

Subject: Marketing Solutions  
Title: How to Describe Vehicles and Influence Sales  
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If you're an auto dealer, your world is made up of inventory. New vehicles, used vehicles, certified pre-owned. Cars, trucks, SUVs and whatever else is coming down the pike are marketed, sold, bought, traded, financed, serviced, customized, and even washed. Inventory is everything. Without it, you wouldn't be in the auto business.

The challenge is, you don't just have inventory, you have an investment and, like any investment, it must be managed successfully.

Each dealership has its own method of recording and measuring what happens to a vehicle. What's often missing from their inventory management process, however, is a consistent and complete description of each vehicle. This standard description, when available, follows the vehicle from initial advertising through financing to remarketing.

In my role as president of a data company, I've had an opportunity to talk with many dealers. I found that the most successful dealerships follow these five tips when describing inventory:

*Tip 1: Accurately and Fully Describe Your Vehicles*

Accurate and consistent vehicle descriptions, starting with your DMS and used throughout your organization, help ensure your information meets legal requirements. Plus, when data is "normalized" and described in common search terms, it is easier for online customers, as well as search engines, to find matches in your inventory.

*Tip 2: Post Your Inventory Online – Everywhere*

The evidence is compelling. More than 5% of all Web searches are involved in the act of researching and purchasing vehicles. Plus, 90% of Internet auto shoppers search for vehicle information before setting foot in a showroom. And just over 70% of those expect to see inventory. It's easy, painless and cost-effective to advertise your inventory over the Internet in multiple locations. Do it.

*Tip 3: Make Sure Your Inventory is Current*

When you get new vehicles in, post them as quickly as you can. When a vehicle sells, remove it from your site. Timely postings of your inventory can lead to quicker sales. Stale listings can't. Since the average online shopper visits seven Web sites, the last thing you want to do is give shoppers a reason for leaving your online store.

*Tip 4: Include Vehicle Images and Shows*

More so than ever, we live in a visual age. When posting your inventory, remember to include vehicle images. Take your own photos, use stock images, hire a service or use third-party photos and multi-media shows. People expect pictures. And if they can see the color change or different views of the interior, you've brought them that much closer to the deal.

*Tip 5: Help Your Ups to Help Themselves*

The Internet has made us all more self-sufficient. Keep your ups in your store longer. Install a computer or kiosk in your showroom and equip it with configuration and inventory search software. Invite shoppers to find their own dream car in your inventory. Plus, make sure your own sales reps have access to the same vehicle information.

In many ways, your vehicle is in the details. And understanding how to best market those details can help you move more inventory.

Chrome Systems provides vehicle data, software and systems to the auto retail channel.