

The Dealer's Guide to Effective SEO Strategy

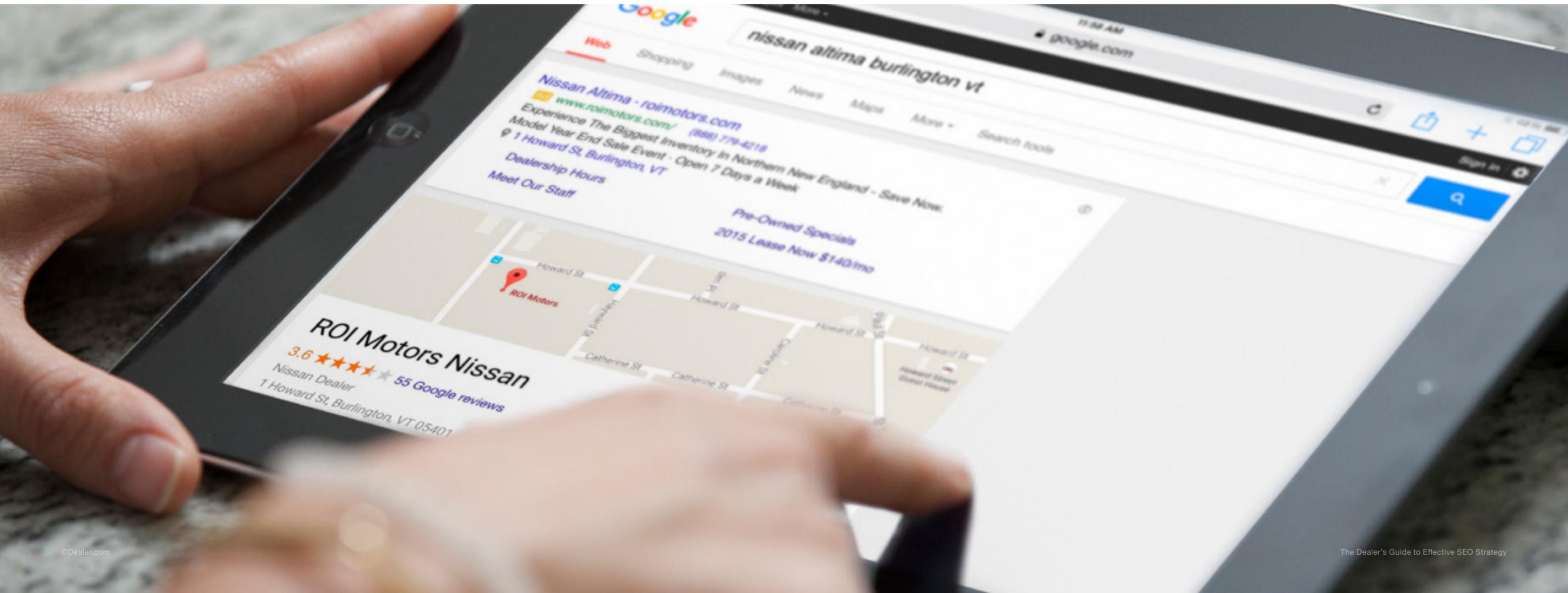
How to win more traffic, and more leads,
through the power of content.

It's time to get resourceful.

Search engine optimization is rapidly evolving.

As their algorithms become more sophisticated, the major search engines increasingly reward websites that offer high quality content to their visitors. For dealers, this means that high rankings depend on connecting the right people to the right digital resources—from vehicles they're searching for, to parts, service and special offers. Plus, in the increasingly mobile digital landscape, successful SEO also requires a seamless website experience on every device.

Accordingly, dealers who embrace SEO as part of a holistic digital strategy centered on engaging, high-impact digital resources tailored for every device experience will have the greatest potential for search engine visibility and the traffic and leads that follow. The following pages will introduce this strategic approach to content, focusing on three key “pillars” of a progressive SEO strategy. They will also provide best practices for implementation and highlight success stories at real dealerships.



