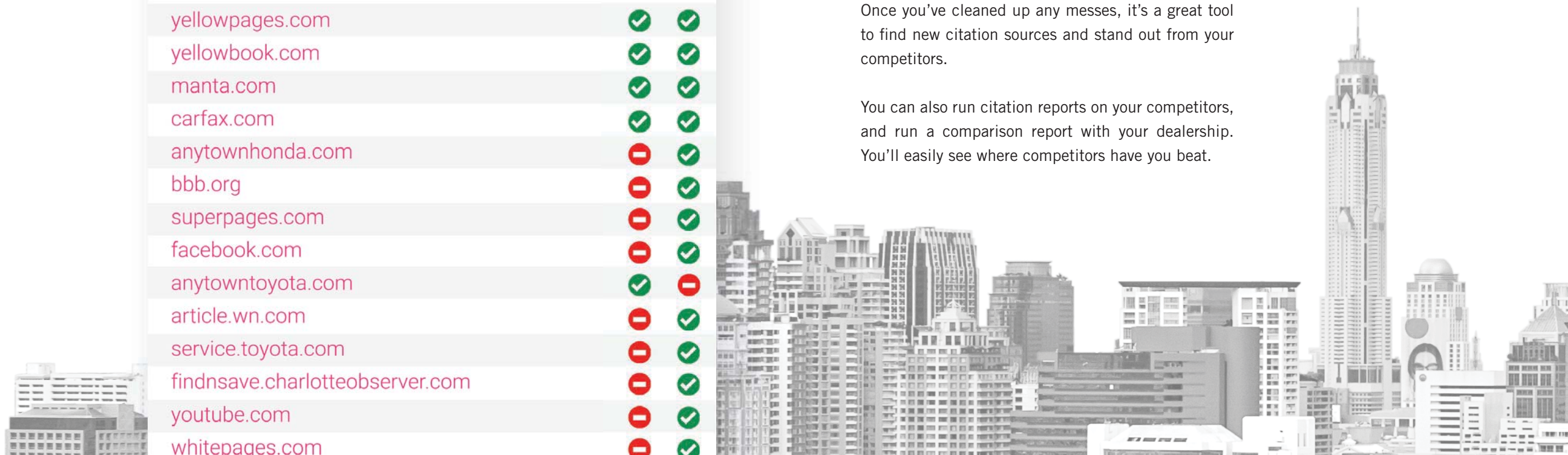
WHITESPARK LOCAL CITATION FINDER

Search Comparison Results			
SITE		ANYTOWN HONDA	ANYTOWN TOYOTA
yellowpages.com		✔	✔
yellowbook.com		✔	✔
manta.com		✔	✔
carfax.com		✔	✔
anytownhonda.com		✘	✔
bbb.org		✘	✔
superpages.com		✘	✔
facebook.com		✘	✔
anyowntoyota.com		✔	✘
article.wn.com		✘	✔
service.toyota.com		✘	✔
findnsave.charlotteobserver.com		✘	✔
youtube.com		✘	✔
whitepages.com		✘	✔

This is a paid tool, but it's extremely helpful because it finds every citation source (not just the top 15). Whitespark's LCF will produce a list of every citation that exists for your dealership, so you're able to update any with incorrect information.

The Local Citation Finder also lets you search for new citation opportunities based on keyword and location. Once you've cleaned up any messes, it's a great tool to find new citation sources and stand out from your competitors.

You can also run citation reports on your competitors, and run a comparison report with your dealership. You'll easily see where competitors have you beat.



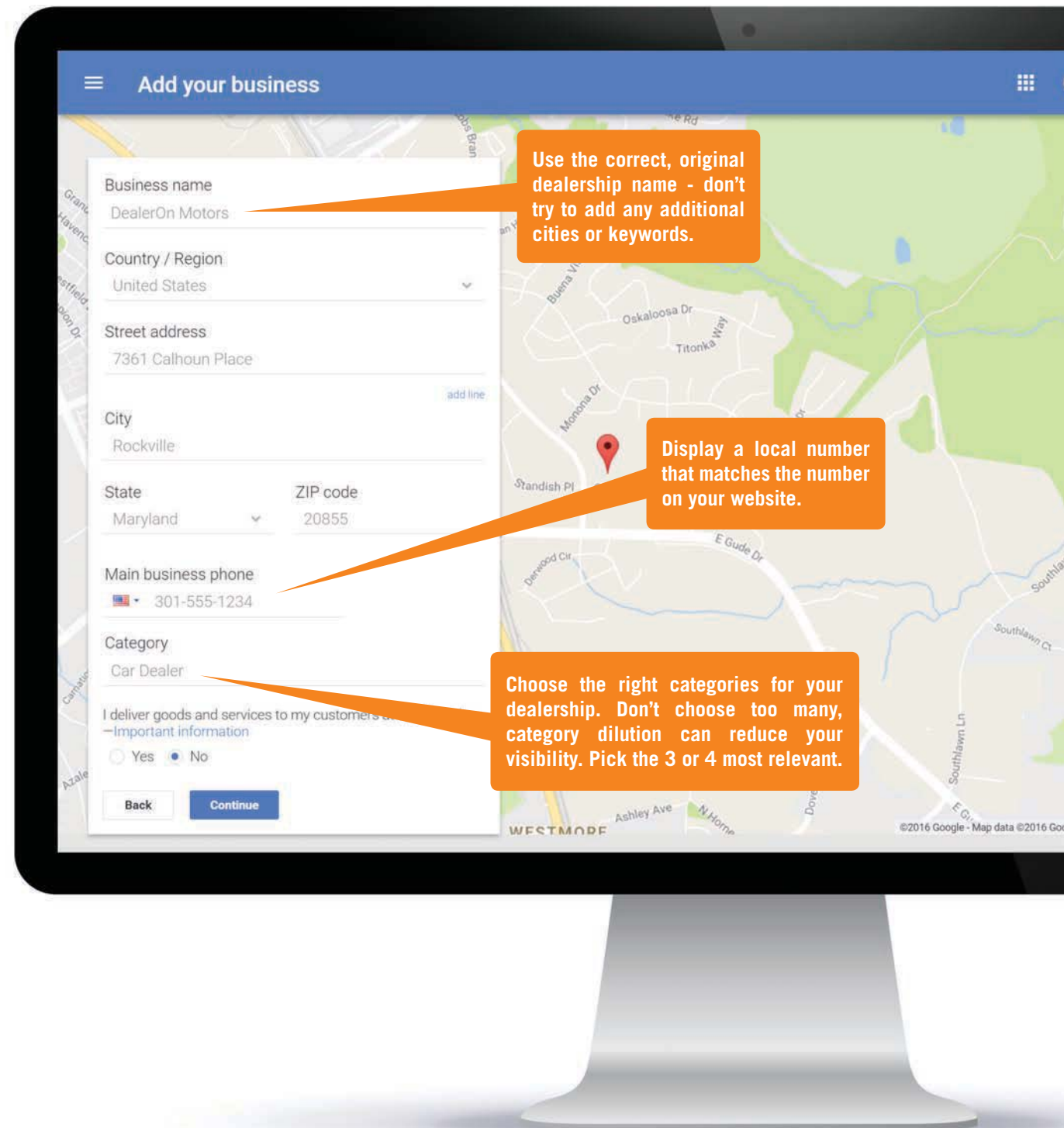
GOOGLE *my Business*

This is your local listing with Google, and most car dealers still refer to it by one of its older names: Google Places. The best practices we mentioned earlier with your citations still apply to your Google My Business Listing, so make sure you've got the right information posted.

