

Web-based service scheduling more effective than phone calls at dealerships, study says

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MileOne Autogroup leads the pack in handling service requests, according to results of the 2026 Pied Piper Auto Dealer Group Service Scheduling Effectiveness Study that came out July 13. (PIED PIPER)

By Clara Martinez July 13, 2026 12:01 AM EDT

Dealership websites handle service requests more effectively than phone calls, averaging a score of 71 out of 100 compared with 61 for phone requests, according to a new study.

For the first time, the 2026 Pied Piper Auto Dealer Group Service Scheduling Effectiveness Study distinguished between the two channels, revealing a 10-point gap that reflects less room for human error online.

More than 4,000 service requests made

Pied Piper sent out 4,163 service requests to every dealership within 31 auto groups across the U.S., and also evaluated four independent service center brands for comparison. They assigned each dealership and service center a service scheduling effectiveness score out of 100 based on more than 40 metrics related to service revenue and customer loyalty. Within the groups surveyed, overall scores ranged from a high of 80 to a low of 47.

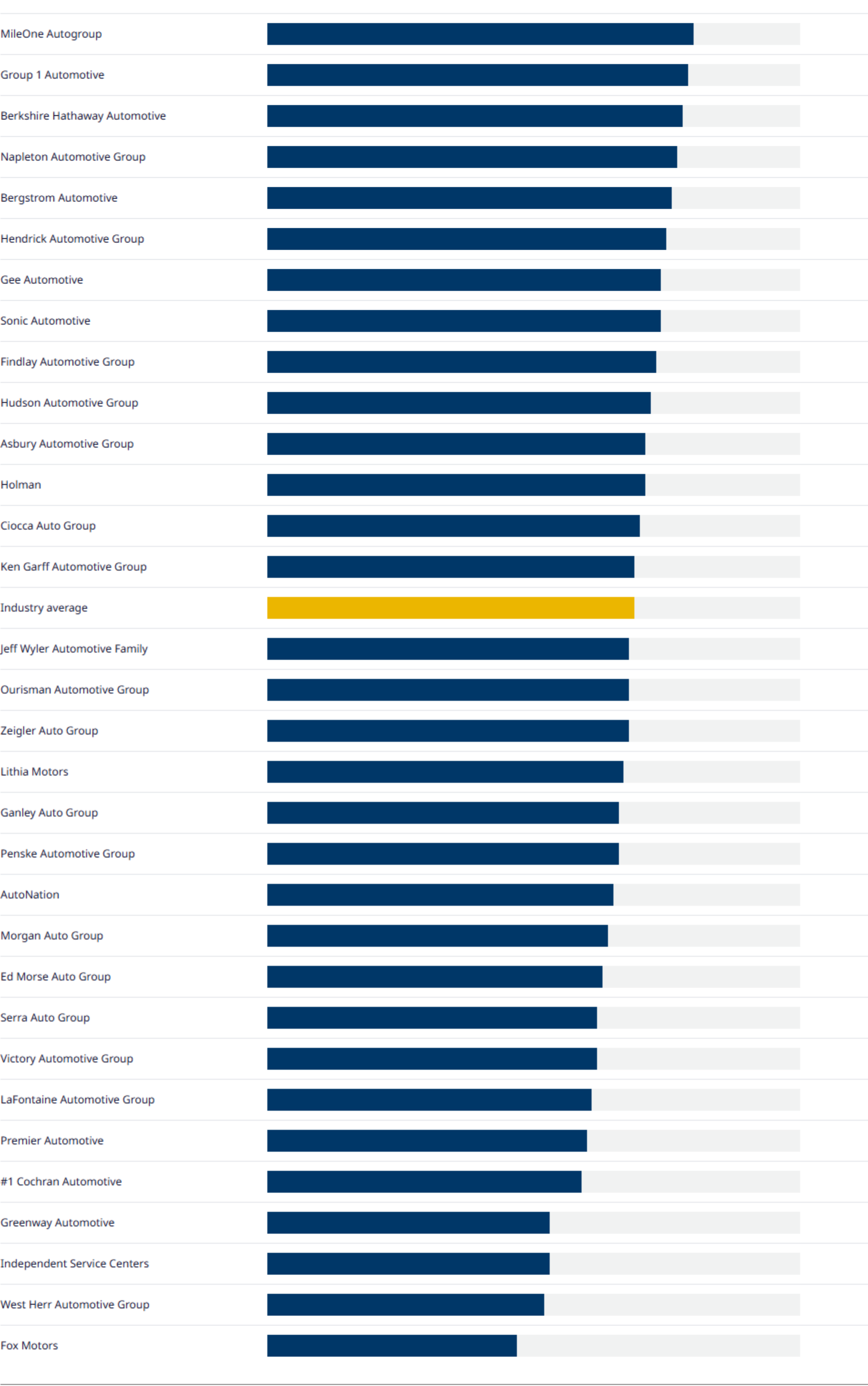
“The difference is that top-performing dealer groups remove friction. Customers get where they need to go quick schedule service with less effort, and know exactly what happens next,” Pied Piper Vice President of Metrics and Analytics Cameron O’Hagan said in a statement. “Lower-performing groups not only make scheduling harder, they fail customers far more often.”

One-third of dealership service requests come in through its website, prompting Pied Piper this year to begin independently tracking how well those are handled, Pied Piper CEO Fran O’Hagan said.

Average website performance scores were higher than those for phone service because there is less room for human error — although software can still fail, he said.

Best and worst service appointment scheduling

The 2026 Pied Piper Service Scheduling Effectiveness study measures how effectively dealerships help customers schedule a service appointment by phone or through the dealership website. More than 40 criteria are combined to produce a single score ranging from 0 to 100. Here are the auto groups ranked by average score.





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Artificial intelligence not a big factor at top groups

Artificial intelligence has proven to be a weak spot in customer service, O’Hagan said. Chatbots fail to connect phone customers with human assistance about one-third of the time, and that disconnect usually happens one to two minutes into the conversation, O’Hagan said.

Pied Piper’s report said chatbots have “dramatically improved” responses to routine service requests. However, none of the top dealership groups relies heavily on AI, he said.

“All of them are at the top of the rankings because of relentless focus from the management of the dealer group and also their processes,” O’Hagan told Automotive News. “They experiment with AI, but they certainly don’t rely on it.”

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Independent service centers scored nine points higher than the overall industry average in phone service effectiveness, but lagged behind the industry website average by 36 points.

Nevertheless, independent shops are a competitive threat to dealership groups because of scheduling reliability, quick service and overall higher quality in service calls, the report said.

“Independent service centers have become formidable competitors. They’ve built their reputation on speed and convenience, and they currently outperform the typical dealer group when customers schedule service by phone, Cameron O’Hagan said in the same statement.

The five dealership groups with the highest overall Service Scheduling Effectiveness score were MileOne Autogroup, Group 1 Automotive, Berkshire Hathaway Automotive, Napleton Auto Group and Bergstrom Automotive.

The overall lowest-scoring groups are Fox Motors, West Herr Automotive Group, Greenway Automotive, #1 Cochran Automotive and Premier Automotive.

The difference between high and low scorers is not about software and suppliers — something all dealership groups have fairly equal access to, Fran O’Hagan said. What separates top performers is being in touch with customers and recognizing when the system isn’t working, he said.

“It’s invisible. If you don’t actually measure it, you don’t actually know when it is failing,” he said. “The only people who know it’s failing are the customers, so I would say the reason that there are dealer groups who perform really well is relentless focus by top management.”



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