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JOSÉ MUÑOZ  
Hyundai  
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## Toyota dealerships rank No. 1 in online response study

WHITNEY MCDONALD



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Toyota stores ranked the



## The Protective F&I Trends Report

There are numerous factors impacting the auto retail environment. The products offered in the F&I office play a key role in continuing success for auto dealers.

Incorporating key insights from auto dealers, Protective Asset Protection's F&I Industry Report, provides the F&I trends that are impacting the auto industry. Armed with this information, dealer group ownership and management can make sure their F&I program is aligned with current and future needs.

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highest in responding to customers who visit dealership websites in the [2020 Pied Piper Prospect Satisfaction Index Internet Lead Effectiveness Benchmarking Study](#).

"This part of the car business is as important as ever — customers grabbing their phone and looking something up is just how any kind of shopping is begun now," Pied Piper CEO Fran O'Hagan said in an email to *Automotive News*.

Pied Piper submitted customer inquiries to websites of 5,063

dealerships between July 2019 and January 2020, asking a question about a vehicle in inventory and providing a name, email address and local phone number. Dealers were evaluated on how they responded by email, phone and text over the next 24 hours. Auto brand rankings are based on a 100-point scale

Toyota toppled last year's No. 1, BMW, with a score of 64, seven points higher than its 2019 performance. Behind Toyota was Cadillac with a score of 62, up from last year's 55, and tied for third were Mini and Subaru with scores of 61.

Brands with the greatest improvement in the last year were Dodge, Chrysler, Ram, Alfa Romeo and Lincoln. Dodge jumped 11 points from the 2019 study.

Fiat and GMC remain at the bottom of the study's list.

Dealers that make it a priority to contact customers with personalized responses rather than automated ones rank higher on the list, O'Hagan said.

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## Premier Companies Testimonial

"When we decided to grow our platform of dealerships, we went out and acquired several dealerships all at one time. The difficulty was trying to get the culture of all of these stores together. Some had ADP. Some had Reynolds and Reynolds.

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### Industrywide

The study found more dealers are using text messages to respond to online customer inquiries -- up 23 percent from last year. The study also showed a 22 percent increase in dealers that send a personal email to customers in less than an hour.

Pied Piper's study says 97 percent of customers will receive a response of some type in 24 hours. But 1 in 4 customers will never see a dealer email because it will land in a junk folder and dealer calls can go to voicemail, where the customer might never listen to it, O'Hagan said. That means it's important to utilize all three forms of communication -- text, phone and email, he said.

This year's study saw a 37 percent decrease in the number of "poor" scores, defined as less than 40 on the Internet Lead Effectiveness scale.

"We also still find plenty of variation in dealership behaviors and see that dealers who master this part of the business far outsell those who do not," O'Hagan said.

