

## COVID-19 Article

### How to Adapt Your Sales Process During COVID-19

We're currently living in unprecedented times, which means we're working and selling in unprecedented times. As the nation continues to respond to the coronavirus pandemic, many dealers are limiting the number of people inside of the dealership, while others have been forced to transition to working remotely. That's a tough reality when so much of our business is based on human interaction within the physical dealership.

However, with the population spending significantly more time at home, people are spending much more time online. In fact, our Trader Interactive vehicle marketplaces -- including RV Trader, Cycle Trader, Commercial Truck Trader, and Equipment Trader -- have seen big spikes in website traffic since the declaration of a national emergency.

With so many consumers browsing the market, competition for their attention will only increase, so **now is the time to shore up your (1) advertising, (2) listings, (3) communication, and (4) sales**. Even if a prospect decides to hold off on finalizing a purchase until things go back to normal, attracting and nurturing leads now sets you up to immediately close the sale as soon as the customer is ready. With each of these areas in mind, here's **how you can adapt your sales process during COVID-19**:

#### Adapted Advertising

To maximize your online presence, do everything you can to **extend your visibility across digital platforms**, including your own website, third-party online marketplaces, email, blogs, and social media. This includes **updating all of your relevant data** on those channels with accurate contact information, hours of operation for both sales and service, any policies affected by coronavirus, and available inventory. If you're on third-party marketplaces, see what **advertising upgrades** might be available to help your units stand out.

You'll want to be top-of-mind for customers and prospects when this pandemic ends, and emails are great at maintaining brand awareness, and are also effective at providing updates about your dealership as circumstances may change. While you would normally develop familiarity and trust with consumers in-person, now you'll have to connect digitally. Social media can help connect you and your dealership on a personal level with customers and prospects, while producing and sharing relevant content -- such as blogposts -- can demonstrate your industry expertise. You can also manage your reputation by soliciting positive online reviews and productively responding to poor reviews

#### Adapted Listings

As online traffic continues to increase with so many people at home and online, your listings need to be clear and competitive. Now, more than ever, we recommend that you optimize your unit listings by remembering to get P.A.I.D.:

- ❑ **Price:** Clearly provide the for-sale and/or rental price, which gives shoppers key information they look for and establishes you as a transparent and trustworthy dealer. In fact, most of our marketplace consumers say they won't even consider a listing if it does not have a price.
- ❑ **Appearance:** Include all relevant keywords so the listing appears higher in search results, either in search engines or in the search feature on listing websites where you advertise.
- ❑ **Images:** Photos and videos of the inventory enhance consumer interest and buying confidence. Be sure consumers can see the vehicle from every angle and highlight all of the key specs, helping them feel as though they are standing on the lot themselves to inspect the unit.
- ❑ **Descriptions:** Today's consumers want as much data as possible before reaching out to a dealer, so include all relevant information, including mileage, condition, fuel type, and upfit details.

## Adapted Communication & Appointments

Once you've attracted prospects with your digital advertising and listings, it's time to nurture those leads using adapted communication. Especially during the time of COVID-19, you need to **allow for as many forms of communication as possible** in order to reach consumers however they prefer to be contacted. Ensure that phone calls will be forwarded to the correct staff member or hunt group, and consider allowing calls to be taken on employees' personal cell phones if you do not already. You'll also want to update your missed-call/out-of-office voicemail -- as well as automated emails and replies -- with any new hours of operation or business policies. Additionally, be sure that any live-chat and texting features are turned on and being checked regularly.

When leads and messages come in, try to respond by the end of the same business day, and within an hour if possible. When in contact with a prospect, inquire as to how -- during this uncertain time -- you can move the consumer from prospect to customer, and then figure out how to satisfy those needs. One of the key ways to do this will be through remote appointments, connecting with leads via phone or video conference calls. Even though the consumer won't be in the physical dealership, you can still satisfy much of the goals of a traditional appointment, including answering any questions, showing off the unit, and possibly convincing the consumer to make a purchase (during coronavirus, potentially convincing them to make a purchase once the pandemic ends).

**Live video conferencing** via your mobile device -- whether it's Facetime, Skype, Zoom, or Google Hangouts -- is a remarkably effective tool for remote appointments. This allows you to show off the unit in many of the same ways as you would if the prospect was right on the lot. With live video you can answer questions, let them hear the running engine, show the mileage, highlight any specs or upfits, point the camera toward any spot or part the consumer requests to inspect -- anything you would usually highlight face-to-face. When communicating remotely, just remember that while consumers may be more informal online, be sure your digital communication is always professional, helpful, and informative.

## Adapted Sales

If possible, now is the time to not only advertise and communicate online, but to also sell remotely. Work with your sales team to **develop a pitch** finely-tuned to the current situation. You'll want to demonstrate empathy while also emphasizing their need to be proactive with so many other consumers active in the market at this time. You [could say something like](#), *"I understand that you really want the vehicle, but you're nervous at the moment -- let me tell you how we're adapting,"* or *"We know you don't want to miss out on the car; what my other customers are doing is..."*

Potential **price negotiations** can also happen remotely, but keep in mind that you may not be able to actually see the customer during these calls and thus may not be able to interpret messages via their body language. You can also offer remote **financing** -- or link to qualifying financing -- through your website, or can **accept deposits** online or over the phone. Depending on state laws, you may even be able to finalize the sale and sign over the vehicle through your website as well.

If you are able to close a sale during the pandemic, you should have a clear process in place for actually handing over the keys. Explain to the customer that you may be operating on a skeleton staff and assure them that you are following social distancing rules, and thus will not be endangering them with a crowded dealership if they come to pick up the unit. Perhaps you can offer to hold onto the vehicle until the coronavirus is resolved or can drop off the unit at their home, allowing nervous customers to secure ownership while staying safe.

## Conclusion

Despite the ongoing COVID-19 situation, online traffic is up and it has the possibility to result in increased enquiries and leads. Hopefully, your dealership will be able to reopen its doors to regular business soon, but you need to be prepared for both the short-term reality, as well as the possibility of the current situation extending well into the future. To set your dealership up for continued success, make a plan now to adapt your advertising, listings, communication, and sales.

For additional information or insights on how to navigate this pandemic at your dealership, please contact us at [Marketing@traderinteractive.com](mailto:Marketing@traderinteractive.com) or call (800) 684-6104 to contact our teams.

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