The Three Pillars of SEO Performance

If there was ever a shortcut to high search rankings, it's long gone—victim to the ever-advancing sophistication of search engine algorithms. Today, creating a SEO-optimized website begins with quality content built for your customers. Three key pillars should guide your strategy:

1. Relevance

Relevant content resonates with ALL the types of customers you're looking to attract—from new sales leads to loyal customers who might be interested in service, specials, or parts.



2. Location

Locally-optimized content accounts for your particular business strategy—whether you're looking to blanket a particular market or strategically reach into new ones.



3. Personalization

Personalized content speaks directly to your customers, not the search engine algorithms. It carves a clear path between your customers and your brand voice and values.



As you create your content around these pillars, you can expect to begin seeing steady performance gains in the key performance indicators that matter most to your digital performance:

- Visits: Total traffic to website.
- Organic Visitors: Search engine traffic.
- Form Submissions: Leads from qualified visitors.

1. Relevance

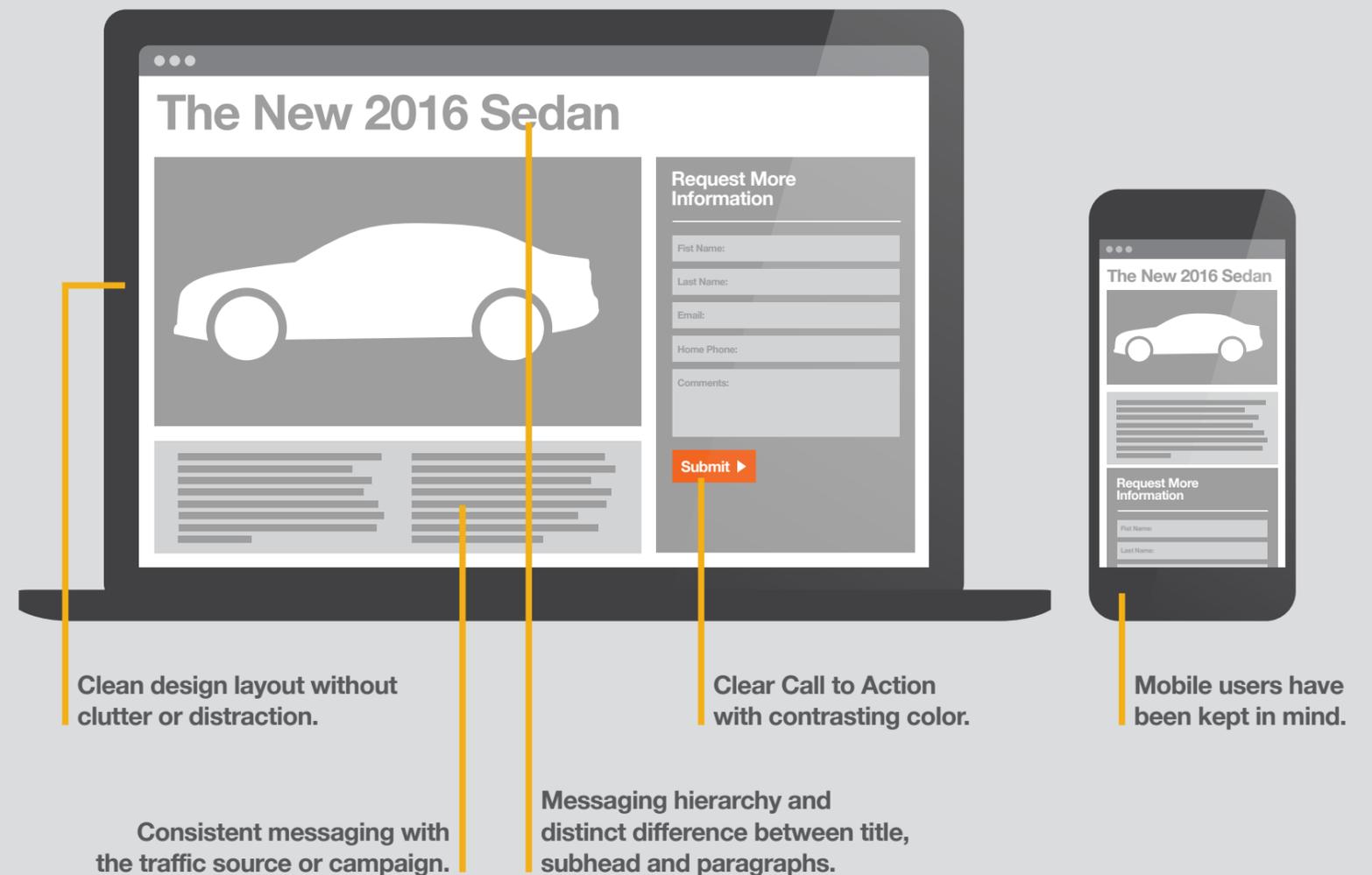


Create resource pages, not landing pages.

Today, low quality landing pages with duplicate content are increasingly ignored while content that serves as a resource for customers is rewarded.

The difference? A landing page is designed as a destination for a click—like a basic sales brochure. A resource actually encourages engagement, from clicks to conversions, and keeps a digital conversation going. A resource delves into the topics and answers the questions that people are researching. It's built for relevance and customer experience—two of the main factors driving modern organic visibility.

Key features of a resource page:



1. Relevance



Three ways to transform your landing pages into customer resources:

Leverage your blog to create timely and relevant content.

Whether blogs are “good” for SEO will depend on the quality of the content you include. Blogs may be used as a CRM tool, a thought leadership resource, a PR extension and much more.

Take a holistic approach to SEO.

If you work with an SEO partner, share ALL of your business values and goals—not just your inventory sales targets—to ensure every relevant webpage is configured to anticipate, and answer, all of your customers’ potential queries and needs.

Bring your showroom values to your digital presence.

You anticipate and answer customer questions every day in your store. Why not do it online as well, where today’s shopping process begins? Consider the questions your target customers will want to know the answers to: Where can I get an oil change in Baltimore? How much legroom does the Forrester have compared to the CR-V? How long will it take to drive from downtown Boston to your dealership? Structure webpages and blog content accordingly.

1. Relevance



Case Study

Shortline Subaru increases relevance with comparison shopping resources.

