

A close-up, shallow depth-of-field photograph of a person's hand touching a tablet screen. The hand is in the foreground, with fingers slightly spread. The background is blurred, showing more of the hand and the tablet. The overall tone is professional and tech-oriented.

YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA *TOOLKIT*

A practical guide to managing your
dealership's online reputation and spending
your time in social media efficiently

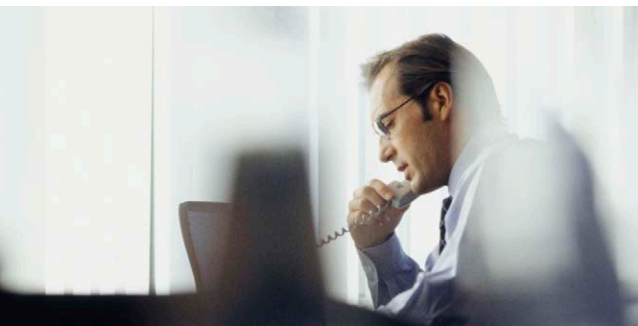


Go Further

We've designed a quick and easy introduction to help you manage your dealership's reputation online and engage with your virtual customers.

(Without having to get a computer science degree or add another hour to your day)

Table of Contents



- 2 Introduction
- 4 Meet your Social Media Dealer Coach

5

STEP 1 : Listen and respond

- 6 Use Google Alerts
- 8 Check review sites
- 10 Create your own social media sites

11

STEP 2 : Understand the types of people you'll encounter online

- 11 The perpetual window shopper
- 12 The chronic complainer
- 13 The abusive troll /
The skeptic
- 14 Virtual shopper /
Wheeler and dealer

15

STEP 3 : Keep these things in mind when responding on social media

17

STEP 4 : Make your community a pleasant place to be

18

STEP 5 : Manage your reputation via social media in just 20 minutes day

- 19 Activity checklist
- 20 Case study: how are dealerships integrating social media into daily operations

23

STEP 6 : Let's go further together

24

Appendices

- 24 Comment policy templates
- 26 Get to know the social media landscape
- 28 Get more traffic to your website and social media sites (search engine optimization)

31

Survey

Good news: You're not in this alone.

Meet your Social Media Dealer Coach



Meet Stacey Fowler, your Ford Social Media Dealer Coach and your ***trusted advisor.***

With years of experience helping organizations establish and manage a social media presence, she knows all the shortcuts to help you do this and do it well.

She'll be helping you incorporate social media into your dealership's daily operations, from training to tips to one-on-one coaching to a regular bulletin with pre-populated Facebook and Twitter posts.

Like every good professor, she is available to you whenever you need her, especially if you are facing a social media crisis. She wants you to know that you're welcome to contact her anytime!



Work: (416) 586-1941



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E-mail: s.fowler@sonicboom.com

STEP 1

LISTEN AND RESPOND

The Internet is abuzz with conversations. And you can be sure that some of them are about your dealership's sales and service departments. Wouldn't you like to know what people are saying about you?

In this step, we're going to help you join those conversations on those sites. With just a couple of clicks, you can listen in on what's being said about your business and then determine how to respond in a professional and helpful way.



Social media sites to consider

Check out our tipsheet that details some of the most popular social media sites on the Internet today.

You can also learn more about the [social media landscape](#) by logging on to InFord > P2P > search social media.

The screenshot shows the Google Alerts web interface in a browser window. The address bar displays 'http://www.google.com/alerts'. The page title is 'Google Alerts - Monitor the Web for interesting new content'. The Google logo is at the top left, and a 'Sign in' button is at the top right. Below the logo, the word 'Alerts' is written in red. The main content area is divided into two columns. The left column contains a 'Search query:' text input field, a 'Result type:' dropdown menu set to 'Everything', a 'How often:' dropdown menu set to 'Once a day', a 'How many:' dropdown menu set to 'Only the best results', and a 'Your email:' text input field. Below these fields are two buttons: 'CREATE ALERT!' in red and 'Manage your alerts' in grey. The right column has a heading 'Monitor the Web for interesting new content', followed by a paragraph explaining that Google Alerts are email updates of the latest relevant Google results. Below this is a paragraph asking the user to enter a search query and providing a preview of results. At the bottom of the right column is a bulleted list of uses: monitoring a developing news story, keeping current on a competitor or industry, getting the latest on a celebrity or event, and keeping tabs on favorite sports teams. At the bottom of the page, there is a footer with links: 'Manage your alerts - Google Alerts Help - Terms of Use - Privacy Policy - Google Home - © 2011 Google'.

Google Alerts - Monitor the Web for interesting new content

Google Alerts - Monitor the Web ...

