

April 2024



Shift Into Spring

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THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER



CMDA Members, Sponsors and Partners,

I open this newsletter by saying that I am definitely excited about what this year will continue to bring all of us. As Spring brings in new excitement about the weather and days ahead, I am filled with that same new excitement about what we continue to do within the automotive retail space.

With April being Celebrate Diversity Month, I think we should all take time to think about the contributions that we make to our great industry as a diverse group of dealers and service providers.

The diversity that we bring to the table, allows for our partners, our dealerships and our communities to be served with an optimal level of service and thought as we consider all of those around us.

As we look to maintain our humble success in this automotive retail world, we will need that diversity of thought, that diversity of team members and that diversity of our professional, and even social, networks to continue to move over and around hurdles that are and will be out there to trip us up.

I am proud to say that the CMDA is a tool that you have in your diversity toolkit to assist in your continued success!

Sincerely,

Gene Johnson

Gene Johnson



Members and Stakeholders of the Chrysler Minority Dealers Association,

Happy Spring to all of you. This is my favorite time of year! Old Man Winter is going back into his cave and the beautiful days of Summer are just around the corner. And...they are playing baseball again!

So while we are beginning a new season with the weather as well as within the sports realm, we are continuing with the season of challenges and changes that remain in our midst in the automotive industry and as advocates for ethnic minorities in our space.

We are seeing organizational changes within our OEM partner Stellantis that will have a material impact on our dealers and membership. We are seeing changes in our business environments as we deal with rising interest rates and rising inventory levels and costs, to name of few. And we will definitely be seeing changes over the next coming months, that will play out on the political landscape as we ready ourselves for our federal, state and local elections.

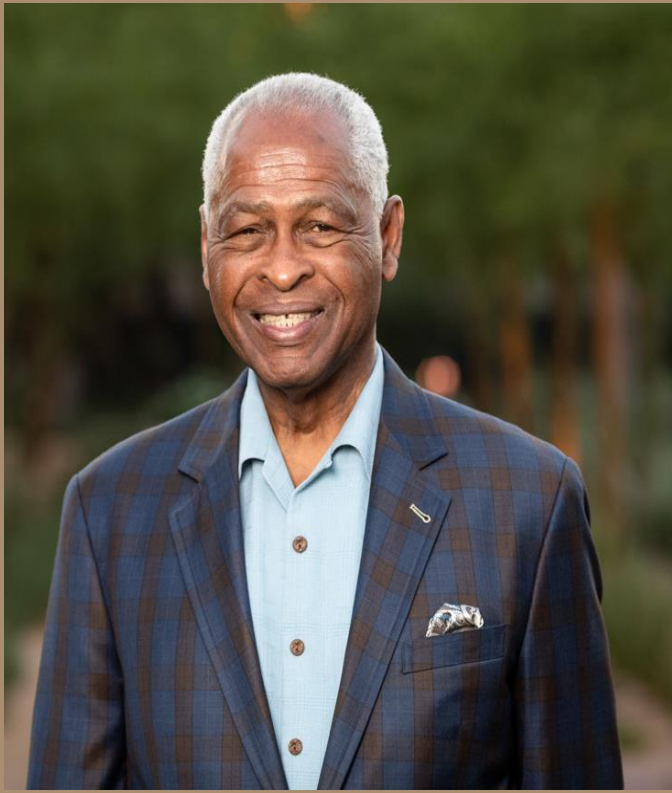
However, with all of these ever-existing shifts and transformations out there, there remains a constant on our landscape. That constant is this Association. This Association remains as a vehicle for our members to face these headwinds. This Association remains as a partner to assist in the brokering of fruitful relationships for our members and our partners. This Association remains as a symbol of the success that diversity can bring to everything that it touches.

Many say that the only constant is change. Well, your Association is another one. We will always be here to support you. That is and always will be unchanging.

Mitch Mitchell
Mitch Mitchell
CMDA Executive Director
emitchell@chryslerminoritydealers.org

2024 – 2025 CMDA BOARD

Executive Board Members



President
Gene Johnson
Rainier Dodge (Olympia, WA)



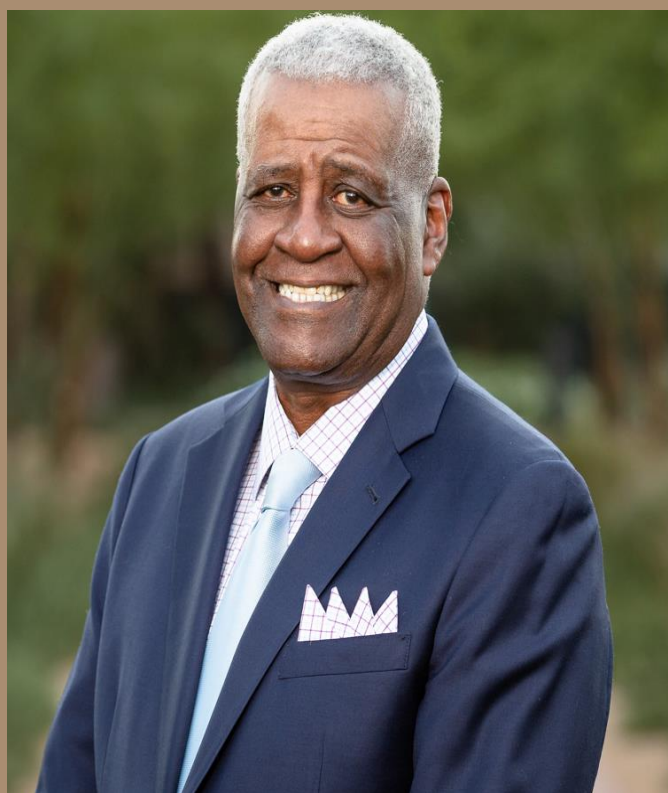
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2024 – 2025 CMDA BOARD

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Member At Large
Christa Billeaud
Acadiana CDJR (Lafayette, LA)



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Member At Large
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Member At Large
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St. Helens CDJR (Warren, OR)



Executive Director
Mitch Mitchell
CMDA Office (Troy, MI)

CMDA

CHRYSLER MINORITY DEALERS ASSOCIATION

SAVE THE DATE!!!

***2024 CMDA Summer Meeting
September 11th – September 13th
Ritz Carlton Hotel
St. Thomas, US Virgin Islands***

(More Details Coming Soon!!!)



