



Dealers Report Internet Highest ROI Business-Generating Tool over Last 5 Years according to Autobytel's "15th Anniversary of the Internet" Survey

The Internet is the auto dealerships' highest ROI business-generating tool over the last five years, according to a national survey of dealerships from Autobytel Inc. (Nasdaq:ABTL); and 96% of dealers predict it will play a larger role in their marketing in the next five years. Additionally, Internet leads continue to be critical, with 93% of dealers reporting that new and used third-party leads are an important part of their marketing mix and business generation.

The survey was conducted in conjunction with the fifteenth anniversary of the automotive Internet's birth when, in 1995, former car dealer Pete Ellis launched Autobytel with a simple website and premise: use the 'Web' to create efficiencies for both dealers and consumers – and everyone wins. A decade and a half later, dealers are extraordinarily bullish on the digital revolution, with 81% saying it will play a 'significantly' bigger role than today.

"None of us – except perhaps for Pete – could have predicted fifteen years ago the lasting and positive impact that one website would have on one of the world's largest industries," said Autobytel Inc. CEO Jeff Coats. "But Autobytel's underlying mission, to use technology to create a better, more efficient experience for both dealers and consumers, is as resonant today as it was fifteen years ago, which the results of this survey clearly illustrate."

Autobytel's 15th Anniversary of the Internet Dealership Survey Results

A Dealer's Highest Performing Marketing Tactic

One hundred percent of dealer respondents reported that their Internet focus/strategies helped them through these challenging times, with the majority (79.5%) reporting that the Internet has been their highest ROI, most cost-effective business generation tool across the last 5 years. In contrast, traditional media heavyweights (TV, newspaper and radio) only ranked first for 7.5%, 6.5%, and 2.5% of dealers, respectively.

Dealers cited being able 'to reach/sell to customers beyond their immediate market' as a key advantage of the Internet, as well as the fact that it is 'a more cost-efficient and targeted medium than traditional media like TV & radio.'

Major Increases in Internet Spend Over Last 5 Years

Ninety-three percent of dealers have increased their Internet marketing budgets in the last five years, according to the survey, with more than half (56%) boosting their Internet budgets by 50% or more; and a third (31%) by 100% or more.

Dealer Marketing Budgets to Increase – and Migrate Further Online – in 2010

Ninety-five percent of dealers are either increasing their 2010 marketing spend (56%) or holding firm on 2009 spend (39%). And the Internet will be the biggest beneficiary of these new investments: 69.5% plan to increase their Internet spend this year. Dealers' traditional media spend (TV, radio, print) tells a different story: 30.5% plan decreases, 48.5% to hold firm, and only 21% plan increases.

Third-Party Lead Providers: First to the 'Online Party,' and Still Critical

Third-party leads continue to provide benefit to dealers for the following reasons, according to 93% of those surveyed:

- having 'control over what I spend/how many leads I'm guaranteed to get'
- 'because so many consumers use 3rd-party research websites I'm able to capture ready-to-buy car shoppers'
- 'they're cost-efficient and measurable'
- 'they enable me to expand my reach across Web'

Nearly nine out of ten (87%) believe in using a 'mix' of leads from their own website and independent lead partners to 'cover their online bases.'

More Info: For detailed survey findings, or to speak to an Autobytel representative, please contact: Jim Helberg, Autobytel Inc., 949-307-4357, jimh@autobytel.com or Melanie Webber, mWEBB Communications, 949.307.1723, melanie@mwebbcom.com.

About Autobytel

Autobytel Inc. (NASDAQ:ABTL), a leading automotive marketing services company, pioneered the automotive Internet when it launched Autobytel.com in 1995. Since then, the company has helped tens of millions of automotive consumers research vehicles; connected thousands of dealers nationwide with motivated car buyers, and helped every major automaker market its brand online. Today, through its flagship website Autobytel.com^{reg}; its network of automotive sites including Autoweb.com[®], AutoSite.com[®], Car.comsm, CarSmart.com[®], CarTV.com[®], and MyRide.com[®], and its respected online partners, Autobytel continues its dedication to innovating the industry's highest quality Internet programs to provide consumers with a comprehensive and positive automotive research and purchasing experience, and auto dealers, dealer groups and auto manufacturers with one of the industry's most productive and cost-effective customer referral and marketing programs.

** Phone survey of dealerships nationwide performed by Survey.com in January, 2010*

Photos/Multimedia Gallery Available: <http://www.businesswire.com/cgi-bin/mmg.cgi?eid=6177486&lang=en>.

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