+You Search Images Maps Play YouTube News Gmail Drive Calendar More -

Google

Sign in

Alerts

Search query:

Result type:

How often:

How many:

Your email:

Monitor the Web for interesting new content

Google Alerts are email updates of the latest relevant Google results (web, news, etc.) based on your queries.

Enter a search query you wish to monitor. You will see a preview of the type of results you'll receive. Some handy uses of Google Alerts include:

- monitoring a developing news story
- keeping current on a competitor or industry
- getting the latest on a celebrity or event
- keeping tabs on your favorite sports teams

Manage your alerts - Google Alerts Help - Terms of Use - Privacy Policy - Google Home - © 2011 Google

Use Google Alerts

The easiest way to monitor your business's online reputation is to set up a few key Google Alerts. You probably already know that Google is the most popular search engine on the Internet. When people want information about anything – from how to boil an egg to how to change the oil in their car – they “Google” it.

Google Alerts are emails that are sent to you whenever Google finds your dealership's name (and any other search queries you choose to put with it) in anything online, from news articles and blogs to review sites and all other web pages that Google can search.

Imagine how customers would search for your dealership and how they would search for a vehicle in general. You can also keep track of your local community, your industry and your competitors with Google Alerts. Here's what you would enter into the search query field:

MY DEALERSHIP / EMPLOYEES

"Pleasantville Ford" This will send you anything that mentions your dealership's entire name.

"Joe Smith" and **"Pleasantville Ford"** This will send you anything that mentions your dealership and your employee Joe Smith.

MY LOCAL COMMUNITY

"Pleasantville Ford" and **"Little Tykes Baseball"** You can use this for tracking mentions of your dealership in connection to your community involvement.

"news" and **"Pleasantville"** You can use this to track news about your city. You can also replace news with other keywords of interest to you.

MY COMPETITORS

"Ford" and **"Pleasantville"** This will send you anything that mentions Ford and the city you operate in. You can also do this for competitors brands. For example: "Honda" and "Pleasantville"

"new city" and **"Honda"** You can use this for surrounding cities.

MY INDUSTRY

you can use keywords to track the automotive industry such as:

"Ford" and **"Canada"**
"auto" and **"Canada"**
"auto" and **"technology"**



Check review sites

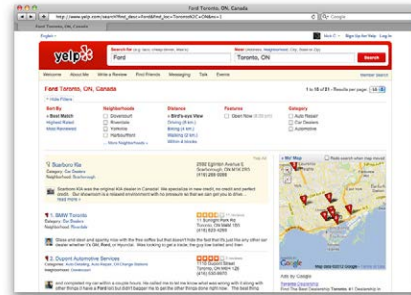
- 8 There are a number of websites where satisfied and not-so-satisfied customers often go to share their experiences with other consumers.

We recommend that you take a peek right now to see if your dealership has been reviewed negatively or positively.

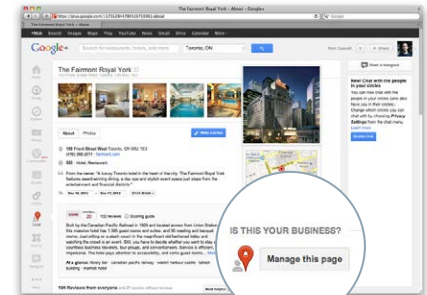
Here are some of the most popular review sites:

- Yelp
- Google + Business
- Yahoo! Local Listings
- Foursquare
- BBB (Better Business Bureau)

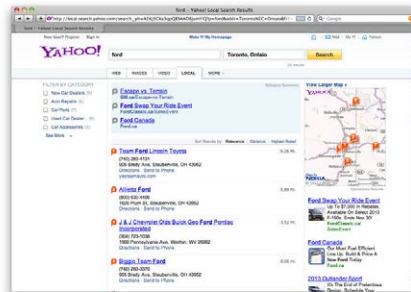
In most cases, you'll find an option to "claim" the page if it's your business. This gives you an opportunity to track and respond to reviews, add photographs and information about your dealership and even see how many people are visiting the page. It's a quick, easy and free way to advertise your business and demonstrate that your business listens to customers.



