

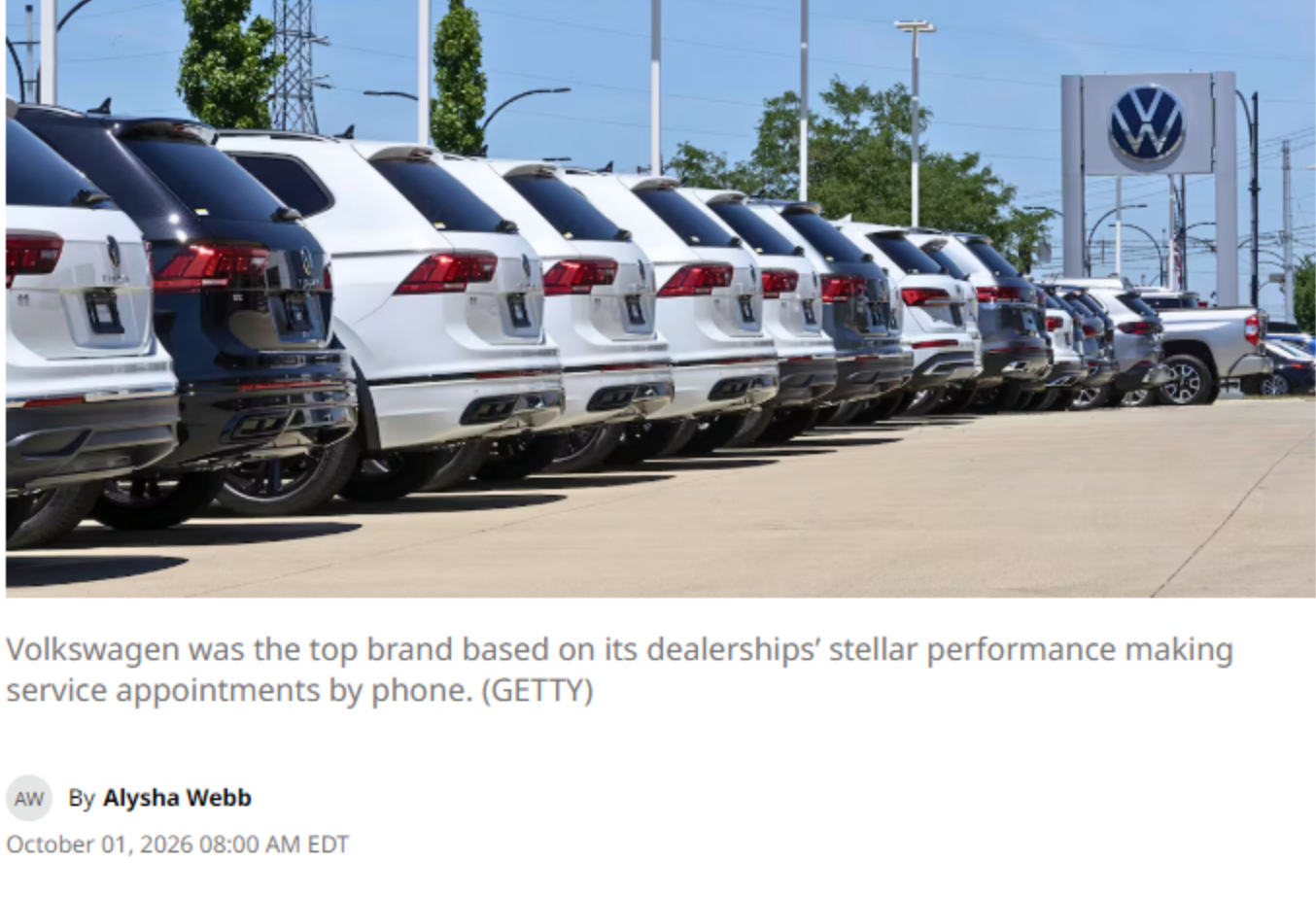
SERVICE AND PARTS

Why getting service scheduling right — from phone to online — is key for dealership profits, loyalty

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Volkswagen was the top brand based on its dealerships’ stellar performance making service appointments by phone. (GETTY)

AW By **Alysha Webb**
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Service departments drive dealerships’ profits, but 1 in 6 customers who call for an appointment can't get scheduled for a specific date and time. While the industry is improving scheduling service by phone and online, gaps threaten customer loyalty, according to benchmarking firm Pied Piper.