Objective

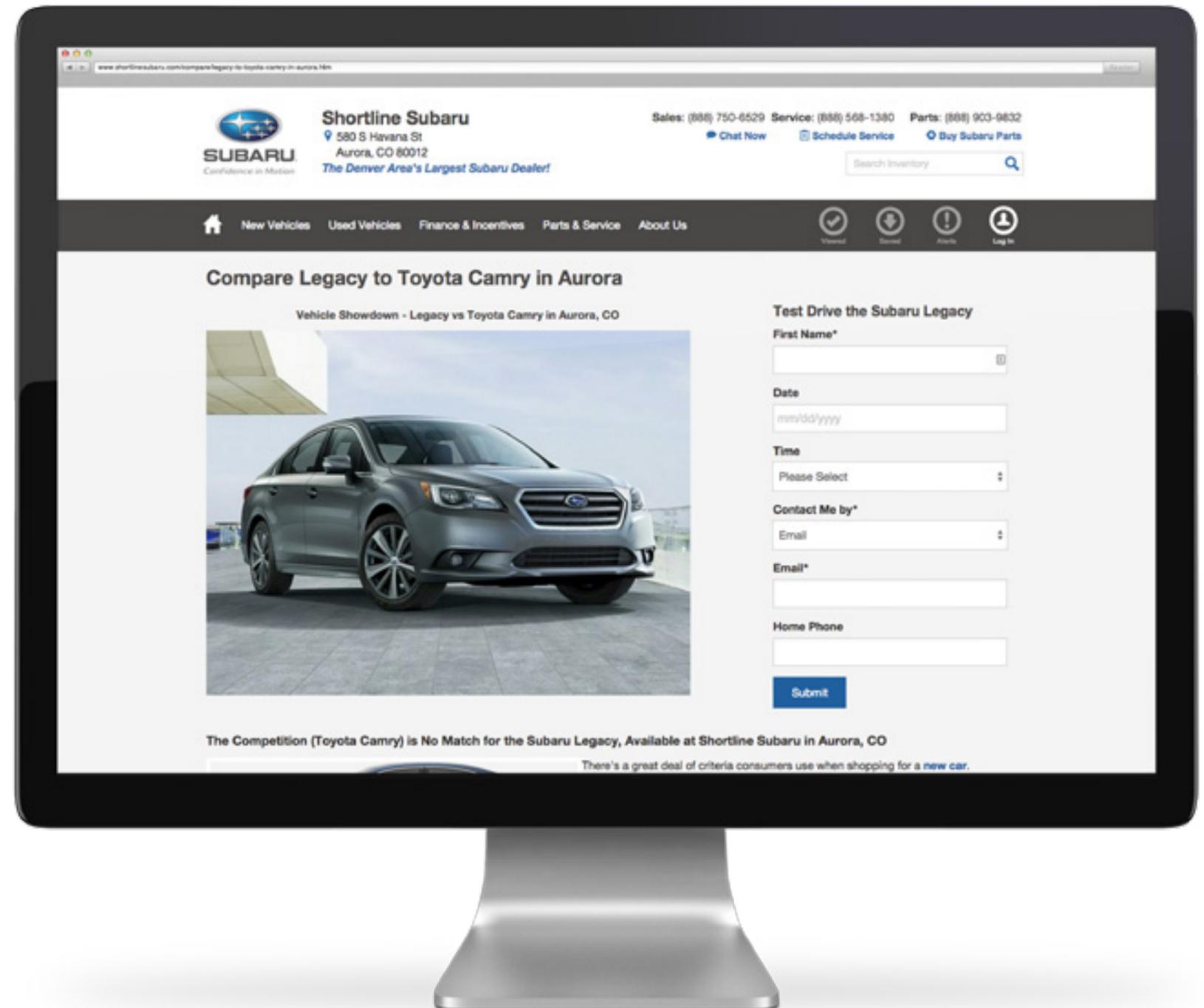
Shortline Subaru sought to increase visibility among local shoppers searching for competing, similar brands.

Action

The dealership created a page that compared the Subaru Legacy with similar models from other manufacturers; the page included specs and photos of multiple vehicles, used 100% original content, and provided a clear opportunity to schedule a test drive.

Result

The page significantly increased overall visibility for Shortline Subaru. It currently fluctuates in the top 5 for “toyota camry aurora,” even though it’s a Subaru site.