THE RITZ-CARLTON

Become a CMDA Member



**Chrysler Minority Dealers
Association**

Driving Our Future



Being a Chrysler Minority Dealers Association Member has its benefits. If you are looking to become a part of this great organization, please contact Mitch Mitchell, the Executive Director, at the CMDA office at (248) 687-1088 or emitchell@chryslerminoritydealers.org for more information or completing a DAP-7 dealer application.

2024 MEMBERSHIP

BENEFITS



Members, please remember that our Association provides you with the following benefits:

- Interaction with leading OEM, vendor and other stakeholder executives and influencers*
- A collective voice within the automotive industry and with automotive OEM's and executives.*
- A viable way to network, interact and mentor with dealers who share similar experiences.*
- Participation in business and educational meetings that promote ethnic minority dealers and their businesses*
- The opportunity to contribute to the growth and development of ethnic minority dealer candidates*
- The opportunity to be a direct contributor in strengthening our partnership with Stellantis*

DEALERS HELPING DEALERS!!! WE NEED YOU!!!

2024 MEMBERSHIP

BENEFITS (FINANCIAL)



Additionally, CMDA members are entitled to the following financial benefits as well:

NADA Dealer Academy Minority Candidate Support – (\$32,000)

Total funding (tuition, lodging, travel) for ten (10) ethnic minority candidates from CMDA dealerships to attend the NADA Dealer Academy. This will assist in the development of the next generation of minority dealers in the automotive industry.

Training Support – (\$10,000)

- A \$10,000 reimbursement for training and operational support activities, including 20 Group activities, Stellantis' Performance Institute training expenses and Degrees@Work Program.

CMDA Member Meetings Participation Incentive – (\$8,000) **Increased For 2024****

- Annual attendance incentive of \$4,000 for attending the CMDA Annual Meeting and Summer Meeting. A total possible incentive of \$8,000.

Dealer Association Membership / Conference Attendance – (\$2,000)

An annual reimbursement of up to \$2,000 for dealer association(s) membership (i.e. NAMAD, NADA, state dealer association, etc....) and/or expense for registering/attending a Dealer Conference (i.e. NAMAD conference, NADA convention, etc....).

Charitable Event / Donation Support – (\$2,000)

- An annual \$2,000 reimbursement to assist CMDA members with their local charitable endeavors and emphasize the importance of community support.

NAMAD Membership Dues Payment – (\$500)

- Membership and payment of annual dues in the National Association for Minority Automobile Dealers (NAMAD). ***This is paid for members directly CMDA.***

Preferred Pricing – CMDA Membership

- Financial and operational benefits and preferred pricing from our sponsors

Fine Tuning Fixed Ops.



As fixed operations continue to evolve, Ally offers their expertise to help dealers maximize potential and profits. Two of Ally's leading Fixed Operations experts, **Jim Stewart, National Fixed Operations Consulting & Training Manager** and **Robert Brooks, National Fixed Operations Product Manager** have their pulse on the industry and offer key insights on the areas of focus that can help dealers drive results.

With over 40 years of combined experience working in dealerships, both Jim and Robert agree that the biggest change they've seen in the industry is longer maintenance intervals and technology advancements. According to Stewart, "with oil change and other kinds of maintenance intervals being much longer, and technology allowing vehicles to be updated remotely, it changes the ability for the fixed operations departments to see their customers as often to make recommendations and offer additional services."

To help keep pace with evolution, Ally has assembled a team of eleven experts that form its fixed operations consulting team that fields continual, tough questions from dealerships and believe that regular maintenance is essential to keeping fixed operations running smoothly – just like vehicles entering the service drive.

One of Ally's specialties in the fixed operations arena is to train service advisors and dealership professionals who interact with customers more than anyone at the store according to both Stewart and Brooks. "Advisors don't need to know as much about the cars, but more importantly, how to take care of customers and make them feel like the most important person in the dealership. Exceptional customer service is the building block for everything and the cornerstone of our training" says Brooks.

We understand that fixed operations training is not one-size-fits-all. According to Brooks, "one of the things about our consulting program – and we did this intentionally when we built the program – is that we adjust what we do to meet the dealer's needs. Each dealer is its own unique entity." While what we teach is 'best practices,' every time we visit a store, we learn and take something away with us. "If we see an opportunity to implement something successful that we learned somewhere else, we can make those recommendations and help dealers create a process" says Brooks.

To help dealers get started, dealers can connect with Ally's Fixed Operations Consulting by:

Website: allyfixedops.com

Toll freephone number/voicemail: 1-(833) 304-2559

Email: fixedops@ally.com

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Meet your 2024 CMDA Future Dealers Training Program candidates

Chrysler Capital and Santander Consumer USA are committed to our industry and helping minority dealers prosper.

Part of that commitment is our partnership with the CMDA and contributing to the next generation of minority leadership. Together, we are implementing programs to foster career opportunities and develop additional dealer principal candidates within the minority community.

We are both honored and excited to continue the CMDA Future Dealers Training Program, a collaboration of the CMDA, Santander's Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and Chrysler Capital, with another talented group of individuals. The formal, 12-month, in-person program, put into action through the NADA Dealer Academy, includes classes, training exercises and experiences that would otherwise take years to acquire via regular, day-to-day dealership operations.

This opportunity provides each candidate the chance to dig in

and learn not only the business and operational sides of running a dealership but also the lending side. By partnering with Chrysler Capital and incorporating financial services into their overall training strategy, the CMDA Future Dealers candidates will complete the program with the tools they need to set themselves up for future success as a dealer principal.

Without further ado, we are excited to announce the third group of candidates for the CMDA Future Dealers Training Program.



Allow us to introduce ... **Alexander Billeaud**

"My grandfather was a Cuban immigrant who found himself working in the car business and eventually found himself as an owner-operator of multiple dealerships during his career," says Alexander. "He created a business and a life for our family that we otherwise wouldn't have been able to dream of."

Alexander's desire to nurture this legacy, coupled with his own love of cars, led him directly to the automotive industry after college.

Currently a customer relations manager, his most memorable experience to date has been the opportunity to join a meeting with a group of dealers in which he was able to hear for himself how different people act upon and react to specific issues within their stores and markets.