“If you talk to dealers, 70 or 80 percent of their profit comes from fixing cars,” said Pied Piper CEO Fran O'Hagan. “So, this is a huge issue for dealers, and therefore the manufacturers need to pay attention to it.”

A dealership's service department is not only vital to its bottom line, but it's where dealers often win — or lose — customer loyalty. Customers who encounter friction when trying to make an appointment may look elsewhere for service and never return, industry experts say.

“Dealers on average lose half of their new-car sales customers from service within two years,” O'Hagan said. “Make scheduling difficult, and it only gets worse.”

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Pied Piper’s 2026 Auto Industry Service Scheduling Effectiveness Study compared average customer experience when scheduling service through dealership websites and by phone. Dealerships received scores for both from 0 to 100 based on weighted measurements tied to best practices most likely to drive service revenue and customer loyalty.

Pied Piper combined the scores for an overall ranking. The study, released Sept. 14 and in its second year, submitted 6,538 service requests across 33 automotive brands and four independent service brands.

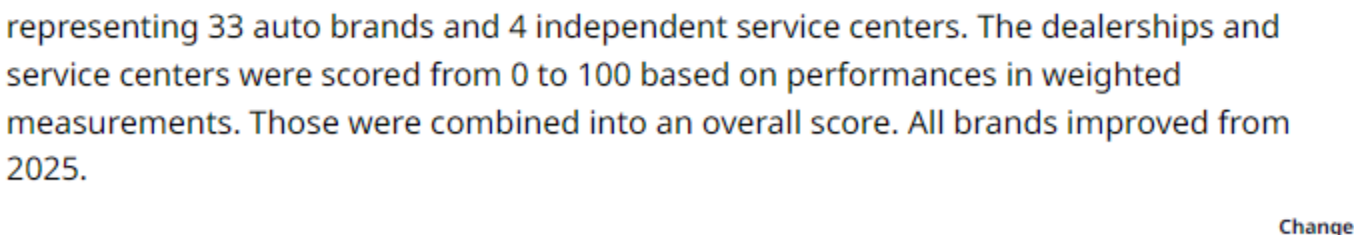


DAVE CANTIN GROUP

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Dave Cantin Group Launches Athlete Investment Services, a Strategic Advisory Practice for Professional Athletes and Automotive Dealer Groups

NEW YORK — July 1, 2026 — Dave Cantin Group (DCG), a leading automotive retail M&A advisory firm, today announced the launch of DCG Athlete Investment Services, focused on advising dealership groups and professional athletes in developing strategic business partnerships that create value for both parties



Service scheduling improves

Pied Piper submitted 6,538 service requests via website and phone to dealerships representing 33 auto brands and 4 independent service centers. The dealerships and service centers were scored from 0 to 100 based on performances in weighted measurements. Those were combined into an overall score. All brands improved from 2025.

