

FRANCIS OHAGAN



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Pied Piper helps track dealerships' Internet results

Mark Rechtin

Automotive News -- February 5, 2011 - 8:27 pm ET

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Mystery shoppers are nothing new, but Internet mystery shoppers are.



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That's part of the expansion plan for Fran O'Hagan as CEO of Pied Piper, which tracks not whether customers enjoyed their shopping experience but whether dealership salespeople did the things that would lead to a sale.



Fran O'Hagan: "Every dealer would rather have great salespeople and a crappy showroom instead of crappy salespeople and a great showroom."

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O'Hagan, who was a Jaguar sales executive from 2000 to 2007, formed Pied Piper as a way for manufacturers to track dealership performance from mystery shoppers. His new venture tracks Internet sales lead effectiveness.

His ratings by manufacturer, based on a patent-pending formula, will be published in March. Subscribers will be able to drill down to the individual dealer level.

"Every dealer would rather have great salespeople and a crappy showroom instead of crappy salespeople and a great showroom," O'Hagan said. "We're applying our in-person shopping process to the Internet."

The final Internet sales performance data are still being culled. One trend emerging is that luxury brands perform better than mass-market brands with mystery shoppers, basically because of their coddling sales process. That said, 80 percent of one luxury brand's dealer body, which O'Hagan declined to name, has received a grade of "D" or "F" in responding to Internet leads.

"A dealer can tell if his salesmen are ignoring walk-in customers," O'Hagan said. "But he has no idea if they aren't responding to Internet queries."

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