

# Dealer news: Napleton sets another record for internet lead response; Walls family sells Md. store

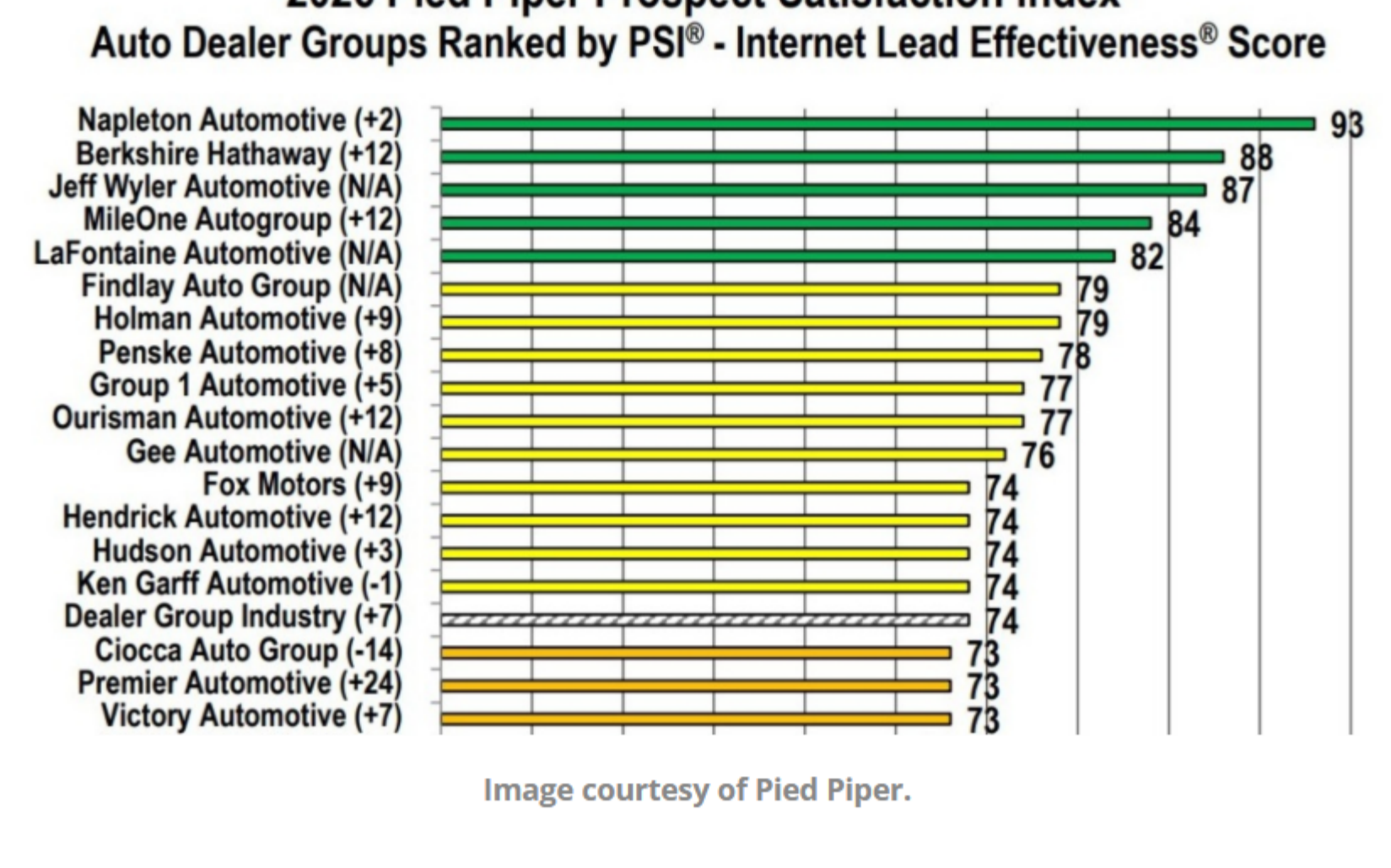
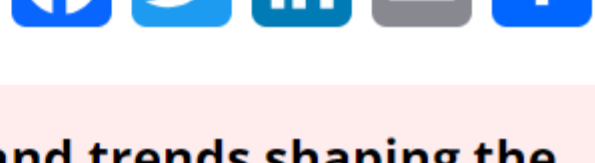


Image courtesy of Pied Piper.

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By Auto Remarketing Staff

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The best dealership group when it comes to responding to internet leads keeps getting better.

For the fifth consecutive year, Napleton Automotive Group ranked No. 1 in Pied Piper’s PSI Internet Lead Effectiveness Auto Dealer Group Study, and for the second year in a row, it set a record.

Napleton’s average internet lead effectiveness score of 93 is the highest ever recorded in the study, which rates the response behaviors of 31 large dealership groups to sales leads received through their dealership websites, breaking its own mark of 91, set last year.

Napleton, which remains the only group to break the 90-point barrier, was followed in the 2026 study by Berkshire Hathaway Automotive (88), Jeff Wyler Automotive Family (87), MileOne Autogroup (84) and LaFontaine Automotive Group (82).

The study was based on 2,414 mystery-shopper inquiries to every dealership in the 31 groups during normal business hours, evaluating the speed and quality of responses sent by email, telephone, chat and text message within the next 24 hours following each inquiry. The scores, ranging from 0-100, are determined by more than 20 weighted measurements for best practices statistically linked to sales success.