With the CMDA Future Dealers Training Program now before him, he's most looking forward to expanding his knowledge and learning how to run a store with the long-term aim of expanding the auto group beyond expectations.



Featuring ... **David L. Ellis**

A veteran of the industry, David's route to dealership life started almost by chance 41 years ago. Getting ready to marry at the age of 18, he was told that being the department manager at a Kmart store wasn't going to pay the bills.

"My dad had been trying to sell cars but was really bad, but he had a cool car to drive, so I decided to give that a chance," he recalls. And so began a decades-long career - 31 years aligned with Stellantis - in which he became a dealership owner six years ago.

With many promotions and deals behind him, David is now seeking to grow further, make valuable connections, "and find out what else I really don't know."

One of the industry areas that may be top of mind is acquiring dealership personnel and in particular qualified technicians, which he believes is a significant challenge for dealers today.



Now presenting ... **Shawn Gill**

University of California graduate Shawn is a continual learner who is hugely excited to be a part of the Future Dealers Program and the opportunities it offers to add to his knowledge.

Having started out washing cars during childhood, Shawn worked in the automotive business for three years during college summer breaks and is now a chief compliance officer, eight months into the job, with big ambitions for the future.

"The education I am receiving is building my skillset and is exactly what I need not just to maintain the store, but to grow and build it. I really am excited more than I have ever been."

Alongside the chance to learn, the ability to meet others within the industry is a highlight for Shawn and through just one academy class, he has forged relationships with his classmates and CMDA dealers that he knows will last a lifetime.



Starring ... **Antonio Jimenez**

Shortly before Antonio's high school graduation, his father passed away and the teenager found himself with a new role as the young man of the house. While Antonio had considered going to college and following in the footsteps of his father, aunts and uncles as a doctor or lawyer, he felt a responsibility to quickly provide for the family and was sold on the idea of becoming a "car guy" by a cousin who was already in the business.

Twenty years and many memorable experiences later, a standout is turning

around a struggling dealership for another auto manufacturer by improving not only sales but how the community viewed the store.

Having worked for a Stellantis dealership for the past six years, the executive manager is now keen to walk through the gateway to enhanced leadership skills, and much more, made available by his place on the Future Dealers Program.

"The education I am receiving is building my skillset and is exactly what I need not just to maintain the store, but to grow and build it." - Shawn Gill



Turning the spotlight on ... **Feliciano Naron Jr.**

Feliciano, known as "JayR," was working for Ernst and Young as an auditor when he discovered a job opportunity to become a chief finance officer/controller at a dealership. Following his passion for cars, he applied and was delighted to be offered the role, and grateful for the trust placed in him by the dealership owners.

Three years into the auto industry, being able to take part in the NADA Dealer Academy through the CMDA program is making a big impact on him. JayR is

particularly enjoying the collaborative atmosphere where those in the academy can come together to share experiences and help each other succeed in the industry.

With a background in finance and accountancy, he is looking to build a broader auto knowledge going forward. "Having focused mostly on the finance side, the program will sure help me understand more the industry and learn the dealership business as a whole," he says.



Starring ... **Jason Olesnavage**

Jason began his automotive journey straight out of college when he was selected to take part in a general manager training program, and his first general manager position is firmly placed in his memory. Although he says that he was fortunate to have the chance to run a dealership as a 25-year-old, and it had a positive impact on his career, it was also a stressful experience.

Today, Jason is a director with 14 years in the auto world under his belt and appreciates the new horizons that the CMDA and NADA Dealer Academy are opening for him.

"I've found most of the education in the automotive industry is on-site 'trial by fire,' so the opportunity to work with the NADA academy on the fundamentals of a well-run dealership is very exciting," he comments.

These new skills and expertise will likely support him as, like other future dealership principals, he negotiates industry challenges such as attracting and retaining talent, changing customer expectations and electric vehicle (EV) adoption.



Now presenting ... **Kareem Radwan**

California-based Kareem's family was in the business of selling preowned vehicles and he began his own automotive trajectory when he stepped into the industry 24 years ago. He has been a dealer principal for no less than 16 years, three of which have been at a Stellantis dealership, and the transformation from being a preowned vehicle dealer to becoming a new car dealer has been a major moment in his career.

He takes his place on the CMDA Future Dealers Training Program with his eyes

on growth and gaining expertise to help with managing multiple locations at the same time.

With his thoughts on the industry echoing those of others within the program, he believes the greatest hurdles for dealers to overcome are staffing issues and the movement within the industry toward EVs.

“... the opportunity to work with the NADA academy on the fundamentals of a well-run dealership is very exciting.” - Jason Olesnavage



Featuring ... **Leandro M. Rodriguez**

Leandro is another program participant for whom vehicles run in the family, and it was through his father that he was introduced to the industry 30 years ago.

With much experience to look back on, Argentinian-born Leandro feels that the most memorable and rewarding parts have been achieving many of his life goals as well as watching colleagues who work both with and for him go on to accomplish their goals, too.

Teaming up with his cohorts at the CMDA Future Dealers Program this year, the general manager is relishing a new journey in which he can learn, grow professionally and build new relationships with people who are facing similar dealer challenges.

“Navigating all of the challenges that come with working with the public and staying ahead of the curve are areas that will ultimately define the dealers of tomorrow, especially the dealers who aren’t part of large groups,” says Leandro.



Turning the spotlight on ... **Jason Trujillo**

Jason’s interest in an automotive career was sparked when he became aware of the profitability of the industry through friends and family.

Starting within sales, he progressed through the dealership ranks, and, currently holding the position of general sales manager and used car director, he enjoys the chance to help others become industry leaders.

Jason has accumulated more than 25 years of experience in the automotive world and

sees the EV movement as the biggest area for dealerships to address in the years to come. As someone who lives in a rural area that’s currently without the infrastructure to support electric vehicles, he’s mindful of the need to adapt to the growing industry trend.

As part of the Future Dealers Training Program, he’ll no doubt be able to use his learnings to better approach this issue while he sets his sights on growth, expansion and dealership ownership in the future.

A Pioneering Program

The CMDA Future Dealers Training Program was created to invest in both the future and legacy of minority-owned dealerships by preparing 50 minority leaders, over a five-year period, to become dealer principals. This groundbreaking program directly addresses a concern expressed by several automotive OEMs regarding a lack of viable minority candidates with the interest, training and working knowledge to become new dealer principals in the coming years.

