

BIT CONCEPTS

756 South 1st Street, Suite 200
Louisville, KY 40202
Phone: 502.587.5940
Fax: 502.587.5944

www.BIT-CONCEPTS.com

Website Tips to Boost Your Sales By Dennis McDonough

There was a movie released last year called *Masked and Anonymous*. It starred Bob Dylan as a singer who is released from prison to play a benefit concert being staged by an unscrupulous promoter played by John Goodman. While the subject matter of the movie had absolutely nothing to do with selling cars or providing service, its mysterious title just might reflect the way some car dealerships and other companies have been doing business on the Internet for years.

A few articles ago, we discussed the handful of major changes that were supposed to come about with the new Internet-based economy. The thinking ran something like this: “I can sell hundreds of turnip juicers a day just from one web site, use an online payment service to collect the cash, and hire someone to ship them for me. And if a customer has a problem, he can send me an e-mail about it. And I can do it all from this little room in my basement. No one has to know where I am or what my phone number is. I am safely anonymous.”

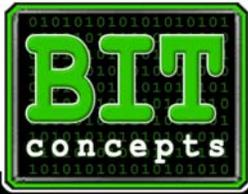
Now that thinking may work for some small home-based entrepreneurs, but, overall, it is *not* a good way to do business. Why? How can customers get questions answered if they want to speak to someone, or if they want to complain, or even offer praise? What if a customer wants to send you a personal letter? How can they do all that if you remain masked and anonymous on the Internet?

Theoretically, the product you sell can be searched for, selected, and bought over the Internet. But it still must be delivered by someone, and someone must also handle all the paperwork. In short, you are in a business that cannot use a web site to be masked and anonymous. Even if you are using your dealership web site to help drive sales, let customers search for cars, or set up service appointments, there are several “musts” for you to have on every page of your site:

Provide Your Physical Address – The idea that the Internet would all but exterminate the old “brick-and-mortar” places to do business was deflated years ago. If you are in business, you need a physical location where your customers can go, and you must tell them how to get there. In your case, customers need a place where they can shop for more cars if they wish, get all the paperwork handled, and obtain service. A P.O. box address will not do. You must give your dealership’s actual street address and provide driving directions on at least one of your web site pages.

Provide Your Telephone Numbers – How else can your customers contact you, your salespeople, or your service staff if they have questions about their vehicles? Keep in mind, too, that not all your customers feel comfortable in conducting business over the Internet. Many would prefer to hear a human voice on the other end of the phone. Include your local and 800 numbers. You should also include a fax number for those instances where a customer needs to send a document that they cannot email.

Fax and Phone Tip: Don’t include your phone number or fax number in text form on your website. Put these into graphics. Text will be picked up by spammers and you will receive more unwanted faxes and phone solicitations.



BIT CONCEPTS

756 South 1st Street, Suite 200
Louisville, KY 40202
Phone: 502.587.5940
Fax: 502.587.5944

www.BIT-CONCEPTS.com

Provide Your E-mail Address – A basic “wsinfo@” e-mail address is good for general inquiries about your dealership. However, if you provide it you must have someone check it regularly and respond to or forward items that come in. Keep in mind also that each one of your salespeople should have his or her own e-mail address, as should the people in F&I, customer relations, and parts and service. Of course, those addresses should be on their appropriate pages in your web site.

Two things to consider when you include e-mail addresses on your web site:

1. Don't use single word email addresses. Spammers who use dictionary broadcasts of emails will find you.
2. Don't use “Mailto” links in your website. Spammers who use spiders to find email addresses will gather these and send you extra messages you really don't want. Check with your web site design team for more information.

Undoubtedly, the Internet has added another dimension to doing business, but that does not mean the *essentials* of doing business have changed. Even with a presence on the Internet, you are still doing business with people who want your product and need to know how to reach and visit you. Having your basic business contact information displayed prominently on your web site shows your potential customers that you are open, available, and ready to serve.

And *that* can help you increase your sales.

Dennis McDonough is at eCarLots.com. Dennis can be contacted at 800- ext 202 or by email at dmcdon@autosuccess.biz.