It's incredibly important that you claim your dealership's listing, or you might not even show up in map searches. Google says that businesses with verified information are "twice as likely to be considered reputable by consumers." That's all the more motivation to get verified, if you ask us.

Showing things like your address, local phone number, hours of operation, and even uploading photos can also help boost your dealership's credibility and give your potential customers even more reasons to choose your dealership over the competition.

To the right, are a few pro tips to help you get the most out of your Google My Business listing:





III: REVIEW & SOCIAL SIGNALS

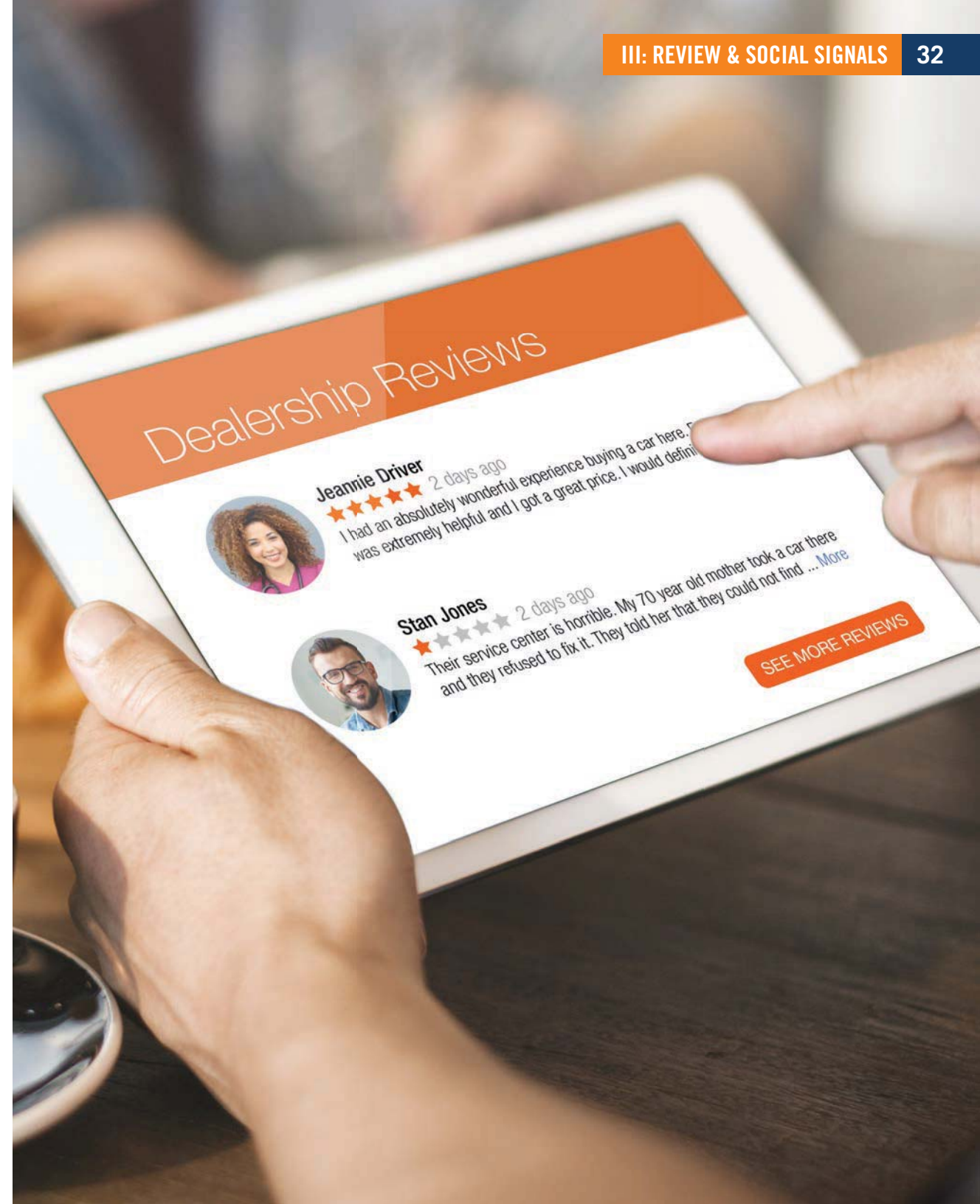
REVIEW & SOCIAL *signals*

REVIEW SIGNALS

Simply put, your reputation is on the line. The fact is, your customers will always check your dealership's reviews before heading into the showroom. If your dealership doesn't follow best practices for getting good reviews and responding to negative ones, then prepare for the worst. Google is smart enough to know that people trust their peers' recommendations and reviews, so you can boost your overall SEO game by simply having good, organic reviews and a simple policy for dealing with negative feedback.

SOCIAL SIGNALS

In today's modern world, you can't do business without being on social media. But we're not just talking about what your dealership is posting online, we'll also address how to interact with other social media users in a way that encourages more business. Not less of it. And yes, we'll talk about negative interactions.





REVIEW *signals*

Review signals are an integral part of the local search algorithm, and they also play a huge role in a customer's decision to choose your dealership. Positive reviews will help you rank better in local searches. But, if you have no reviews (or worse, negative reviews), you'll have a hard time getting people to come into your showroom. Take a look at the stats.

80% of people polled said they'd avoid a business with bad reviews, and 90% of people said they'd trust an online review the same way they'd trust a review from a close friend, or their grandma. Do you really think you can compete with someone's grandma? Didn't think so.

Not only are positive reviews a major plus for your dealership's ranking potential, but they reflect what kind of service you offer. If people know that previous customers had a good experience, it makes them more trusting.

Disclaimer: A prerequisite to getting good reviews is actually providing good service. All the SEO that money can buy won't do a thing for your site if your dealership has terrible reviews because you provide terrible service.