Brand		Score	Change from 2025
Volkswagen		73	▲ 11
Volvo		71	▲ 13
Acura		70	▲ 9
BMW		70	▲ 6
Mazda		70	▲ 6
Nissan		70	▲ 8
Cadillac		69	▲ 7
Honda		69	▲ 6
Mini		69	▲ 3
Porsche		69	▲ 7
Audi		68	▲ 9
Chevrolet		68	▲ 12
Ford		68	▲ 7
Toyota		68	▲ 7
GMC		67	▲ 6
Infiniti		66	▲ 3
Lexus		66	▲ 2
Mercedes-Benz		66	▲ 6
Industry average		66	▲ 7
Hyundai		65	▲ 9
Jaguar		65	▲ 8
Land Rover		65	▲ 7
Subaru		65	▲ 4
Buick		62	▲ 7
Kia		61	▲ 2
Mitsubishi		61	▲ 7
Chrysler		60	▲ 11
Fiat		59	▲ 7
Jeep		59	▲ 7
Lincoln		59	▲ 9
Genesis		58	▲ 4
Dodge		55	▲ 5
Ram		52	▲ 10
Alfa Romeo		45	▲ 3

Source: 2026 Pied Piper Service Scheduling Effectiveness Study

How top brands are effective in service scheduling

Volkswagen was the top brand based on its dealerships’ stellar performance making service appointments by phone.

More than two-thirds of service customers still prefer to schedule appointments by phone, according to Pied Piper.

VW’s improvement is a “direct result of many of the actions that we have taken over the last 18 to 24 months to improve our customer experience,” said David Durant, senior vice president of after sales at Volkswagen of America.

Volkswagen’s score grew 11 points to 73; it ranked seventh last year. The industry average in 2026 rose seven points to 66.

After several years of performing poorly on the JD Power Customer Service Index survey, VW enrolled the majority of dealerships in its certified scheduling program, which included website audits and ensuring third-party vendors met VW standards, Durant said.

VW improved scheduling capability through its myVW mobile app, Durant said, eliminating unnecessary phone calls to dealerships from customers who preferred to schedule through the app. And dealership service teams could then focus on call-in customers “not as comfortable with online scheduling,” he said.

Volvo also did well, finishing second. The luxury brand rose 13 points to 71.

100 percent of Volvo customers were able to schedule a service appointment for a specific date and time through the website, the study found. A poor phone scheduling performance kept it out of the top spot, however.

“We’re working closely with our retailers on sales and service call handling, including training, coaching and best practices,” a Volvo spokesperson said. “At the end of the day, our focus is making it easy for customers to reach Volvo and our retailers, however they chose to connect.”

Both online and phone service scheduling matter; AI creates challenges

Every brand improved its overall score in the study, but there continues to be some issues.

For example, 16 percent of callers in the study attempting to schedule didn't get an offer to set up service at a specific date and time.

Among that percentage included some 30 “large national” franchised dealership groups, smaller groups and single-point stores, and independent centers, O'Hagan said.

Customers were unable to schedule service on some brand websites more than 10 percent of the time, said Cameron O'Hagan, Pied Piper’s vice president of metrics and analytics.

Volkswagen is focusing on both phone and online appointments, Durant said. Its dealers work with outside vendor Shift Digital that handles inbound calls and schedules service appointments directly into stores’ dealership management system. That’s had a “significant improvement” in phone scheduling response times, he said.

Independent service providers, while performing poorly on website scheduling, were better at scheduling by telephone than dealers, Pied Piper found.

If customers have a poor telephone experience with a dealership, then call an independent service provider, “there’s a pretty good chance that they have a good interaction, and then they are gone as a customer,” Cameron O'Hagan said.

Many dealerships also are turning to artificial intelligence software for scheduling.

AI did boost service scheduling efficiency, Pied Piper found, but a third of AI-to-human transfers failed, typically an average of one and a half minutes into the call, essentially wasting the customer’s time.

It's important dealership general managers and service managers monitor how effective any technology is, including AI, Fran O'Hagan said.

“The ones who say, ‘oh, I’m going to buy some technology and now its hands-off,’ they’re the ones who are going to have problems,” he said.

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Unlock Hidden Used Vehicle Opportunities Already in Your Database

Every vehicle sale creates future acquisition potential, but many dealerships miss the signals. The Cox Automotive Fixed Ops and Ownership Study found that most customers