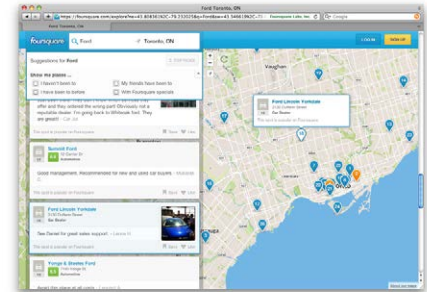
Yelp



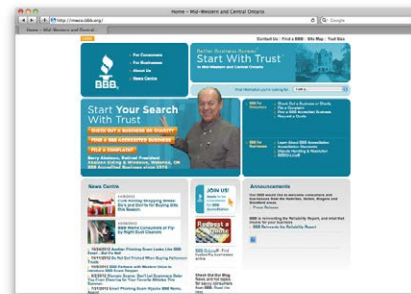
Google + Business



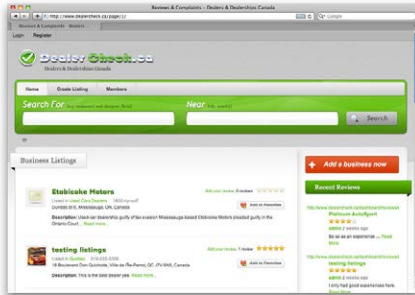
Yahoo! Local Listings



Foursquare



BBB (Better Business Bureau)



DealerRater.ca



DealerCheck.ca

Two other places where you'll find people talking about cars and dealerships in Canada are:

- DealerRater.ca
- DealerCheck.ca

9



Consider adding your business to each of these sites and check up on them regularly for anything that may need your response, be it a positive or a negative review.



Create your own social media sites

While this toolkit focuses on managing your reputation where customers are talking about you, we'd be remiss to not talk briefly about creating your own social media sites.



To make it more likely that customers will find your dealership when using search engines, check out our tips on [search engine optimization \(SEO\)](#) in the 'Appendices' section!

Your SocialMedia Dealer Coach recommends recommends Facebook as the best place for a dealership to get started:

- It is one of the most popular social networks.
- It has proven popular with Ford dealerships (63% of all Ford dealerships have a Facebook page).
- It is one of the best places for you to connect with former and prospective customers, fans of the Ford brand and members of your personal and professional network.

For those of you who already have social media sites for your dealerships, your Ford Social Media Dealer Coach offers one-to-one coaching to ensure your continued success.

P2P training on InFord has basic resources you should check out.

STEP 2

UNDERSTAND THE TYPES OF PEOPLE YOU'LL ENCOUNTER ONLINE

We don't need to tell you that it takes all kinds of people to make the world go 'round. When you work in customer service, you meet just about all of them.

The same is true online, particularly on social media sites like Facebook and Twitter, where anyone can grab the spotlight and have their say.

Knowing who you'll meet online and what they might want will help you decide how you'll respond to them.

11

The perpetual window shopper

You've got to love the guy who does all kinds of research and asks a million questions... only to decide that he needs to think about it. "But thanks for all your help!" he'll toss cheerfully over his shoulder on the way out.

Just like in the showroom, this is one potential customer who can take up a lot of time with a ton of questions (and he'll expect lightning-fast replies, of course) with no guarantee of a purchase.

How to deal with the perpetual window shopper on social media

Never ignore or turn this person away. Instead, respectfully answer any questions that can be easily addressed online in a timely manner. Refer lengthier or specific inquiries to an in-person visit. "We'd be glad to help you out if you drop by our showroom anytime," you might write, followed by your address, phone number and hours of business.



12

The chronic complainer

Some people just love to vent. They'll complain about everything from the décor in the dealership's bathroom to the way a sales representative says hello to the bad experience they had with a Ford vehicle that hasn't been manufactured for 10 years.

In some cases, the person has a legitimate issue that needs addressing. In other cases, it's complaining for the sake of complaining.

In either case, pacifying a professional grump requires nerves of steel and every ounce of patience you can muster.



How to deal with the chronic complainer on social media

The Internet can be a chronic complainer's playground. It is here that they can rant and avoid the accountability one might feel face-to-face with another human being. You might answer an upset customer's ravings with something like:

“ We're sorry to hear about your experience. We do our best to offer our customers the best service, so I will private message you to give you my contact info and discuss how we can rectify this issue for you. ”

Not only are you making peace with a loudmouth, you're showing other more reasonable potential customers that you are willing to try to make it right. That's what really counts.



The abusive troll

In Internet slang, “trolls” purposely post inflammatory or off-topic messages on social media sites. Their goal? To get attention and to provoke a negative emotional response from other users. Falling for this trap by responding in an inflammatory way can put your reputation at risk.

While rare, it is possible that your name, business and/or an employee could be defamed on social media. Many platforms have a Terms of Use policy that prohibits this kind of behaviour on their site, but if you feel you are a victim of defamation, you may consider legal options.



How to deal with the abusive troll on social media

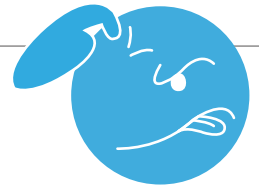
Don't take the bait. Always be professional, even when someone is taking online jabs at you. Address the person once, referring them to your comment policy, which reserves the right to remove inappropriate content or limit access to certain users, if this is taking place on a social media site you own (e.g. Facebook, YouTube, etc.). If they continue to try to provoke you, simply ignore it. Giving them attention only adds fuel to the fire.