We are thrilled to be part of this one-of-a-kind program and look forward to its long-term success.

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Completing Your OEM Dealer Application

IT'S BETTER TO COMPLETE YOUR OEM DEALER AGREEMENT EARLY

As you develop your manufacturer relationship one of the first things you will want to do is to complete a Dealer Agreement Application. It is better to take a few minutes to complete the application before you have negotiated a purchase agreement. Like buying a home, you are in a stronger position if you can tell a prospective seller that you have already applied with XYZ OEM and have been pre-approved.

First, you will need to contact the OEM and ask if you could complete an application before you start searching for a dealership to purchase. You will want to contact your OEM's National Dealer Diversity Manager and/or the regional Dealer Network Manager and request an application.

Submitting a typed pdf application is more professional than a handwritten application. When you are developing your relationship with your OEM, little things like typing an application matter. Therefore, once you receive the application, print off a working copy and grab a pencil. I always recommend using a working copy to handwrite the application first. Then, when your working copy is complete, transcribe the information to a final digital version on your desktop.

Let us look at the different sections inside an OEM application. I will be reviewing the Stellantis application. Other OEMs will ask for similar information.

THE FOUR COMPONENTS OF YOUR OEM DEALER AGREEMENT

PART 1: PERSONAL INFORMATION

The first component is for basic personal information, such as your legal name, address, and social security number. Complete every section. If a section of the application does not apply to you, list N/A instead of leaving it blank. Please make sure this information is correct because the OEM will check.

The OEM will ask about your education. Where did you go to high school, college, or trade school? Did you graduate, and what did you study? If you did not graduate, do not be afraid to tell the OEM. Your OEM just wants to know about your background. I know many multi-millionaire dealer principals that did not graduate from college. The great thing about the auto industry is that your life experience and work experience may be more valuable than your education level.

- *Exploring the four components of your application*
 - *Personal Information*
 - *References*
 - *Finances*
 - *Background*
- *Complete your OEM dealer agreement early*
- *Pay attention to little details*

Your OEM will also want to know about your work and business experience. Be honest and do not inflate this information. Remember to fill in all the boxes. Again, use N/A if a section does not apply.

PART 2: REFERENCES

In the situation of a Stellantis dealer application the second component asks for three personal and three financial references. Think about who knows you best in your business life and ask these individuals if you can use them for a reference. Be sure to ask these individuals, as they may be contacted during your background check.

The application asks if you have ever been bonded, if yes, please complete this information. If you have never been bonded, list no and N/A in the bonding information questions.

PART 3: PERSONAL FINANCES

The segment of the dealer application dives deep into your personal finances. Dealerships are expensive to purchase and capitalize. Your OEM wants to know how you plan to buy a dealership and where the money is coming from.

At the start of this section is a simple net worth form asking you to list your personal assets, personal liabilities, and net worth. You can use the net worth form on the application, or attach a net worth statement from your bank or CPA.

The next section asks for your source of funds. Where is the money to invest in a dealership coming from? Are any of these funds encumbered? What amount of the investment is coming from you personally? The personal investment question is an important one. OEMs like to see the dealer applicant personally invested. If you are borrowing a portion of the funds, list the loan details. Do not inflate the funds information. Later, when you submit an Asset Purchase Agreement, you will have to provide hard proof of this information.

PART 4: YOUR BACKGROUND

This last section of your dealer application asks several yes/no questions on your background. If you answer yes to any of these questions, please provide a statement explaining your answer on a separate page.

For example, you may be asked if a dealership that you worked at or managed was ever involved in an audit which resulted in a chargeback. For 99.9% of the applicants this answer is yes. If the audit was a routine sales/service audit you might answer the question this way, "During my time at XYZ dealership, we had routine sales and service audits, some involved minor chargebacks. No fraudulent activity was found, and corrective actions were taken." If the audit was more serious, provide an honest explanation. This information will come out in a background check, so it is better to be up front about all these responses.

INITIALING

Watch for requests to initial pages on the application. If the OEM asks for an initial at the bottom of a page and you skip this step, they may send the application back to you.

IF NEEDED, ASK FOR CLARIFICATION

If there are any potential application problems while completing your dealer application, pick up the phone and call your OEM contact. Do this before you submit the application, and before the issue comes up in a background check. Your OEM contact can guide you through how to address these issues.

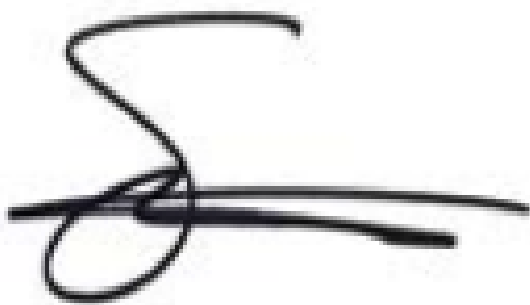
SIGN & DATE YOUR APPLICATION

Finally, do not forget to sign and date the typed copy of the application. I have had to send applications back over the years because the signature was left off.

Once you have completed a typed version of the application and any supporting statements, scan all your documents, and send them to your OEM contact. If you have a resume, I recommend sending this also. Your application package tells the OEM who they may be partnering with and gives details on your background.

Thanks for taking a few minutes to read this month's OEM Insider.

Good Selling!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'S. Corle', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Steve Corle

The Role of MCUs When Charging Station Infrastructure is Lacking

By Craig Johnston
VP, Product Management

Introduction: As the world accelerates towards a more sustainable future with the adoption of electric vehicles (EV), insufficient charging infrastructure has been a significant hurdle that slows widespread acceptance.

Many businesses are grappling with a scarcity of charging stations and insufficient resources to support their electrification efforts and ultimately their customers. This article explores the challenges posed by the lack of charging station infrastructure and proposes a creative solution: the utilization of mobile charging units (MCU).

Current State of Charging Infrastructure

Despite the growing deployment of EVs, commercial and fleet charging infrastructure has struggled to keep pace with the increasing demand. In both urban and rural areas, and even along highways, EV drivers often face the challenge of finding charging stations. This scarcity poses a considerable barrier, discouraging potential EV adopters who worry about running out of charge or being limited in how far they may travel without a readily available station.

Urban planners and policymakers face the complex task of balancing the need for charging infrastructure development with the often-limited electrical grid resources being accessible.