QUICK STATS

80%

of people will avoid a business with bad reviews.

90%

of people trust an online review like they'd trust a review from close friends or family members

A *cautionary* TALE

Like we just mentioned, all the SEO in the world won't help you if you don't care enough about your customers to provide good service.

⊗ BAD REVIEW #1



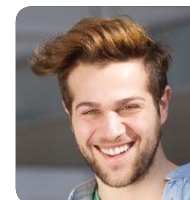
Chuck Majors

★★★★★ reviewed a week ago
Great place to buy a car. See Chuck!

BAD REVIEW #1: WHAT'S SO BAD ABOUT IT?

It's against Google's Terms of Service to leave a review for your own place of business! If your team is leaving reviews for your dealership, it's not only clear to your customers that it's an inside job, it could potentially get you in trouble with Google and lead to a penalty.

⊗ BAD REVIEW #2



Jake Chelton

★☆☆☆☆ reviewed a week ago
This is the worst place ever to buy a vehicle from. Don't ever go here unless you want to get ripped off! Chuck is even posting fake posts under my name saying that I liked my experience so much. Don't believe it! That was the biggest mistake of my life dealing with these people.

BAD REVIEW #2: WHAT'S SO BAD ABOUT IT?

This dealership decided to spiff its sales team \$50 for each review that mentioned a salesperson by name. So, of course, the sales team started posting fake reviews. In this case, Jake had a bad experience at the dealership on a Friday, stewed about it all weekend, and decided to write a negative review on Monday. When he got to their Google listing, he saw a 5-star review with his name on it, got even madder, and wrote this review as a response.

how do i get REVIEWS?



It's simple: You just have to ask!

It's human nature to cry unto the heavens when you're wronged. Or when you have a bad shopping experience. But it's often a one-way street, isn't it? In other words, the best shopping experience in the world doesn't necessarily make you want to leave a glowing review.

However, if a customer has an amazing experience and is asked to leave feedback, they'll probably leave a positive review, and gladly. You've gotta make sure that your dealership is actually asking happy customers to leave reviews if you want to get more positive reviews.

We encourage dealerships to ask every single customer for a review. The more you ask, the more you'll get. Don't be scared off by unhappy customers — many times, potential customers want to see how your dealership handles negative reviews and unhappy customers... so a few negative reviews can actually help!

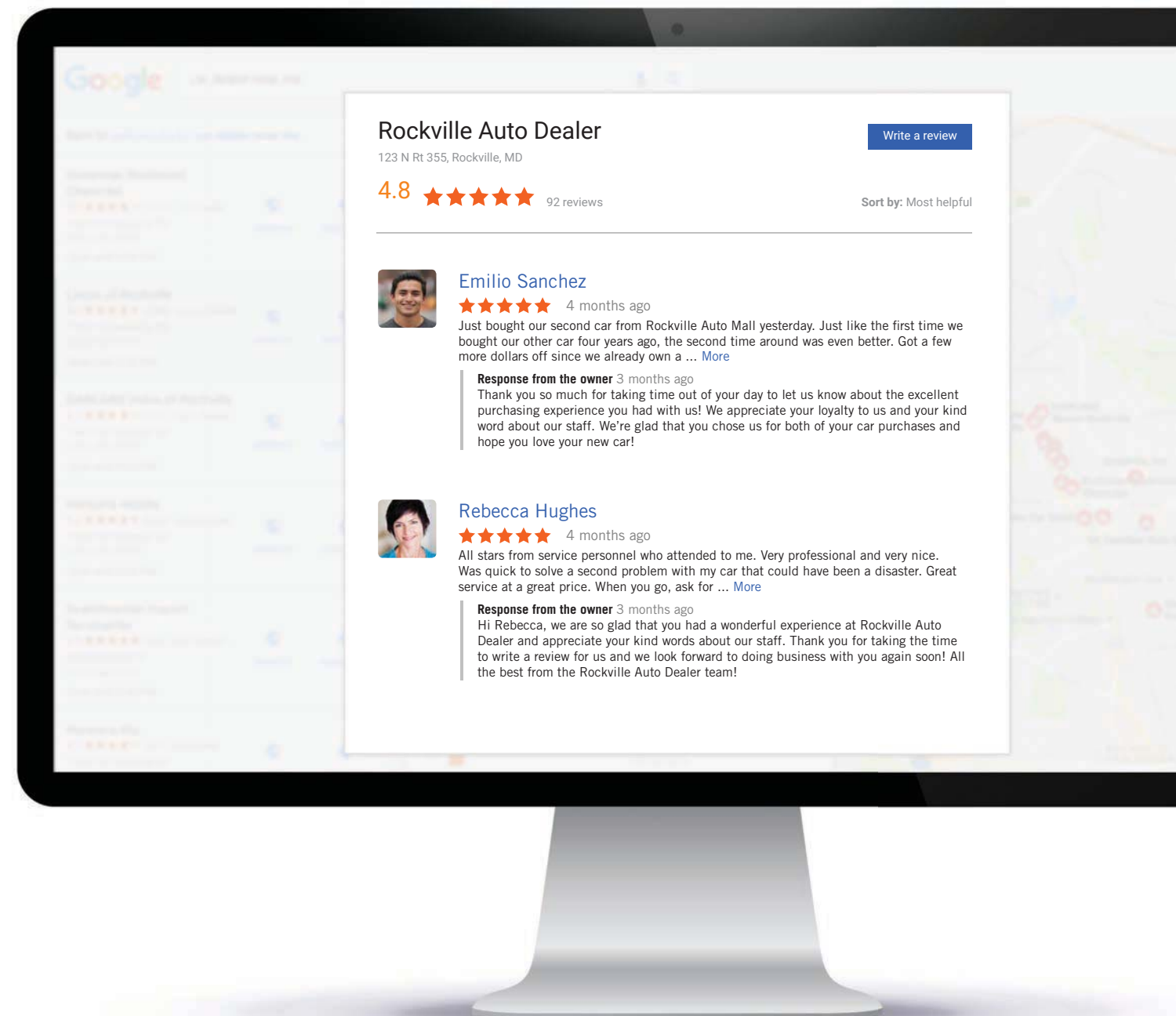
GOOGLE *reviews*

First things first. You're totally allowed to ask for Google reviews, and in fact, we encourage it! Since Google reviews are the most visible (and carry the most weight), this is where you should be focusing the majority of your efforts.

You need at least 5 reviews before Google will start showing aggregate scores. After that, make sure you've got at least 10 reviews before targeting any other review sites.

Make sure you have more Google reviews than your local competitors.