The skeptic

Some of us are naturally more cynical than others, especially when it comes to making a major purchase. This is one customer who needs to be educated and reassured about the quality of your products and the honesty of your business practices.

How to deal with the skeptic on social media

If you spot someone writing something you know to be untrue, there's nothing wrong with offering a gentle correction publicly. This is yet another opportunity to demonstrate your professionalism to others who might be eavesdropping. Then you can private message the user to discuss any questions he or she has.



Virtual shopper

There's a large, ever-growing demographic of consumers who prefer to make most of their decisions and purchases based on their own online research. Often, the dealer who answers their queries most quickly and satisfactorily will get their business.

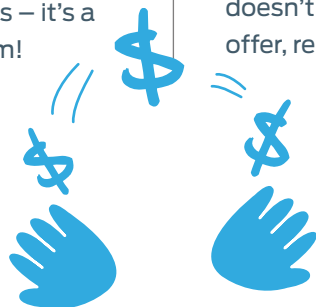
How to deal with the virtual shopper on social media

Responding to inquiries in a timely and accurate way is key to engaging with the online shopper. You might offer relevant links to aid them in their research and other online information that would help them make a decision. For example, once you know what type of vehicle they are looking for, it's good to share any inventory you might have that they may be interested in. It's also effective to use an incentive to get them off the web and into your dealership. These people are usually very well connected online, so they will likely be impressed – and will tell others about it too – if they know about your social media efforts.



Wheeler and dealer

Who hasn't met the stealthy shopper who boasts that he's got a better deal at another dealership but wants to give yours a chance to compete? In fact, there is even a website called Unhaggle that pits local dealerships against each other for the customer's business – it's a wheeler and dealer's dream!



How to deal with the wheeler and dealer on social media

To start off, offer the best package you can while remaining pleasant, friendly and professional throughout your interactions with this type of customer. There might be temptation to call into question the accuracy of this alleged deal the customer says he has at another dealership – don't do it. It will not establish a good rapport to question the customer. If you can't win on price, see if you can woo them with perks like a social media contest, a coupon, a better referral bonus, a charitable donation in their name, etc. If that doesn't work, you can continue the conversation offline but remain pleasant yet firm on your offer, reminding them that you'll be there should they need your services in the future.

STEP 3

KEEP THESE THINGS IN MIND WHEN RESPONDING ON SOCIAL MEDIA

15

Responding to people's comments online is a tricky business. Not only are you answering a person's question or delicately handling negative feedback (that may or may not be fully truthful), you're doing it in front of an audience of potential customers. The way you respond to customers on social media is of monumental importance to your dealership's reputation.

Here are some guidelines to keep in mind before you respond to anything about your dealership:

Pause and think about your response

Whether we see our business's reputation called into question on Twitter or a flattering Facebook post from a satisfied customer, our instinct is to put fingers to keyboard immediately. Don't. Pause and think about the kind of message you want to send. If the issue is complex you will want to take it offline.

Don't delete negative posts

Unless a comment is profane, abusive or otherwise violates your [comment policy](#), consider a negative post as an opportunity to exhibit your consummate customer service skills. If you delete a negative post from your Facebook wall without trying to address it first, you're shutting down a dissatisfied customer and sending the message that you ignore complaints.

Respond in a helpful manner

Consider social media as another way to offer excellent customer service. Share your expertise whenever possible but make sure that what you share is helping the customer, rather than sounding like an advertisement.

Be courteous

The tone of every response should be courteous and respectful. You can still have a personality and add some humour, but your underlying tone should be a courteous one.

Respond quickly

The best way to demonstrate that you care about what your customers think is to provide immediate responses to their questions and reviews. Wouldn't you rather they get their answers from you than someone else? On Twitter especially, people are looking to get answers right away, and your business will have the advantage if you can get back to the customer first. In fact, you'll want to prioritize Twitter over all other social media sites on which you participate. For other social sites, it's generally acceptable to respond within 24 hours of the customer leaving the comment. In all cases, having mobile access to your social sites is helpful so you can respond on the go.