Traditional charging stations require significant investment, dependence on electrical utility providers, and time to install, leading to a slow expansion of the charging network.

The Role of MCUs

One promising solution to charging infrastructure challenges and the speed at which charging stations can be built lies in the deployment of an MCU.

Using our proprietary battery pack technology, ZEVx bridges the gap by providing a turn-key solution that offers on-demand mobile charging stations. Our MCUs can be strategically placed in locations, such as:

- Parking lots (shopping centers, airports, apartment complexes, etc.)
- Popular gathering spots
- Events where a sudden surge in electric vehicle users is anticipated
- Fleet depots and hub facilities lacking charging infrastructure

By strategically placing MCUs, EV drivers have access to a charging solution when and where they need it the most.

MCUs offer a flexible and convenient charging solution. This approach not only addresses the immediate need for charging infrastructure but also provides a scalable and adaptable solution that can evolve with changing demand patterns.

The Advantages of MCUs:

1. Rapid Deployment: MCUs can be quickly deployed to address immediate needs. This agility is especially beneficial during peak usage times or in response to unexpected needs.

2. Cost-Effective: Compared to the installation of traditional charging stations, mobile units are a more cost-effective solution. They require less upfront investment and can be moved to different locations as demand evolves, optimizing resource utilization.

3. Scalability: As the adoption of EVs continues to grow, the demand for charging infrastructure will also increase. MCUs provide a scalable solution that can be easily expanded to meet the evolving needs of the EV market.

4. Accessibility: MCUs enhance accessibility by reaching areas where fixed charging stations may be impractical, ensuring that a broader demographic can benefit from the increase in charging station locations.

5. Charging Speed: MCUs bring Level 3 DC-Fast Charging to sites that may not have the electrical requirements or property permits to supply a higher rate of charge to cycle vehicles efficiently.

Conclusion

While the lack of charging station infrastructure remains a challenge for EVs, the introduction of MCUs offers two promising solutions: addressing the immediate needs of EV owners and creating the foundation for a more comprehensive and adaptable charging network.



Connected Cars - Challenges and Opportunities



“Tech-forward vehicles bring new challenges for dealerships.”

Tony Wonderon
CEO, APCO Holdings

As vehicle technology becomes more and more sophisticated, challenges that stem from computers, complex electronics, and connectivity pose unique concerns. The learning curve and the risk increases along with it. Savvy dealers have a plan in place to educate staff and customers on emerging technology across their dealership, as well as look to their F&I providers to help them stay ahead of changing vehicle protection needs.

Tackle the learning curve

Just like it's hard to stay ahead of emerging personal technology, the amount of things to learn when you buy a tech-forward vehicle can be overwhelming. Dealers should have a training program in place to educate their staff on the models they sell and that training should flow down to the customer.

“To provide value and solidify the relationship with the customer, dealers are in a unique position to be an irreplaceable resource to buyers. Having a plan in place to make sure your staff can help customers understand their vehicle technology and risks can help dealers differentiate themselves and be perceived as a trusted authority,” says Corey Smith, Fixed Operations Training Manager for EasyCare.

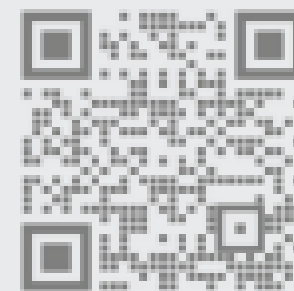
Offer forward-thinking protection

The need for F&I products to cover the risks of connected vehicles, electric vehicles (EVs), and whatever comes next is only going to increase. Look to your F&I product provider to stay ahead of the curve and changing consumer needs. Products like tech-only, EV-specific, and connected car-specific vehicle service contracts that cover more sophisticated technology components and include cyber-attack protection. And don't forget about GAP to protect in the event remote keyless entry is hacked and a thief is able to drive away with the car. Products that address technology risk should enhance the ownership experience and allay any fears the customers have about the vehicle they're purchasing.

As the connected-car market expands, dealers are uniquely positioned to be a resource for their customers to understand the technology and the risks, while being there for them with the protection products that suit emerging needs.

When it comes to F&I, the right partner is key

easycare.com/cmda



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SHOW YOU WHAT'S NEXT

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FIRST DEALERSHIP

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12-month commitment. Includes all NADA Professional Series classes and seminars. Excludes NADA Academy.

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10TH ANNUAL AUTOMOTIVE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

TRENDS STUDY

The Automotive Industry's
Most In-Depth & Longest-Running
Study of Its Kind | **2024**



INTRODUCTION

Rapid shifts in the consumer behavior of vehicle shoppers, buyers and service customers requires dealerships to deliver a seamless digital customer experience. DAS Technology's 10th annual trends study explores what sort of experiences consumers wish to have when they interact with a retail dealer in today's world.

The automotive landscape in 2023 grappled with challenges such as soaring interest rates, elevated vehicle prices, a historic auto strike between the United Auto Workers union and the Detroit Three automakers, and persistent supply chain disruptions affecting vehicle inventory. Electric vehicles played a notable role, with numerous automakers introducing new models.

Our 10th annual trends study delves into these trends and how they impact consumer preferences for an improved shopping experience. In addition, the study guides dealers on how they can streamline the car-buying journey. As more consumers express a desire to complete a significant portion of their vehicle purchase online, dealers must adapt to meet these evolving needs. Over the past 14 years, DAS Technology has forged close partnerships throughout the automotive industry while delivering an award-winning consumer data and experience platform that harnesses powerful technology solutions to enhance the customer journey.

We're pleased to present our milestone **10th Annual Automotive Customer Experience Trends Study** as a deep dive into what is shaping the modern automotive decision-making experience.