While it's good to have more reviews than your competitors, too many more reviews simply looks faked. If most of the other dealerships in town have 70-80 reviews, but you're closer to 800 reviews, people will assume your reviews aren't real (even if they're all legitimate reviews).



YELP *reviews*

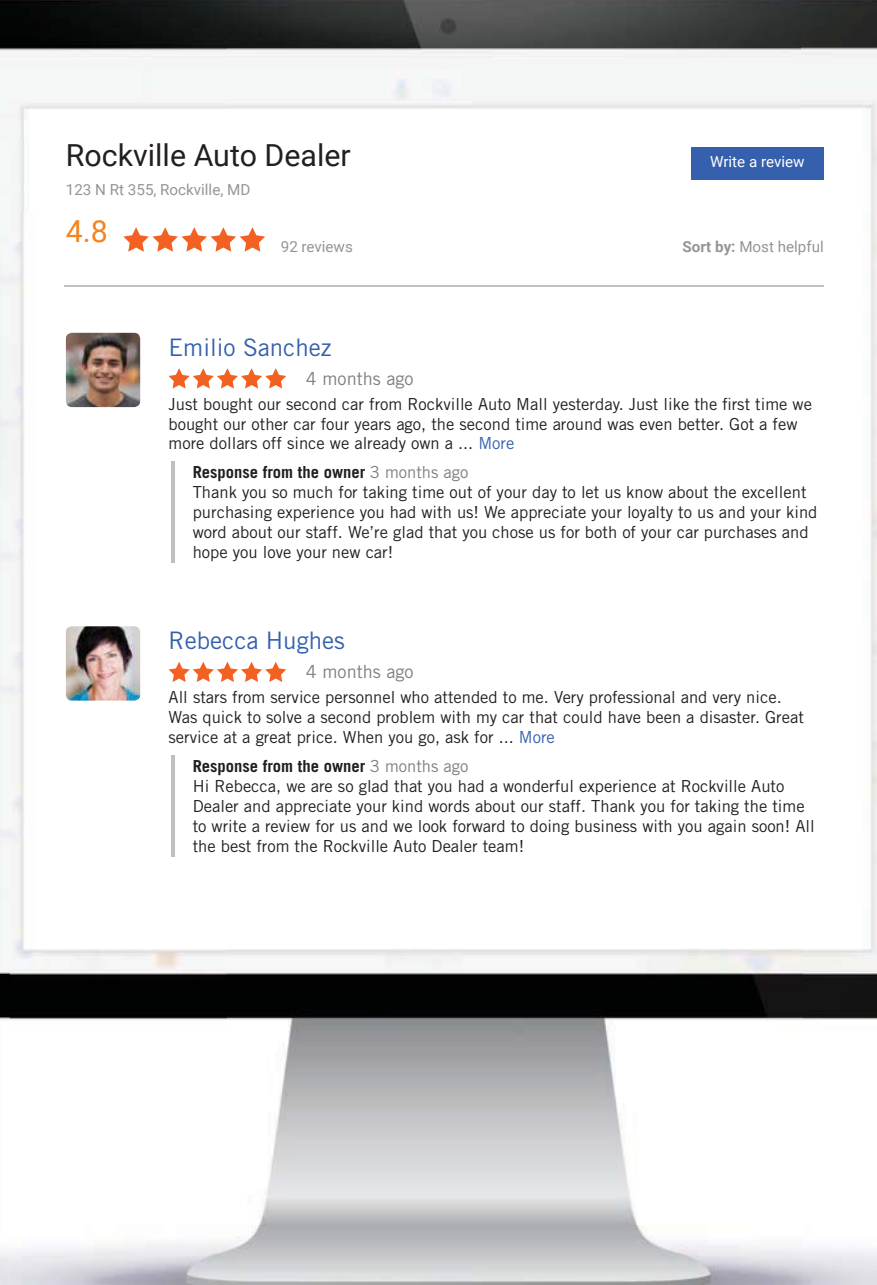
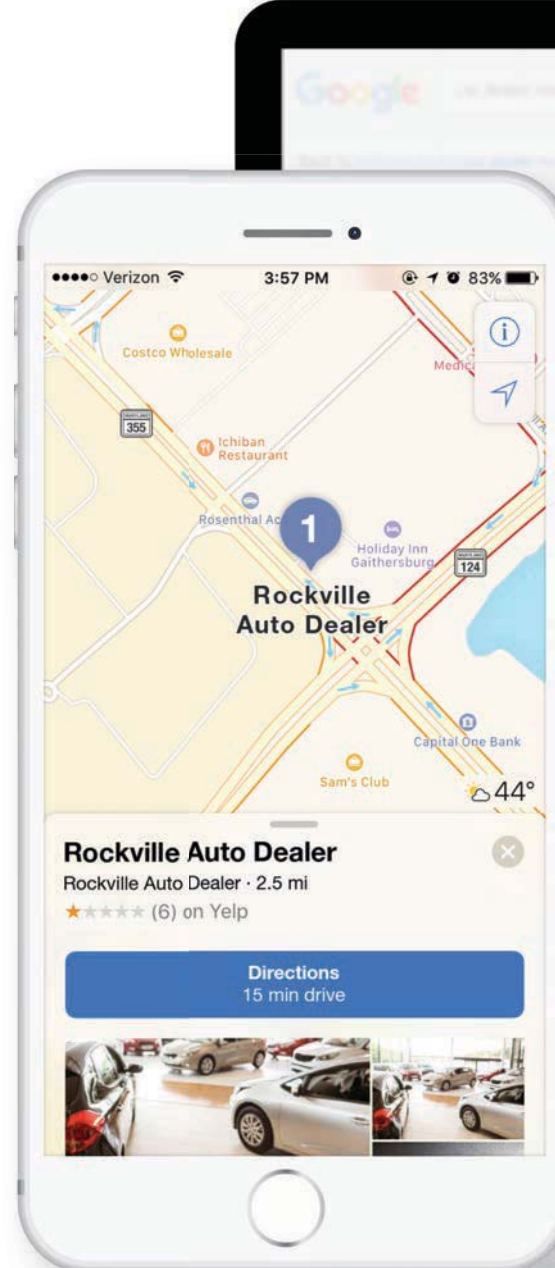
Yelp has strict rules against asking for reviews from your customers. That's right, you can't actually ask for Yelp reviews, but you can tell your customers about your Yelp profile.



Claim your Yelp listing, grab a review badge, and put a “Find Us On Yelp” sign or sticker in a visible area of your dealership.

Most dealers don't give Yelp a lot of thought because it's mostly used to review businesses like restaurants, bars, and the hospitality industry. But, you definitely don't want to ignore Yelp, since it powers the review stars for Apple Maps.