Empathize

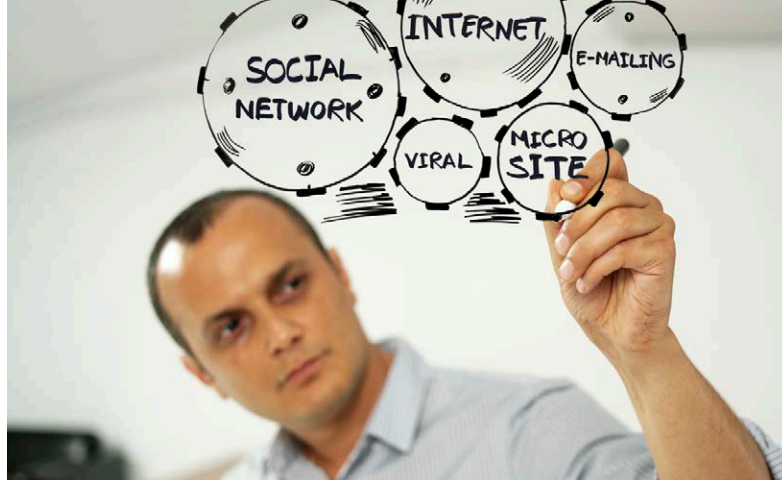
Any great customer service agent knows the customer is always right – even when he's wrong.

If someone is upset and venting about your dealership online, step right up and show him or her you're sorry to hear about this experience. Half the time, people just want to be heard... Confirming that you will take their feedback into account goes a long way. Always take action to try to make things better. This often shuts down a situation that could snowball quickly.

Be present

Not every comment requires a response, but it's great to show your virtual "face" wherever possible. This is when those Google Alerts come in handy – take some time to go through them and, where appropriate, show you're paying attention to the conversation and are ready to help.

STEP 4



17

MAKE YOUR COMMUNITY A PLEASANT PLACE TO BE

Comment policies help explain what is and isn't acceptable on the social media accounts you own. When everyone follows the rules, it makes for a more pleasant community.

When you have a comment policy in place, you won't need to defend your actions should you need to delete a comment due to its inappropriate nature. Simply point to the comment policy and it will be clear that it was nothing personal. You can decide how stringent to be, but the key is to always be consistent.

We have built Facebook and Youtube [comment policies](#) for you to edit and use. Go ahead and post them publicly on your social media accounts. There is usually room in the About section on most social media sites. Or you can post them on your website and link to it from each of your social media sites.

• See 'Appendices' section for comment policy templates – when posting your own comment policies, use the attached Word document versions for quick and easy cutting and pasting.

Note

You don't need a comment policy for Twitter because it's not possible for someone to publicly post or comment directly on your account.

STEP 5

Manage your reputation

VIA SOCIAL MEDIA

In Just



**MINUTES
A DAY**

It might seem like managing social media is a time-consuming business. But it doesn't have to be. With focus and discipline, you can fulfill all of your social media obligations in just 20 minutes a day.

Set the timer and work your way through this quick checklist to help you successfully manage your reputation.



Check your dealership's own social media sites. Spend a few minutes browsing your Facebook page, Twitter account, YouTube channel and any other social media sites you own. Answer any questions and respond to any comments. *



Check your email for Google Alerts that came in since the last time you checked. View the links and respond where necessary.



Share one interesting read. An easy way to stay on your followers' radar is to direct them to a relevant article or website they would find as interesting as you do. Sites like jalopnik.com and autos.ca post fresh content every day that you can share. **



Share one link from the Ford Canada nameplates. Give your community something to enjoy while strengthening your dealership's presence and also the Ford Canada brand. *



Check the Weekly Social Media Dealer Bulletin. This is a great place to find fascinating Ford content you can use on your Facebook and Twitter pages.



Use a Scheduler. If you have something that you know in advance you'll want to post on your social media sites, like a New Year's special, sign up for a free online tool like [Hootsuite](http://hootsuite.com). It lets you schedule your social media content in advance so that you don't have to be at a computer to hit "publish" – it does that for you on the day and time you choose.



Check the [review sites](#) this toolkit mentioned earlier.

* If your dealership gets a lot of comments on social media, you may need to check your social media sites a couple of times a day. If this isn't possible, consider assigning a staff member or hiring outside help to keep an eye on the sites you own.

** It's easy to let time get away from you when you're browsing for content to share. Either add an extra 20 minutes to keep abreast of auto and local news or limit your browsing time to five minutes on each site.

Case study

How one dealership integrated social media into daily operations

Terry Ortynsky's
ROYAL
FORD

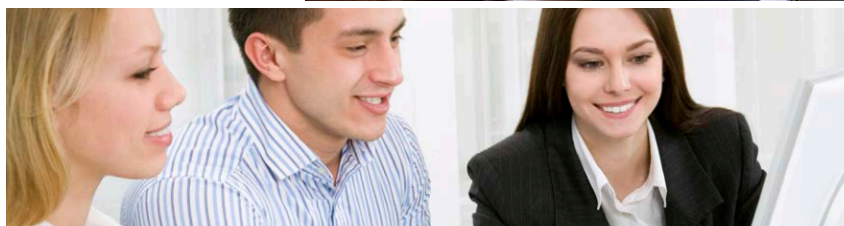
Who better to talk to you about social media than someone from a Ford dealership who has been there, done that?