For Media Inquiries Please Contact
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DAStechnology.com



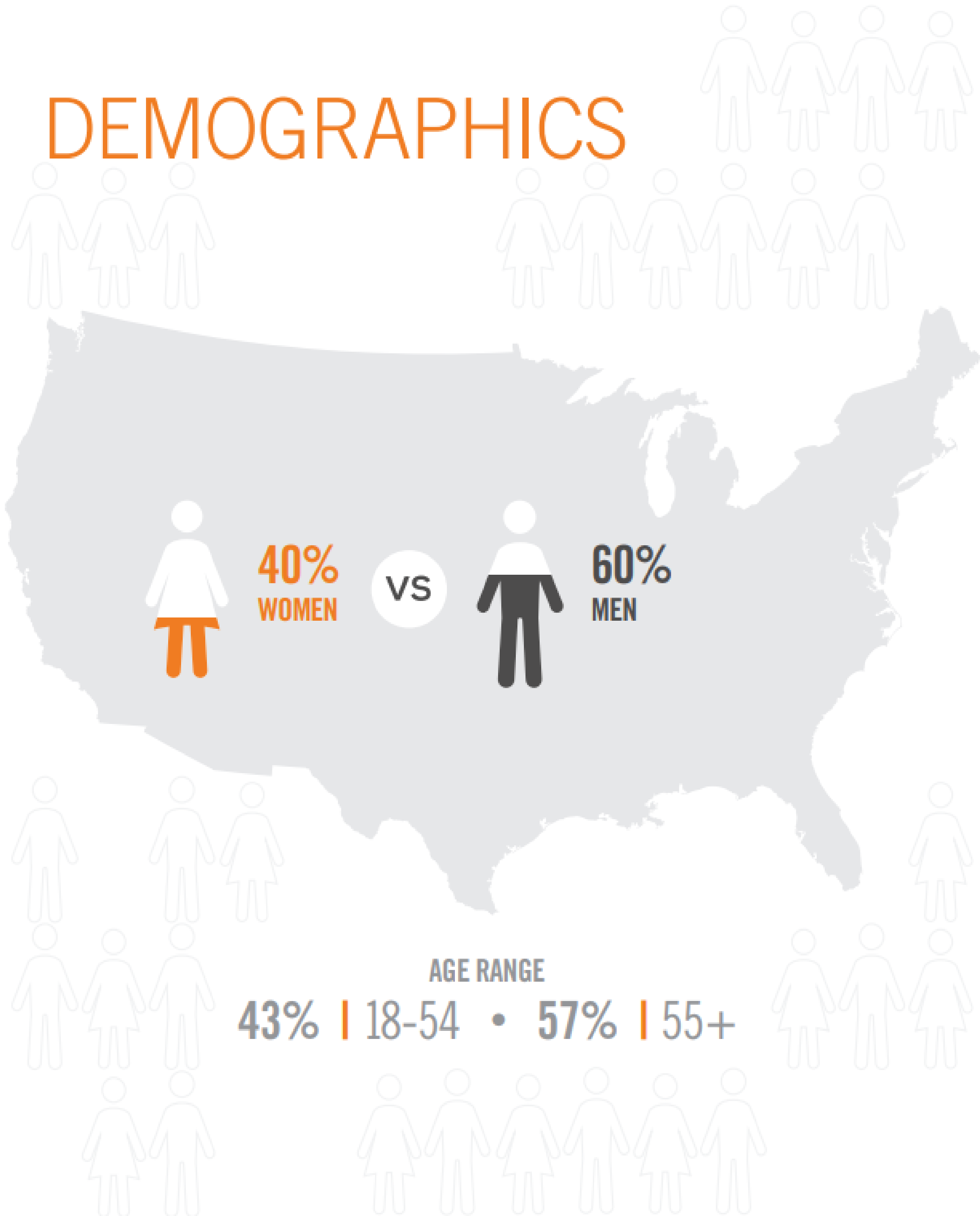
ABOUT THE STUDY

In its **10th Annual Automotive Customer Experience Trends Study**, DAS Technology researched the use of website chat, lead follow-up, dealership and service experiences, online reviews, and the influence of technology and AI on consumer decisions throughout the vehicle shopping, purchasing, and ownership lifecycle.

- 7,000 verified vehicle buyers and service customers surveyed.
- Survey was conducted second half of 2023 through January 2024.
- Men and women ages 18 to 75 were invited to participate.
- Representative of all vehicle makes and models, both foreign and domestic, including new and pre-owned.
- Responses represented from around the United States.
- Includes responses from all lead sources (online and in-person).

The results reveal insights that may challenge preconceptions in the industry.

DEMOGRAPHICS



ONLINE RESEARCH & INTERACTIONS

The digital landscape has changed dramatically over the past ten years as more social media platforms, search engines, third-party vehicle marketplaces, OEM websites, and dealer websites have popped up and consumers spend more time online.

RANK ORDER OF MOST POPULAR PLATFORMS INFLUENCING IN-MARKET CAR SHOPPERS:

- 1 ONLINE MARKETING ADS
- 2 SOCIAL MEDIA ADS & REVIEWS
- 3 EMAIL MARKETING
- 4 BROADCAST, CABLE, OR SATELLITE TV ADS
- 5 DIRECT MAIL
- 6 PRINT ADS IN NEWSPAPERS & MAGAZINES
- 7 STREAMING TV ADS

STREAMING
TV ADS NOW
5X MORE
EFFECTIVE*

A ROBUST ONLINE PRESENCE DRIVES
MORE SALES TO YOUR DEALERSHIP.

85%

of car shoppers
say social media
advertising is helpful
when shopping
for a car and

18%

say they make
purchase decisions
based on these
types of ads.



IMPORTANCE OF REVIEWS

Consumer reviews are vital to protect a dealership's reputation and build loyalty with consumers. Dealers should regularly monitor top social and review sites and engage with reviewers by promptly and professionally responding to all reviews, positive or negative.



95%

of car shoppers said dealership reviews impacted which dealership they visited when shopping for a vehicle.

Ten years ago, that number was only **69%**.



11%

report they did not visit a dealership they saw online because the dealer had terrible online reviews.

Yet only **41%** of vehicle buyers report their dealership asked them to leave a review.



84%

of vehicle shoppers say review sites like Google are the most helpful in selecting their dealership.



41%

say they used review sites to decide where to buy their vehicle.