Imagine this - you've got a great review score on Google, so someone looks up your dealership on their iPhone for directions. When the info pops up, they see that you only have 1 star. Are they still likely to come?



OUT WITH THE BAD *in with the good*

Instead of pushing every single customer to leave a public review, send them a single-question survey.

The question? Ask them to rate their experience at your dealership on a 1-10 scale. Low-score responses are routed to a private form, where the customer is free to rant and rave to their heart's content. Their response is then emailed to your dealership, so your staff can do their due diligence.

High-score responses are routed to a page that asks the customer to leave a response on a public review site. This process lowers the likelihood of negative reviews going public and puts your positive reviews front & center.

These survey systems typically let you set the threshold between “positive” and “negative” reviews, but we recommend setting it at 7. You don’t want it too low (and let negative reviews go public) while having nothing but perfect 10’s is flat-out unbelievable. In a bad way.



REPUTATION *management*

Your digital reputation is at stake when you ask for the public's feedback online. Things can go disastrously wrong or you can get glowing recommendations. When bad reviews come your way (sometimes you just can't avoid 'em), here's what you need to do.

RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

Always respond within 24 hours of a negative review, if not sooner. Lots of dealerships like to wait until they've addressed the situation with an unhappy customer so they can post a response that explains what happened. But, your response is as much for the public's benefit as it is for your unhappy customer. A quick response is vital — it shows that you care. Responses to negative reviews should be short, sincere, and unique.

Make sure you're not posting canned responses for every negative review. There's nothing worse than seeing a stream of impersonal, identical responses, like the ones shown here.

Don't just reply to negative reviews, thank folks for leaving good reviews as well. This lets future customers know that you're committed, and not just trying to run damage control.



Stan Jones

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ 4 months ago

My 70 year old mother took a car there that was shutting down on the road and it only has 10 thousand miles on it and they refused to fix it. They made her feel stupid and they told her that they could not find the problem. This is a ... [More](#)

Response from the owner 3 months ago

Sorry to hear you had a less than amazing experience with us, Stan. Please send us a message with your contact information and someone will be in contact with you shortly to fix our error. We strive to do our best at our dealership and we'd like to have the opportunity to make it up to you as soon as possible!



Jeannie Driver

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ 3 months ago

I had an absolutely wonderful experience with the dealer! I was a bit reluctant to dive into a new car. I emailed several times before going up there to look at a car. Ryan, the salesperson, was extremely helpful. Once I finally made the decision to go look ... [More](#)



Phillip Stoneman

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ 5 months ago

This is a terrible place to buy a car. The staff seem okay at first but they are unprofessional and childish. The way they do business is a nightmare for any consumer. They are limited in information and in car repairs. Bottom line, this is ... [More](#)

Response from the owner 3 months ago

Sorry to hear you had a less than amazing experience with us, Phillip. Please send us a message with your contact information and someone will be in contact with you shortly to fix our error. We strive to do our best at our dealership and we'd like to have the opportunity to make it up to you as soon as possible!

social SIGNALS

Just like reviews, your social media signals are an important part of Google's search algorithm, but it's not all numbers and code. Your social media is a reflection of your dealership's human side.

Having a bad social media strategy (or just executing it poorly) can really damage your dealership's Local SEO efforts. Moreover, it can really damage what people think about your dealership.

Social media is a place where your dealership has an interactive relationship with people. Some dealers avoid social media altogether because they either don't understand how to use it, or just don't like it.

But conversations about your dealership are happening on social media — whether you're there or not. So be there, already, and participate. Over the next few pages, we'll show you what to say, how to say it, and all kinds of tips & tricks for your social media signals.

We'll cover Facebook optimization in an organic sense, but not from an advertiser's perspective. That will come later, don't fret.



what TO POST?

So what things should your dealership post on social media? Most dealers only share lots of self-promoting posts and inventory links, but that's the absolute worst social strategy.

People get on social media to be...well, social. If all your posts are basically extended sales pitches, nobody will care. When businesses try to promote themselves through social media too heavily, people react very negatively. It's the exact opposite of being social and it's intrusive.

FOLLOW THE 80/20 RULE: IT'S EASY

80% of your posts should be designed to increase audience engagement. 20% should be reserved for standard sales and marketing posts. In other words, 4 out of 5 posts don't even need to be about your dealership, they should be fun and engaging.

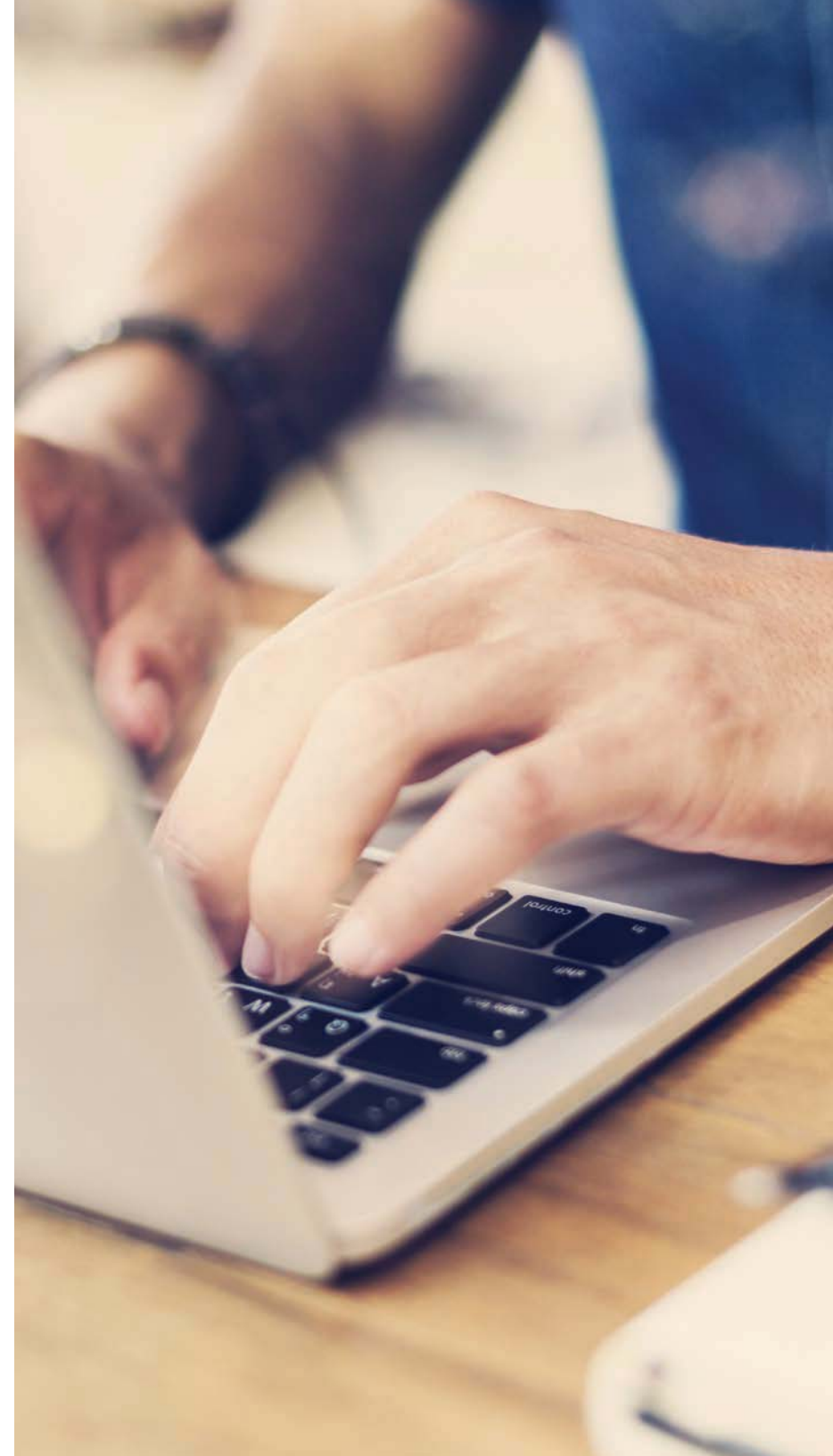
And, of course, it's best to post *unique* things to your social media profiles, not just the same junk that every other dealership is posting. Cut out the OEM's preconfigured social media stream that posts the exact same thing for all Ford dealerships. That's not unique and it's not helpful.