Sylvia Henheffer of Terry Ortynsky's Royal Ford shares her dealership's experience with jumping into social media.



Why they did it

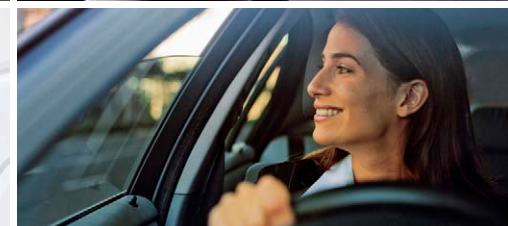
- They considered it a cost-effective way to connect with people and “stay in front of them on an ongoing basis”
- They wanted to reach customers as well as those who were not traditionally “Ford people”
- They saw the importance of being where their customers are



How they did it

Sylvia says they initially jumped in without having a clear strategy, which was a mistake they learned a lot from: “When we first tried to start up a Facebook page, we weren’t very consistent with updating and checking it, so we didn’t see any kind of benefit.”

Struggling with strategy and a message, they decided to get help from a social media expert. With guidance, they were able to agree on the direction and purpose of their social media sites, which made it much easier to move forward.





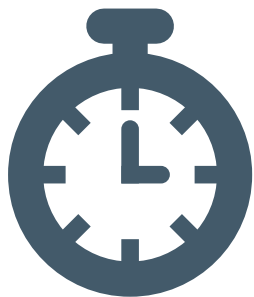
This is how she says they began using social media:

- 1 We started out with Facebook, reaching out to just co-workers, friends and family to tell them about our page and ask them to like it. Those people shared the dealership's content with their networks.
- 2 We then began following other local people and businesses that had a social media presence.
- 3 Then we held contests and teamed up with other businesses on social media to create events or contests. We gained many more followers this way.



- 4 As our Facebook presence grew and became more demanding, we brought in a company to help manage the sites and keep them up to date. But all information and direction comes from the dealership.
- 5 The weekly social media updates we receive from Ford's Social Media Dealer Coach proved to be very helpful. It was easy to post them on Facebook for fresh content.

Here are Sylvia's thoughts on the main concerns dealerships have when doing social media:



Concerns about finding time to do social media

The dealership encouraged all employees to play a small part in their social media strategy to help manage workload. Some of the things they did were “like” the Facebook page, share content from the page, and comment on content.

She says, “it does not have to be time consuming – the key is to be consistent. You can bring in part-time assistance if it does become too much, instead of taking someone away from selling vehicles.”

Concerns about having the right resource to do social media

The dealership's solution was to find a company with the same values as the dealership. (Never just hand it over, you still need someone designated to give direction from the dealership).

Not being sure of where to start

Sign up! You can't do anything if you haven't signed up – secure your dealership's name on key social platforms you may want to use even if you aren't ready to begin yet.

Always keep track of all passwords.

Ensure all your social sites have the same branding and are connected to each other. Also, pull them into your website so people visiting it can also connect with you via social media. She advises placing your icons on every document, email, advertisement, letter, etc.

Use your customer email base to promote your social media efforts, but make sure you explain what's in it for them if they connect with your dealership's social sites.

Not being sure of how to tell social media is really “working” for the dealership

Sylvia advises checking each site's built-in analytics for a basic idea of how well you are doing. To see the bigger picture, always tie back to what the dealership wants out of social media and what it means to your dealership to be social.

For her dealership, success was gaining followers and engaging with them. It was not about selling but “being in front of customers & potential customers.”

Your Ford Social Media Dealer Coach has a plan to help you build relationships with your customers using social media. From strategy right through to measurement, your coach will get you set up in social media and help you be successful.



Here are just some of the ways your coach supports you:

- You can contact your coach anytime with any questions you have about social media.
- You can reach out to your coach for a one-on-one coaching session tailored to your dealership.
- Get your coach's expert advice if you run into a crisis situation on any of your social sites. It's important to nip that situation in the bud so it doesn't grow any bigger.
- Use your coach's Weekly Social Media Bulletin, which will give you all kinds of interesting Facebook and Twitter content you can share with your social media community.
- Your coach has Level II & III training coming in early 2013.

STEP 6 LET'S GO FURTHER TOGETHER

APPENDICES

Below are templates you can use just as they are, or you can modify them if you wish. When posting your own comment policies, use the attached Word document versions for quick and easy cutting and pasting.

DEALERSHIP NAME's YouTube Comment Policy

Welcome to **DEALERSHIP NAME's** YouTube channel!

