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Automakers Internet Efforts Lag In-Person Customer Svc.

Posted March 14th, 2011 at 12:04 pm by Karl Greenberg

Lexus, Honda and Toyota dealerships ranked highest in a newly released Pied Piper Prospect Satisfaction Index Internet Lead Effectiveness study, which measures dealership responsiveness to customer inquiries over the internet. But industry wide, dealers' internet efforts lag their in-person customer service.

The study measured average dealership performance for all major U.S. automotive brands, showing a wide variety in performance by brand. Pied Piper conducted the study as an independent benchmarking service to retailer client, who receive monthly internet "mystery shops" to measure and improve dealership response to internet inquiries, according to the firm.

The firm says three years ago only six in ten dealership internet inquiries were answered in any way within 24 hours. Today, however, dealerships respond within 24 hours nine times out of ten, but often with an automated, impersonal response. And one's specific question is answered within 24 hours only 64% of the time.

Fran O'Hagan, president of Pied Piper said in a statement that even though there are big differences between automakers, they are all behind. "We find that 64% of in-person mystery shops are either 'A' or 'B' performances, while only 16% earn a 'D' or 'F.' In comparison, only 17% of internet mystery shops earn 'A' or 'B', while 60% perform at a 'D' or 'F' level."