SHARE DELIVERY PHOTOS

One of the most effective posts your dealership can share is a photo of a smiling customer next to the new car that he or she just bought — so make sure that posting delivery photos is part of your social strategy. But remember, multiple photos uploaded to Facebook at the same time will be grouped into a single post, so spread them throughout the entire day for maximum visibility.

TALK ABOUT EVENTS

Stuff happens at your dealership, right? Do you sponsor events like golf tournaments or 5K runs? Start to let people know 3-4 weeks in advance by posting about it on social media, including things like photos and registration links. If you don't know what a "landing page" is, that's okay, just write a blog post that has all the relevant information about the event and link to it in your social posts.



how often

TO POST?

How about we get a little practical? Let's talk about how often you should be posting things to your dealership's social media accounts, because oversaturating your followers with messages (even fun ones) is a quick way to lose credibility & followers.

We recommend posting something to your accounts at least once a day, and if you're posting more than that, spread them throughout the day. Don't just drop 3-4 posts consecutively, either, remember that your customers are browsing at different times throughout the day.

DOMO ARIGATO, MR. ROBOTO

Automation services are a helpful way to schedule posts and save time, but they should not be your sole strategy. You've got to post in real time. It shows that your dealership is run by real, engaging people. Unless you're all boring, then leave it to the robots. We're kidding, don't do that.

And if you're running automated posts, pay attention to current events. Nothing looks worse than a lighthearted post in the midst of a national tragedy.

TIPS & TRICKS

BE A SOCIAL MEDIA "REGULAR"

You need to be seen as active on social media. That means putting time and effort in on a regular basis. Don't just post and ghost.

SHARE IMAGES, NOT (JUST) TEXT

Though it may be easier to just type out a bunch of text, it's images that really draw people's attention. So share images, not text-heavy posts. You'll get more visibility.

SHARE AT THE RIGHT IMAGE SIZE

If you're sharing an image on Facebook, make sure the size is 1200 x 630 pixels.

DITCH THE OEM SOCIAL STREAM

It's worth saying again: get rid of that OEM social stream. No sense in sharing the exact same content as all the other dealers in your market.

DON'T POST LINKS TO INVENTORY

Rarely (if ever) post links to your inventory. It's called social media, not "buy my stuff media."

DON'T USE HASHTAGS ON FACEBOOK

Hashtags are for Twitter, not for Facebook. Facebook users won't use them, and you end up looking like a n00b.

DON'T TETHER YOUR FACEBOOK AND TWITTER

Although it's great to have your social media streams in sync, you should never tether your Facebook and Twitter accounts. When you post photos to Facebook, the photos aren't displayed in Twitter — users will instead see shortened fb.me links.

IV: HOW TO AVOID SHADY SEO



AVOIDING

shady SEO

Now that you understand the basics of SEO, let's talk about choosing the right provider. While there are lots of them within the automotive industry, there are plenty outsiders who will claim to have the solutions to all your problems.

The problem is that too many of them are all too happy to take your money without providing any valuable service to help your dealership. Not cool.

Consider this list the 12 Commandments of avoiding shady SEO. Heed these warning signs, and you'll be able to pick the right provider to boost your Local SEO signals.

Shall we begin?

avoid LOW-QUALITY, DUPLICATED CONTENT



Several factors can contribute to your air conditioning system malfunctioning. Some of the chemicals in your air conditioning system may be worn out and need replacement. There is also a chance your Hyundai Accent is leaking fluids, in which case not only is your air conditioning unit not functioning properly, but your entire engine could be affected as well.

Sometimes the dirt, dust and gravel you travel on during the course of a day gets in your engine and can clog your air conditioning unit. Clogging drags the performance of your Hyundai Accent as well as its gas mileage. By bringing your Hyundai Accent to Small Town Hyundai serving Small Town, MD 21811, you can be sure your air conditioning is keeping you cool without slowing down your car.

Bringing your Hundai Accent to Small Town Hyundai ensure that you get a valued product and service at reasonable prices. Our service team knows your Hundai Accent air conditioning unit from top to bottom and will make sure it is functioning in top form because we want you to drive away from Small Town Hyundai serving Small Town MD 21811 feeling cool and refreshed.

AVOID LOW-QUALITY CONTENT

The copy on your website should tell your story. For an auto dealer, it's pretty straightforward: you sell cars. Having content that's simply regurgitated jargon from a site like *Car and Driver* isn't particularly useful, it's run-of-the-mill and generic.

AVOID DUPLICATED CONTENT

We touched on this in Part I, but it's crucial to have unique content on your site. The example on this page shows duplicate content in action.

The example to the left shows an actual blog post from a major automotive SEO provider. They'll write an AC repair post, then re-use it for every model in your lineup, only changing the model name in the post. Then they'll take that group of posts and re-use them for 15-20 cities in the area, only changing city names.

How do you know if your site has duplicate content? Copy a sentence fragment from your website (that doesn't include your dealership name) and search for it in Google, inside double quotes. The double quotes will force Google to return only exact matches. You SHOULD only see one result.