We welcome your comments on our videos but please know that we're moderating this page to make sure it's a suitable place to be for everyone. That means we reserve the right to remove comments that violate either this comment policy, YouTube's Terms of Use and/or Community Guidelines:

Keep it clean. Do not use inappropriate / offensive language and/or etiquette.

Be courteous. We encourage healthy debate, but please be courteous to others on the page.

Stay on-topic. Any comment that is not relevant to the topic at hand, or to other peoples' comments, may be removed.

Be careful. Comments relating to legal matters or containing info known to be false, fraudulent, deceptive, inaccurate or misleading may be removed. Please remember that this page is public. For your own safety, do not post any personal information about yourself or others (addresses, phone numbers, email addresses, etc).

Be spam-free. Any comments that appear to be spam may be removed. Posts that overtly promote products or services may be removed. Comments from the same user that are repeated or similar in nature may be removed.

Also note that comments or opinions expressed on this page are those of their respective contributors only. The views expressed on this page do not necessarily represent or reflect the views of **DEALERSHIP NAME**, its management or employees.

DEALERSHIP NAME is not responsible for, and disclaims any and all liability to the fullest extent permitted by law for, the content of comments written by contributors to this page.

Employees of **DEALERSHIP NAME**, Ford, or any affiliated companies, please note: If you'd like to leave a comment, please ensure you disclose your affiliation with Ford.

DEALERSHIP NAME's Facebook Comment Policy

Welcome to **DEALERSHIP NAME**'s Facebook page! Our goal is to give you a way to connect with us and other Ford fans in our Facebook community and in the **NAME OF CITY** area. We'll share interesting news and views as well as offers, contests and deals.

We encourage you to add your voice by taking our polls, commenting on our wall posts, tagging us in photos of you and your Ford and asking us anything you need to know about sales, service and parts! We are here to help and will make best efforts to respond to your comments and questions in a timely fashion.

Keep in mind though that this is a moderated page; we reserve the right to remove comments as well as limit access to this page for users who repeatedly abuse the comment policy. All users must comply with [Facebook's Terms of Use](#) and these guidelines for participating on this page:

Keep it clean. Do not use inappropriate / offensive language and/or etiquette.

Be courteous. We encourage healthy debate but please be courteous to others on the page.

Stay on-topic. Any comment that is not relevant to the topic at hand, or to other peoples' comments, may be removed.

Be careful. Comments relating to legal matters or containing info known to be false, fraudulent, deceptive, inaccurate or misleading may be removed. Please remember that this page is public. For your own safety, do not post any personal information about yourself or others (addresses, phone numbers, email addresses, etc).

Be spam-free. Any comments that appear to be spam may be removed. Posts that overtly promote products or services may be removed. Comments from the same user that are repeated or similar in nature may be removed.

Also note that comments or opinions expressed on this page are those of their respective contributors only. The views expressed on this page do not necessarily represent or reflect the views of **DEALERSHIP NAME**, its management or employees. **DEALERSHIP NAME** is not responsible for, and disclaims any and all liability to the fullest extent permitted by law for, the content of comments written by contributors to this page.

Employees of **DEALERSHIP NAME**, Ford, or any affiliated companies, please note: If you'd like to leave a comment, please ensure you disclose your affiliation with Ford.

Get to know the social media landscape

Social media sites are like huge parties, conferences and coffee houses all rolled into one. They're where you'll find people talking, sharing information and expertise, blowing off steam, raving, and checking up on one another. You can also learn more about the social media landscape by logging on to InFord > P2P > search social media.

Here are some of the most popular social media sites on the web:

Facebook

This popular social network lets users and businesses share thoughts, news, links, photos, videos and more. Businesses may create their own page and encourage users to "like" the page with enticements like contests, perks and interesting content. "Liking" a business page basically means you are making a connection with the page & opting in to receive updates from it, and you have the ability to interact with the page owner and other users who "like" the page.

Forums

If users are looking to talk with others about a specific topic, they might start or join a forum, e.g. "muscle cars," "used cars" – there's even one specifically for Ford truck lovers! Forums are usually moderated to be sure that inappropriate or offensive content stays out of the discussions.

Twitter

Twitter is a site where people share thoughts, news, photos and more. After creating an account (all Twitter users have a "handle" that begins with @, e.g. @staceyfowler), users can send out 140-character-long "tweets" to their network of "followers" – people who have subscribed to their Twitter "feed." When people see someone else on Twitter say something they find interesting, they "retweet" it, which shares it with their entire network of followers.

"Hashtags" are a commonly used way of organically organizing content. So for example, if you write #Lunch in a tweet about what you ate for lunch, you will see your tweet along with the tweets of all others in the world who used #Lunch in their tweets too!