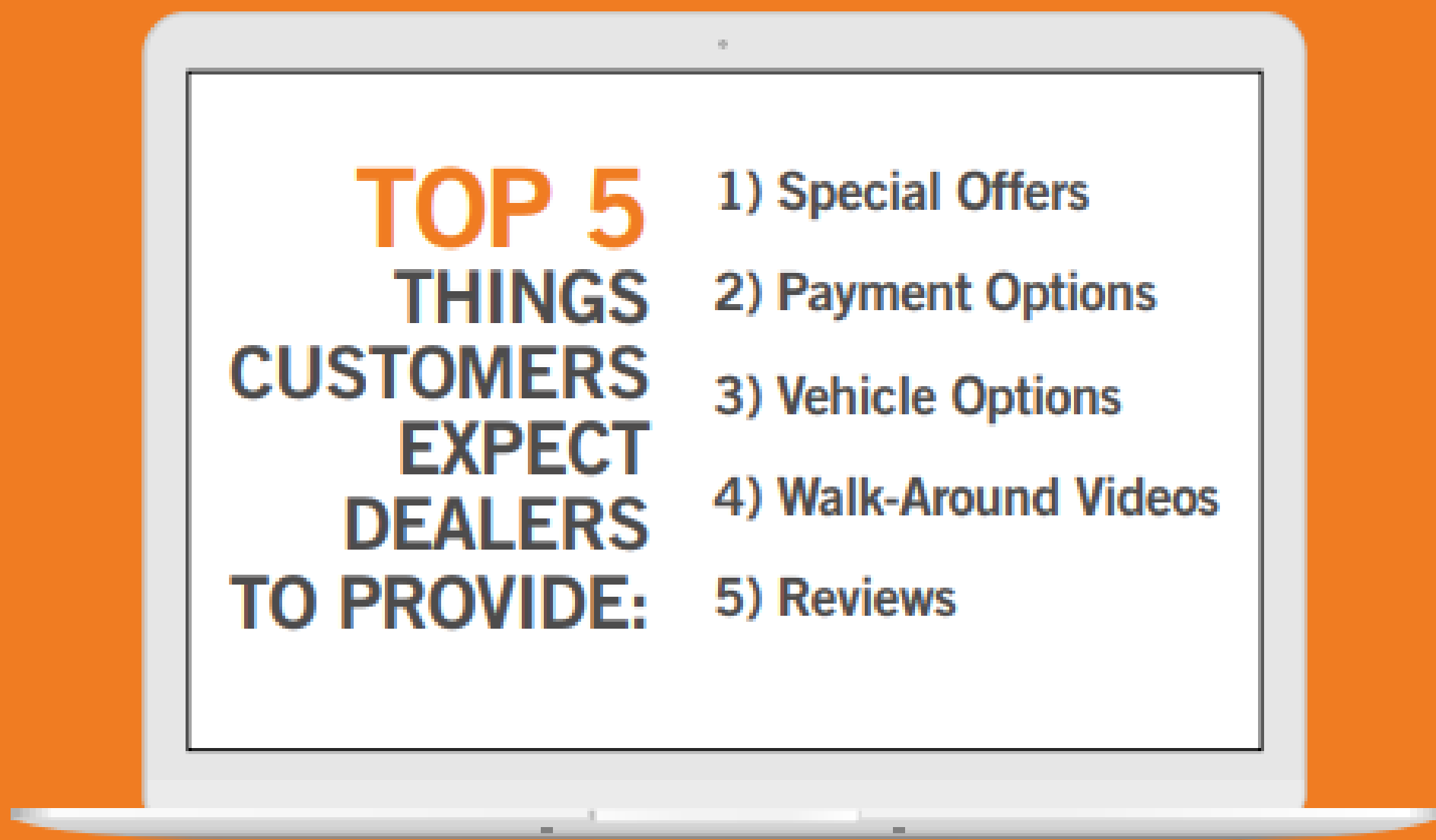


HAPPY CUSTOMERS ARE MORE LIKELY TO LEAVE POSITIVE REVIEWS, SO DON'T HESITATE TO ASK THEM TO SHARE THEIR EXPERIENCES.

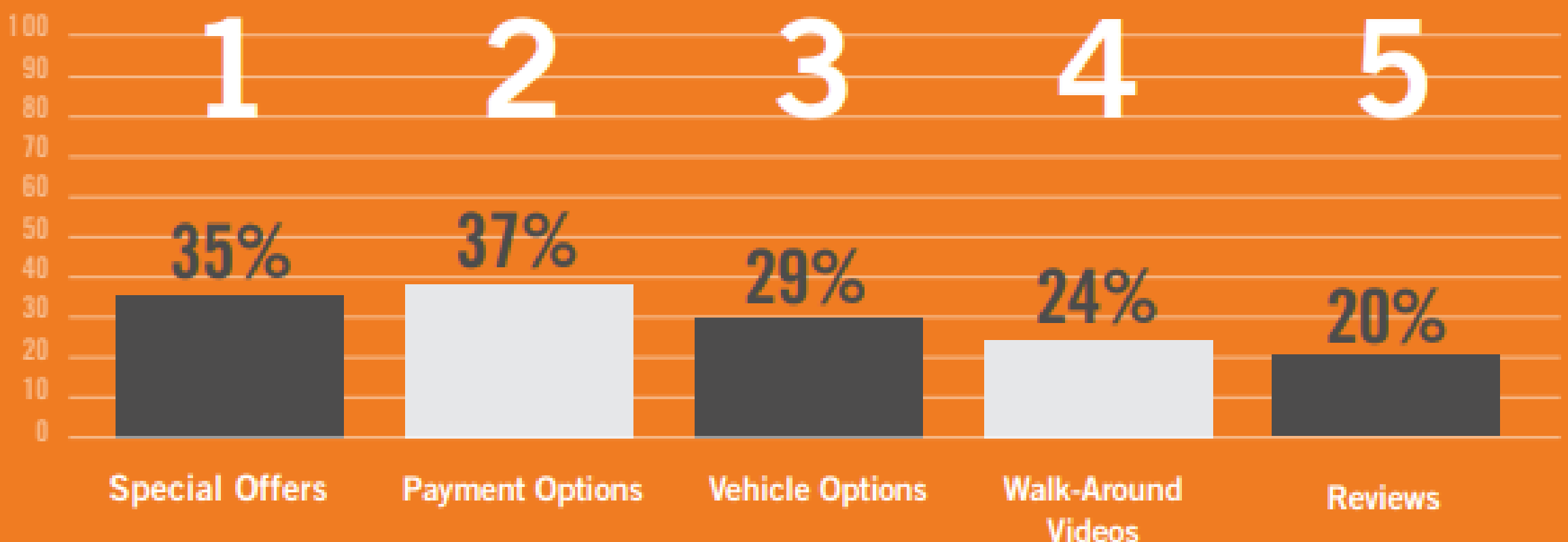
DEALER RESPONSE



Consumers expect swift, 24/7 responses to their questions, and if a dealership falls short, they're likely to turn to a competitor for faster answers. Our research indicates a clear trend: dealerships are not meeting consumers' expectations regarding online responses.