The sentence fragment to the left showed up almost 42,000 times! Obviously, that's not good for your SEO.

avoid OUTDATED SEO TACTICS

The landscape of SEO is constantly changing. To spot outdated tactics & techniques, you need to be up to date yourself. The good news is that it only requires a little reading on your end. Sites like Search Engine Land, Moz, or even DealerOn's blog are excellent resources that will explain what's going in SEO at any given point.

Here's a hilarious example of outdated techniques: This support ticket submitted by an automotive SEO provider whose client was using a DealerOn website. The goal was to improve this website's SEO signals, but this provider's methods were ridiculously out of date.

Title Tag: Don't put your dealership name at the front
You should never put your dealership name first... you'll always rank #1 for that term. Use title tag space wisely and target money keywords.

Title Tag: Don't use a phone number
No one will search for your dealership's phone number. If they have your number, they'll simply call. Again, use money keywords.

Example HTML markup

```
<title>Big City Honda Dealer 888-555-1234 Palo Alto San Jose  
Fremont California CA</title>  
<meta name="description" content="Big City Honda Dealer Palo  
Alto San Jose Fremont Used Car Dealerships Redwood City Bay  
Area San Francisco Pre-Owned Honda Dealers Sunnyvale Santa  
Clara Certified Honda Dealer San Mateo Mountain View Milpitas  
Cupertino San Bruno Menlo Park Daly City California CA" />  
<meta name="keywords" content="Big City Honda, Honda, Palo  
Alto, San Jose, Fremont, Redwood City, Bay Area, San  
Francisco, Sunnyvale, Santa Clara, San Mateo, Mountain View,  
Mountain View, Milpitas, Cupertino, San Bruno, Menlo Park,  
Los Gatos, Burlingame, Daly City, Used Honda, Honda Service,  
Honda Parts, Certified, Pre-Owned, California Honda, Cars,  
Trucks, SUV, Hybrid, Accord, Civic, CR-V, Element, Fit,  
Odyssey, Pilot, Ridgeline, Insight, CR-Z Civic Hybrid, Civic  
Natural Gas, Crosstour" />
```

Title Tag: Don't list multiple cities
You won't rank for other cities simply because you stuffed them in your title tag. Only list location info for your own city... and be conversational.

Meta Description: Don't list multiple cities
Again, you won't rank for other cities simply because you stuffed them in your page elements. Include location info for your own city only!

Meta Description: Be conversational!
Your meta description populates the 2 grey sentences under your blue link in Google results. Make sure it's enticing and conversational!

Example Home Page

Honda Dealer of Palo Alto California

New Honda Dealers serving San Jose, CA

Visit Big City Honda Dealership near Bay Area CA to see our huge selection of new and used Honda models as well as Certified Pre-owned cars and trucks. Ask about our in-store specials.

READ MORE

Honda Dealerships located near:

- Palo Alto, California
- San Jose, California
- Fremont, California
- Redwood City, California
- Bay Area, California
- San Francisco, California
- Sunnyvale, California
- Santa Clara, California
- San Mateo, California
- Mountain View, California
- Cupertino, California
- San Bruno, California
- Menlo Park, California
- Los Gatos, California
- Burlingame, California
- Daly City, California

Used Honda Dealership serving Fremont CA

New and used Honda models to choose from including:

- Honda Accord
- Honda Accord Hybrid
- Honda Civic
- Honda CR-V
- Honda Element
- Honda Fit
- Honda Odyssey

Homepage: Bullets kill kittens!
This goes without saying, but you can't simply rank for multiple cities just because you listed them all in a bullet list. Your page text needs to be relevant & conversational!

Home page: Don't use "Read More" links
Google has publicly stated that if text isn't visible to humans when a page loads, it doesn't count for SEO. Make sure your text is visible and actually useful and relevant for humans... Stuffing keywords gets you nowhere!

avoid CONTENT-ONLY PROVIDERS

MODEL RESEARCH PAGES

Having quality Model Research Pages is an important piece of the SEO puzzle, but if that's all you're getting from your provider, that's bad. You're buying content, not Search Engine Optimization.

BLOG POSTS

You definitely want a blog that's consistently updated with quality local content. That's part of what drives traffic to your site and boosts your local relevancy. But again, blog posts alone are not SEO.

Be wary of providers who are just selling individual pieces of SEO (like content or link building), because that's like selling tires, but calling yourself a dealership. Not gonna fly.

avoid LOTS OF CONTENT FOR CONTENT'S SAKE

Like the guys who sell nothing but MRPs and blog posts, there are providers who promise X pages of "fresh" content each month. They're not talking about blog posts, they're talking about actual website pages.

Why? Probably because they read a blog post once that mentioned Google loves fresh content, so they ran with it. In all seriousness, it's a poor SEO strategy because a typical dealership only needs anywhere from 15-25 pages of content (minus blog posts & inventory pages).

These providers are more than happy to add 240 pages of content to your site each year, with no real strategy behind it other than "Google Loves Fresh Content." Sure, Google, sees fresh content as a positive thing, but adding content without a solid content strategy will only hurt you.



avoid ARTIFICIALLY-LOWERED BOUNCE RATES

If you've ever heard a provider make the promise that their website or SEO service will magically lower your bounce rate to 5% or less, check your pockets because you're getting scammed.

They're not actually doing anything to change user behavior on your site, they're simply adding an extra script behind the scenes that pings Google Analytics every few seconds. Instead of doing anything to improve your architecture or content, they're simply cheating the Google Analytics report.

If you've got tomatoes, go ahead and chuck 'em.



avoid A-LA CARTE SEO SERVICES

SEO isn't just a combination of one or two things that Google wants to see on your website, it's a comprehensive effort — and it takes expertise to know what any given client will need.

You're hiring an SEO provider to be the expert in your corner; they should tell you what you need. If you're not an SEO expert, how should you know what your dealership needs? Simply put, it's their job, not yours.

That's kind of like offering to replacing someone's roof, but only the shingles that look bad to the homeowner. Sure, it might cost \$84, but that's not how you replace a roof.

Understand that if someone is selling a "choose-your-own-adventure" SEO package, they might not understand a whole lot about SEO themselves.

avoid GUARANTEED RANKING PROMISES

Nobody can actually guarantee a #1 ranking in Google. Nobody. If you remember from Part I, Google uses personalization and localization to return unique results to every user. Everyone's results are different, so what might be #1 to John won't necessarily rank as high for Bob.