Overall, dealerships took a giant leap forward in their responses to internet leads over the past year.

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The average ILE score among all the groups studied soared seven points from the 2025 study to 74, with 24 scoring 70 or better compared to just nine a year ago. Eight groups improved their score by more than 10 points — led by a remarkable 30-point jump by Bergstrom Automotive from 41 to 71, and Premier Automotive’s 24-point rise from 49 to 73 — while just three lost ground.

In a news release, Pied Piper said those numbers “reflect clear behavioral shifts,” with the dealerships showing a 20% increase in responding to leads by text, an 11% improvement in multichannel follow-up and 6% fewer slow or unhelpful responses.

One reason for that overall improvement is artificial intelligence, Pied Piper said, though it added AI automation also “creates new ways for customer inquiries to invisibly fail.”

Dealerships that rely heavily on AI respond quickly to simple questions, the company noted, but performance drops when inquiries require human involvement, with the typical dealership response to those “harder” questions dropping an average of nine points.

Breakdowns can also occur between systems, Pier Piper said, when AI interacts with the DMS, CRM, website, email, text and phone, as the system might claim activity occurred while the customer received no useful response.

“AI is raising the baseline,” Pied Piper vice president of metrics and analytics Cameron O’Hagan said. “The challenge is that the most important failures now happen in the gaps, between systems, or when a customer needs human help. That’s where breakdowns tend to occur, and they’re often invisible without independent measurement.”

Napleton had little if any trouble with breakdowns in its process, with customers of its 63 locations in six states receiving a phone call as well as an email or text answering their question within 30 minutes an average of 91% of the time. The next best group averaged 80%, and the overall dealer group average was just 50%.

In addition, 87% of Napleton’s internet leads received a phone call within 15 minutes. Pied Piper said that’s significant because quicker phone responses the lower the rate of customers ignoring an unknown phone number.

And 80% of Napleton dealership responses included an offer to schedule an appointment for a specific date and time, far above the overall average of 33%.

Napleton was one of five groups with a score above 80 in the 2026. The seven lowest performing groups scored in the 60s or lower. Pied Piper said the top five offered to set appointments more often than the lowest-ranked groups (60%-24%), used text to answer customer questions (69%-33%) and communicated through multiple channels (87%-44%) more frequently.

The study found the top three groups — Napleton Automotive, Jeff Wyler and Berkshire Hathaway — were the only ones that answered a question via email or text and also phoned the customer within 30 minutes at least 75% of the time.

“The difference is operational discipline,” O’Hagan said. “Top groups are three times more likely to suggest appointments and twice as likely to follow up across multiple channels, while lower performers lose sales with inconsistent responses.”

## Walls family sells Maryland ‘flagship’ store to Bob Bell Automotive

A longtime dealership family has bowed out of its award-winning business.

The Walls family has sold Plaza Ford in Bel Air, Md., to Bob Bell Automotive Group, according to Kerrigan Advisors, which advised the seller in the transaction.

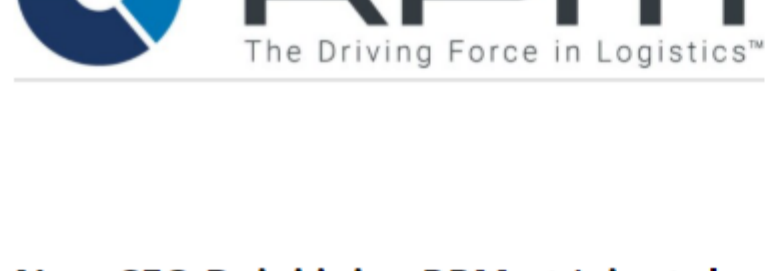
Plaza Ford was founded in 1933 and Ralph Walls began working for the dealership as a bookkeeper of the dealership in 1947. He became general manager in 1959 and an owner three years later, eventually earning Maryland’s TIME Dealer of the Year award in 1992. Ralph Walls, his wife Betty and sons Tom and Charlie built the store into a “flagship operation on Bel Air’s premier auto retail corridor,” Kerrigan said in a news release.

“Our family is proud of the legacy our team has built at Plaza Ford, and we are excited about the growth opportunities this transition creates for our employees,” Tom Walls said. “Joining a multi-franchise group like Bob Bell Automotive Group opens meaningful new doors for the people who have been at the heart of this dealership for decades. We are excited for our employees and their next chapter with Bob Bell.”

Bob Bell Automotive, led by J.P. Bishop, now operates seven locations in Baltimore, Bel Air and Glen Burnie, Md., representing the Ford, Chevrolet, Hyundai, Kia and Nissan brands.

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### New CFO Bojaj joins RPM at ‘pivotal moment’ in company’s accelerating expansion

May 11, 2026

RPM is revving up its business model, and it’s adding a new chief financial officer to help that expansion along. The logistics provider has hired Joe Bojaj as its CFO, bringing what the company called “a sophisticated background in financial leadership” to the executive team, along with a track record of driving fiscal discipline and strategic growth. In a news release, RPM said Bojaj has been instrumental in scaling financial operations for high-growth organizations, with expertise in capital allocation, financial planning and analysis, and corporate development. The company expects Bojaj to play a pivotal role in RPM’s pursuit of