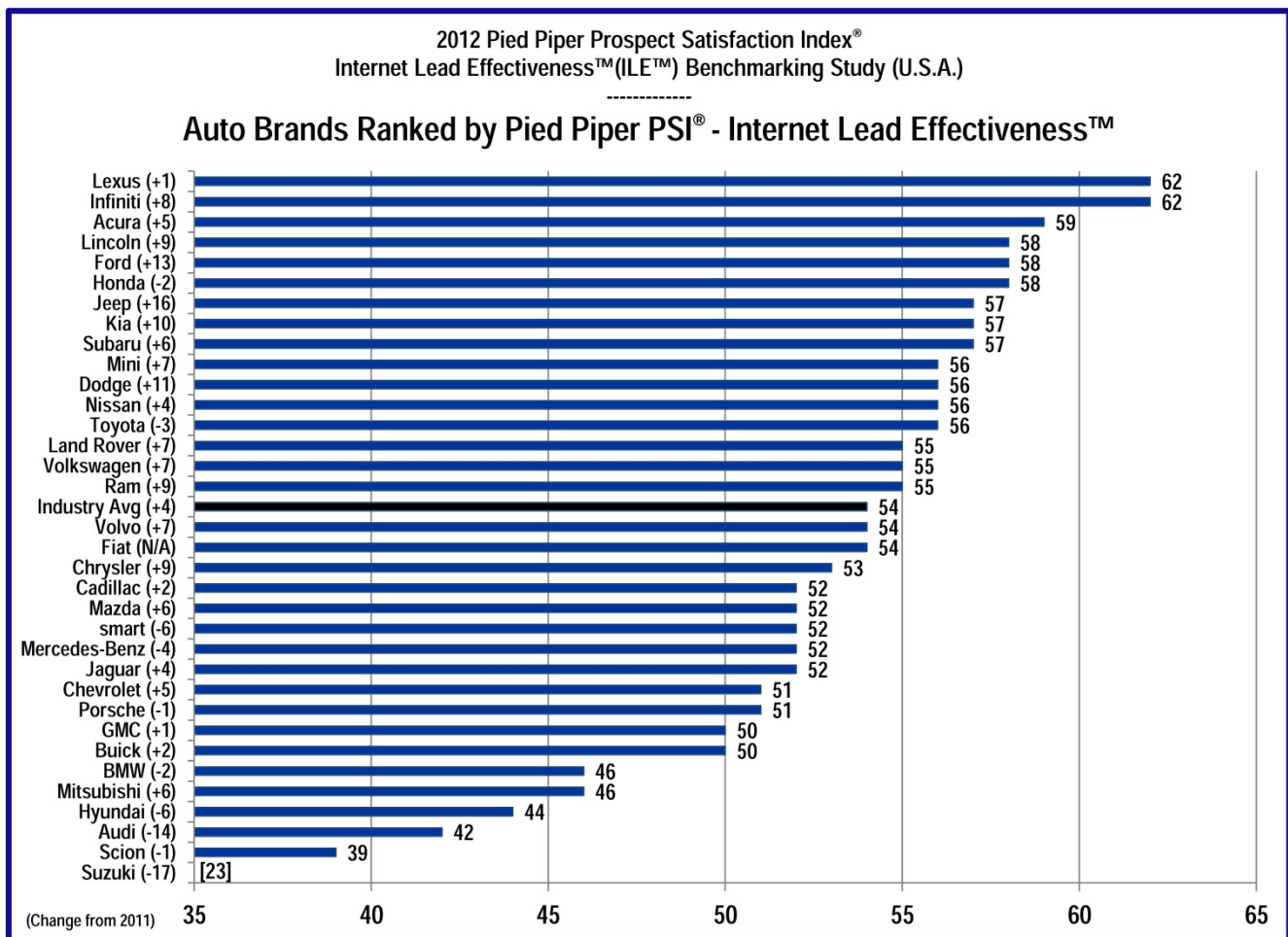


## LEXUS, INFINITI AND ACURA DEALERSHIPS TOP RANKED FOR RESPONSE TO CUSTOMER INTERNET INQUIRIES, REPORTS PIED PIPER PROSPECT SATISFACTION INDEX<sup>®</sup>