So how can someone guarantee #1 rankings? They optimize your site for oddly specific longtail keywords that nobody would ever actually search with Google. They can give you a nice report showing that you rank #1 for hundreds of phrases... But if no humans will ever search for those phrases, who cares? You won't see any additional traffic or any increase in leads.

avoid GUARANTEED LINK PROMISES

If Part II of our book taught you anything, it's that getting great links ain't easy. It's the result of a natural relationship between your dealership and other businesses or sites, not the result of paid efforts or shady methods.

When an SEO provider guarantees a certain number of inbound links per month, or they promise an outlandishly high number of links when you sign up with them, that's a bad sign. Run away.

They're either buying those links from a third party, or they're giving your site links from spammy sites or a linkfarm. Can those things earn you a penalty from Google? You bet.

avoid PROVIDERS WITH NO MONTHLY REPORTING

It's impossible to do SEO without communicating with your client. If you've bought SEO services from a provider, but you only hear from them a few times a year (or worse, when things go wrong), that's not nearly enough.

You should be talking to your SEO provider at least once a month... at a minimum. Why? It's a matter of transparency and due diligence. If you don't get any kind of monthly reporting, then how do you know your budget is being spent wisely? You don't.

So get those reports!

avoid RANKINGS ONLY REPORTING

Like we've said before, rankings are going to be different for each customer. Any SEO provider with an ounce of experience knows this. But here's the real stinger: a ranking report isn't really a measure of ROI. Results are.

If you're ranking high for some quality keywords, that's great! Can you tie your sales to it? Not so much. A good SEO report will contain organic traffic information, including which leads came from which channel.

Once you can analyze that data, and see how things are changing from month to month, you can evaluate your SEO provider based on ROI. Don't be wowed by graphs and numbers, make sure to look beyond them to what actually matters for your dealership's bottom line.

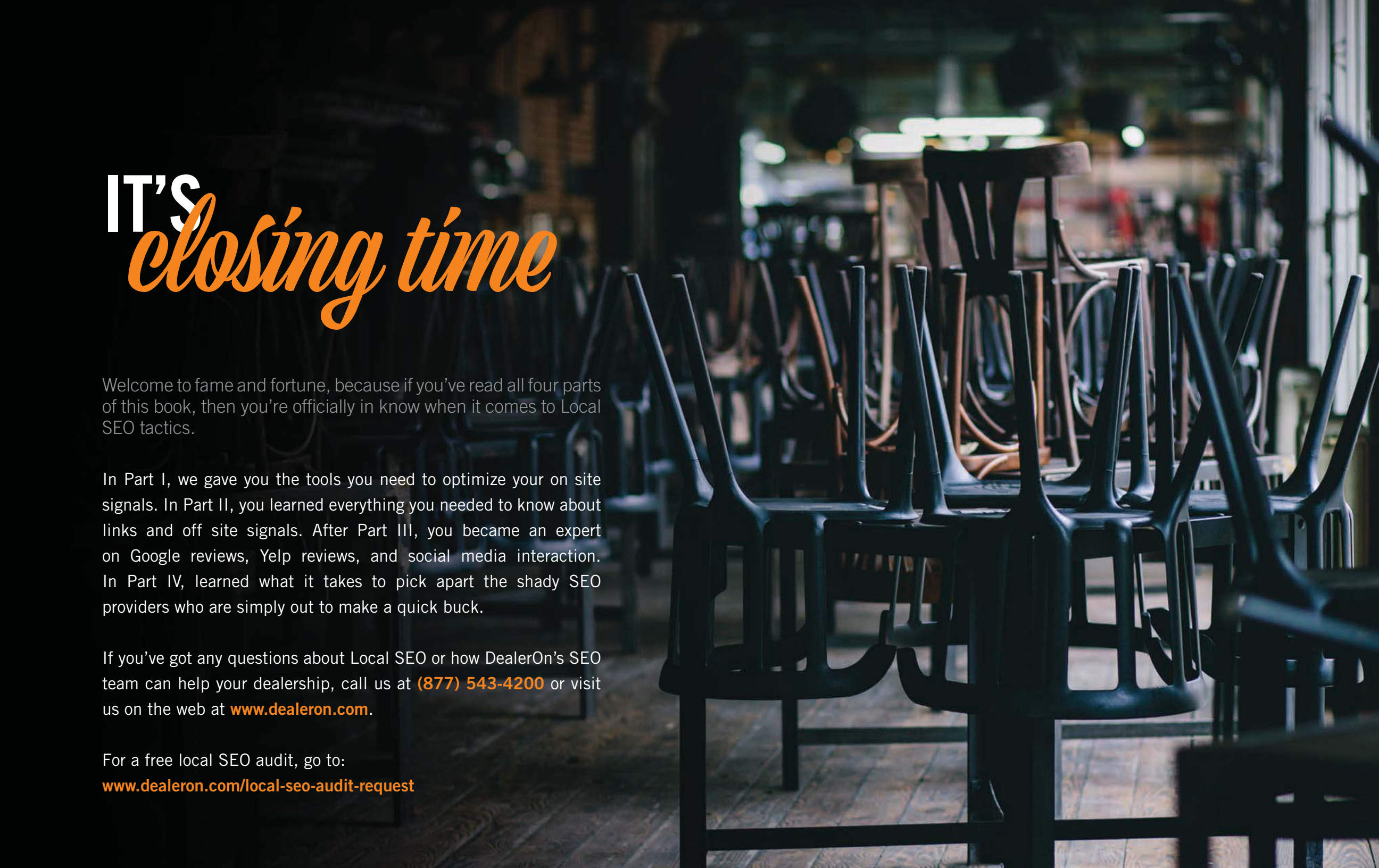


avoid
CHEAP SEO!

Much like high-end cars and quality tools, the good stuff ain't cheap. There's a reason expensive things cost more than the bargain brands. It's the same with your SEO provider.

You've read our book, right? By this point, you know how much expertise and effort goes into SEO. There are no automated processes for quality SEO, and a set-it-and-forget-it method simply won't do. You need real people doing real work on your site every month, and that costs money.

It's impossible to get even decent SEO for less than \$2,000-\$2,500 per month, and most providers with a higher level of expertise that can provide consistent results will charge even more.



IT'S *closing time*

Welcome to fame and fortune, because if you've read all four parts of this book, then you're officially in know when it comes to Local SEO tactics.

In Part I, we gave you the tools you need to optimize your on site signals. In Part II, you learned everything you needed to know about links and off site signals. After Part III, you became an expert on Google reviews, Yelp reviews, and social media interaction. In Part IV, learned what it takes to pick apart the shady SEO providers who are simply out to make a quick buck.

If you've got any questions about Local SEO or how DealerOn's SEO team can help your dealership, call us at **(877) 543-4200** or visit us on the web at **www.dealeron.com**.

For a free local SEO audit, go to:
www.dealeron.com/local-seo-audit-request

notes

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