DEALERS ARE FALLING SHORT OF PROVIDING INFORMATION THAT CONSUMERS EXPECT WHEN RESPONDING TO ONLINE INQUIRIES.



CONSUMERS WANT A GREAT EXPERIENCE



Ensuring a seamless customer experience is vital for dealerships who want to stay ahead of their competition. Every touchpoint in the customer journey must deliver excellence, from online interactions to in-store visits. The goal is to encourage repeat business and have customers share their positive experiences with friends and family, fostering lasting loyalty.



NEW VEHICLE PRE-ORDER SURGE TAKES CENTER STAGE

Pre-orders became more of the norm in 2023 after inventory issues plagued dealerships and more consumers began to customize their preferred vehicle options. Dealers must leverage this as an opportunity to communicate to customers awaiting pre-order delivery about servicing and trading-in their existing vehicle.

OF THOSE WHO PRE-ORDERED A VEHICLE,

65% had irregular contact with their dealership while awaiting delivery.

OF THOSE,

62% reported this irregular contact negatively affected their purchase satisfaction.

82% of consumers waited more than 20 weeks after pre-ordering their new vehicle, making the need for regular dealership contact vital.



IMPROVE THE EXPERIENCE OF CUSTOMERS WHO PRE-ORDER BY KEEPING YOUR CUSTOMERS INFORMED. ENGAGE AND COMMUNICATE WITH YOUR CUSTOMERS ABOUT SERVICE AND TRADE-IN OFFERS WHILE THEY WAIT!

ELECTRIC VEHICLES TREND

Demand for EVs is increasing slightly as automakers launch more affordable options. Our study found that many consumers didn't originally intend to purchase an EV, and only made the decision after seeing the vehicle in a dealer's inventory. This tells us that dealers must leverage lead response technology to promote their EV inventory.

50% stated what changed their mind was the dealership had good deals on an EV in stock.

31% of EV owners report that owning an all-electric vehicle costs less than expected.

BE MORE CLEAR ABOUT THE VALUE AND INCENTIVES OF EV OWNERSHIP.

Dealers who leverage communicating to customers about EVs in inventory and the affordability of ownership are able to sell **18%** more EVs to consumers not originally in the market to purchase an EV.

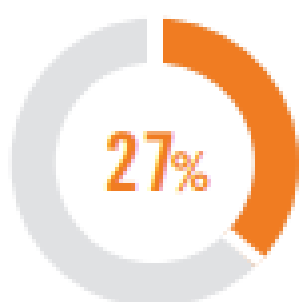
80%

OF EV OWNERS CHARGE THEIR VEHICLES AT HOME ONLY.

ONLY **25%**

OF NON-EV OWNERS REPORT RANGE ANXIETY AS A REASON THEY DIDN'T PURCHASE AN EV.

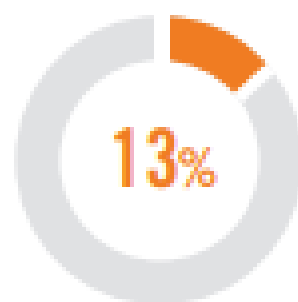
REASONS WHY CONSUMERS CHOSE TO PURCHASE AN EV.



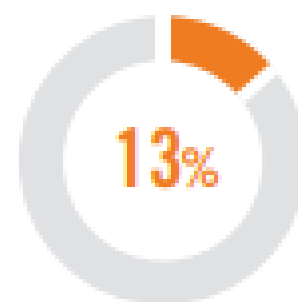
SPECIFIC VEHICLE BECAME AVAILABLE



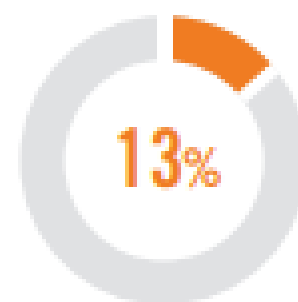
TECHNOLOGY IN THE VEHICLE



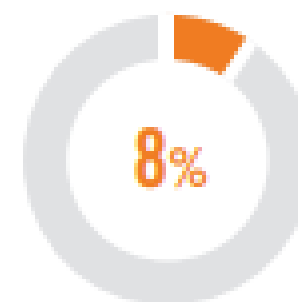
DEAL ON INTERESTED VEHICLE



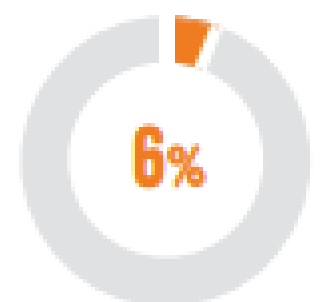
TAX & REGISTRATION SAVINGS



SPECIFIC VEHICLE BECAME AFFORDABLE



GAS PRICE SAVINGS



OTHER

5

THE GOAL IS TO ATTRACT, CONVERT, AND RETAIN MORE CUSTOMERS.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1

Harness the influence of online review sites. Recognize their impact on consumer behavior. Make a lasting first impression by maintaining fully updated online profiles. Demonstrate your commitment to positive customer experiences by actively curating reviews from satisfied customers.

2

Integrate AI-powered technology responsibly. Enhance your website with AI-powered live chat, ensuring vigilant monitoring for a positive customer experience. Employ AI-powered lead response technology to proactively engage prospects with valuable information, encompassing alternative vehicle options in inventory, exclusive offers, and alternative payment options. Ensure the consumer experience is seamless.

3

Leverage DMS and CRM data for effective customer outreach. Utilize dealership management system (DMS) and customer relationship management (CRM) data for strategic outreach to target the right customers with the right message at the right time. Establish a systematic approach to analyzing customer data to unlock hidden revenue opportunities.

4

Elevate the customer journey through enhanced online interactions. Boost your dealership's visibility through targeted online and streaming ads, active social media engagement, positive online reviews, and personalized custom videos.

5

Amplify your marketing strategy to reach new heights. Enhance your approach by maintaining an up-to-date Google Business Profile. Highlight special offers, showcase additional dealership photos, and notify consumers about pre-orders and newly available inventory. Cultivate loyalty and keep your consumer base informed to ensure they stay connected with your dealership.



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Driving Our Future