Google+

Here's a place that replicates the way people share in real-life. It organizes contacts into "Circles" (i.e. family, friends, colleagues) so you can pick what to share with whom. It also has "Hangouts" for video chats with others (businesses/experts use them sometimes to share their expertise) and "Sparks" where you select topics of interest and Google+ provides a feed of relevant information.

Pinterest

Imagine a virtual corkboard with all of your favourite images and ideas for everyone to see. That's Pinterest. There is also an option for users to collaborate on a board.

YouTube and Vimeo

Everyone can be a star of the screen on YouTube and Vimeo, places where users can upload their own videos, comment on and "favourite" others videos and create playlists.

Instagram and Flickr

These are photo sharing sites where users can post photos, create online albums, follow the photographic work of others and comment on it. Instagram is widely used on mobile devices and lets you add filters and borders to make photos more visually appealing.

Stumbleupon

This is a site that helps users discover relevant Internet content based on pre-set interests the user selects. You can click the "stumble" button and it will bring up relevant sites you may like.

Foursquare

This specialized site allows users to "check in" (which essentially publishes a note that that user is at that business right now). You can also share tips on local businesses. Some businesses have a deal with Foursquare to have a branded page sharing tips in their area of expertise. Others have "check-in" offers (for example, get 10% off your dinner bill if you've checked in at Joe's Chicken & Ribs).

Blogs

Short for "weblogs," blogs are websites where users can write entries ("posts") that resemble an online journal. Posts can include images, video, music, links and more. People can subscribe to the "RSS feed" of the site to get updates when the blogger posts something new.

Tumblr

A cross between Twitter and a blog, Tumblr is a place where users can share photos, quotes, links, music, videos and more. "Reblogging" is popular, where users can share content they like from other people's Tumblr pages on their own page. Any piece of content you post can be turned into a "question" for other users to weigh in on.



Get more traffic to your website and social media sites

How do you expect customers to know about your business if they can't find you online?

SEO

You may have heard the term “search engine optimization” or SEO. It's just a fancy way of making sure your website gets noticed by search engines like Google.

When a user searches “Ford dealerships,” “where to buy a car in [Your City]” or something similar, you want your dealership's website, Facebook page and other social media sites to be at the top of the list.

Here are just a few easy ways to make that happen:

Use descriptive keywords

Think like a customer when it comes to keywords. When describing your business on your “About us” page or bio section on the various social media sites you have, incorporate words that potential customers might employ when looking for a dealership.

Example: A person from Winnipeg looking for an oil change might type, “oil change Winnipeg” or “where to get an oil change in Winnipeg” into a search engine. Be sure to put your location close to your name and any other details you think your customers would search for in association with your dealership name.

Also, be specific when describing what you offer.

So instead of

“ We're a full-service dealership ”,

try something like

“ We're a full-service dealership that offers: Oil, lube and filter changes, Maintenance, Wipers, Winter tires, Free tire storage. ”

On social media sites, make sure your “Bio” or “About” pages incorporate specific keywords that customers might use when seeking out a Ford dealership in your area. Don’t overdo it on the keywords, though. Google can actually ignore your site if you’re excessively using the same ones over and over. Go [here](#) and [here](#) to learn more about what Google is looking for when it is deciding which results to return to people using its search engine.

29

Stay fresh

Update your site often. Search engines and users are more likely to notice a website if they see it frequently has fresh new content. The weekly Social Media Bulletin sent to you by your coach provides interesting new content that you can use to keep your Facebook and Twitter pages updated.



Always link where appropriate

Linking is a way to increase the chances of your sites being picked up by search engines.

You should also link back to archival or previous content posted. For example, you might be posting a special on oil changes on your Facebook page. Link the term “oil change” to your “About us” or “Services” page or anywhere else you mention oil change.

Link to other sites. Interlinking with other reputable pages can increase your standing in the search results, meaning potential customers are more likely to see your page at the top of their search results.

Claim your business on review sites

We listed popular review sites in Step 1: Listen and respond. As we mentioned there, do take the time to claim your business page. Your dealership will be more likely to come to the top of a search page, especially if you get a lot of reviews.

Avoid Flash

Flash is a multimedia platform used to add animation, video and interactivity to web pages. And while people tend to like websites that are dynamic and well designed, search engines can’t penetrate Flash to pick up on key words.

Describe images

Photographs and other images are a great way to add life to a website or social media site. But be aware that search engines can only search text, so they don’t recognize images very well unless you name the file appropriately and add “alternate text” to the image (your webmaster can do this in your website’s code) that describes what it is. Make the words associated with your images as descriptive as possible. For example, if you upload a photo of a truck for sale on your lot, be sure to use descriptive text. So instead of IMG3341.jpg, it should be named BlackFordF-150Sale.jpg.

Survey

We want to know what you thought of this Social Media Toolkit.

Fill out this short survey