- **Industry-wide improvement from previous year led by Ford and Chrysler**
- **However, 22% of customer internet inquiries remain unanswered after 24 hours**

**MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA – March 12, 2012** – Lexus, Infiniti and Acura dealerships ranked highest in the 2012 Pied Piper Prospect Satisfaction Index<sup>®</sup> (PSI<sup>®</sup>) Internet Lead Effectiveness<sup>™</sup> (ILE<sup>™</sup>) Benchmarking Study, which measured auto dealership responsiveness to customer inquiries received over the internet. Study rankings by brand were determined by the patent-pending Pied Piper PSI process, which ties “mystery shopping” measurement and scoring to actual industry sales success.

Industry-wide performance improved substantially from 2011 to 2012, with two-thirds of the 34 auto brands recording higher scores, but despite the higher scores there remains plenty of room for improvement. In 2011, dealerships on average responded to customer inquiries within 24 hours 64% of the time, improving to 78% of the time on average in 2012. However, the 2012 results suggest that nearly one-in-four of today’s customer internet inquiries remain unanswered after 24 hours.



Ford Motor Company and Chrysler Group LLC brands showed the most improvement from the previous year, with Ford, Lincoln, Chrysler, Dodge, Jeep and Ram dealerships improving the most, along with Kia dealerships. Performance varied considerably from brand to brand, and also from year to year. For example, Mercedes-Benz dealerships climbed to the top of the category of telephone follow-up, with salespeople attempting to follow-up by telephone 74% of the time, compared to the industry average 55% of the time. Another example shows that Infiniti, Volvo and Mini dealerships answered specific customer questions more than 50% of the time, compared to the industry average of 27% of the time.

Today most auto dealerships rely on “Auto Responder” software to generate an automatic email reply to customer inquiries based upon information gleaned from the customer inquiry. The study showed that 72% of customer inquiries were initially answered using an auto responder, while the first response was a personal email 18% of the time, and there was no dealership reply of any kind 10% of the time.

The study measured 37 different combinations of dealership replies relying on automated and/or personal responses. The most common dealership reply, occurring 16% of the time, was a simple auto response promising that a salesperson would be in touch soon, followed by a personal email from a salesperson. Dealerships that follow this “simple” process on average achieved a PSI-ILE score of 66; higher than any current brand average score. Other effective dealership processes included both a “rich” auto response promoting the dealership and specific vehicles, as well as a personal response to answer questions and encourage next steps. In contrast, dealerships that sent only a single auto response averaged a PSI-ILE score of only 26, while dealerships relying solely on one personal email averaged a PSI-ILE score of 59.

“Simply responding to all customer internet inquiries is the first step,” said Fran O’Hagan, President and CEO of Pied Piper Management Company LLC. “Include an auto response to promote the dealership and add a salesperson’s personal touch, and today a dealership will outperform three out of four competitors.”

The 2012 Pied Piper PSI<sup>®</sup> Internet Lead Effectiveness<sup>™</sup>(ILE<sup>™</sup>) Benchmarking Study (U.S.A.) was conducted between September 2011 and March 2012 by submitting internet inquiries to a sample of 4,331 dealerships nationwide representing all major brands. Examples of other recent Pied Piper PSI studies are the 2011 Pied Piper PSI U.S. Auto Industry Study and 2011 Pied Piper PSI U.S. Motorcycle Industry Study, both of which measured in-dealership, in-person sales effectiveness. Complete Pied Piper PSI industry study results are provided to vehicle manufacturers and national dealer groups. Manufacturers, national dealer groups and individual dealerships also order PSI evaluations as a tool to improve the sales effectiveness of their dealerships. For more information about the Pied Piper Prospect Satisfaction Index, and the patent-pending PSI process, go to [www.piedpiperpsi.com](http://www.piedpiperpsi.com).

### **About Pied Piper Management Company, LLC**

Pied Piper Management Company, LLC is a nine year old Monterey, California, company that develops and runs sales and marketing programs to maximize the performance of dealer networks. Go to [www.piedpipermc.com](http://www.piedpipermc.com).

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