2. Location

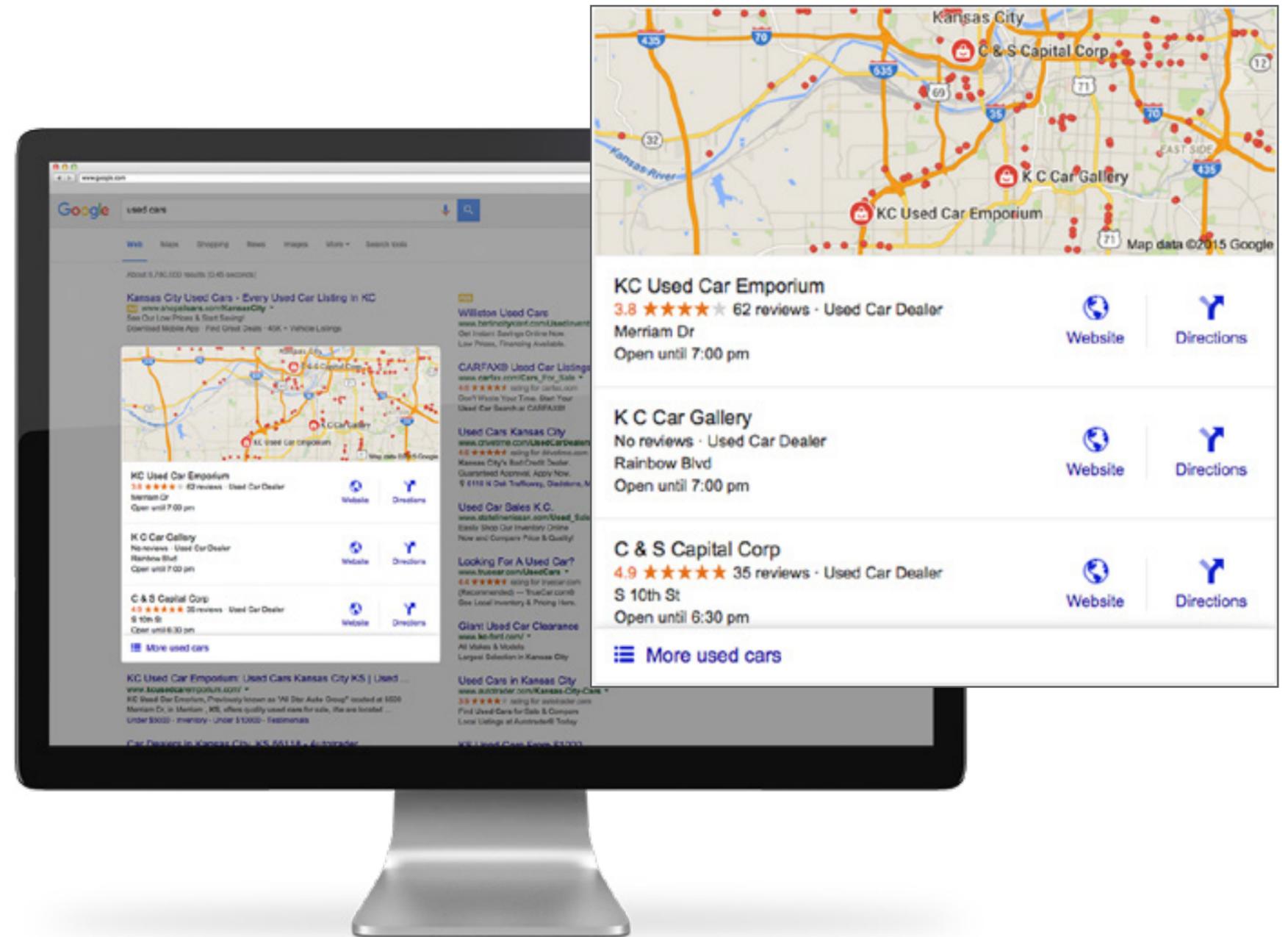


Matter more in your market.

Your digital presence should be about more than just showcasing your inventory.

It's an opportunity to matter more in your local markets, and attract customers to your brand, your values, and vehicles in a meaningful way. Creating content designed to resonate locally will boost the relevance—which in turn will earn higher overall rankings while also increasing your visibility in Google's "pack" results. A function of Google's local algorithm, these listings are powerful due to their prominent placement on results pages.

Along with increased visibility, a regional content focus creates a valuable website experience to local residents. It can elevate your overall site engagement, boost conversion rates and even leadflow.



2. Location



Three ways to optimize for local visibility:

Create content that resonates in your specific market.

Demonstrating that your dealership is a part of the fabric of your community will resonate with customers while helping you rank highly on search engines. For example, if your dealership exists along a commuter corridor, create sales and service content that helps to solve the complexities of living with a long commute—or a resource which shows how to make that life easier and more affordable.

Cultivate your local and regional visibility.

The right content strategy can help you differentiate your dealership locally and attract new business opportunities. For instance, if you want to be known for specific, hard-to-find vehicles or particular services, set up custom pages that highlight this business differentiator. So-called “halo” cars or performance model lines are designed to attract attention and boost the automaker’s brand among key audiences. You can leverage these vehicles and build a reputation in your area as a knowledgeable resource.

Create and optimize your Google+ Local Page, YouTube page and other social profiles.

Social sites will help your overall dealership visibility, and may help you rank higher on organic searches. Publish consistently, and use your social pages to build a positive reputation about your dealership through active participation and thoughtful moderation. Ask your social media partner how strong reputation management benefits both search visibility and consumer confidence in your brand.

2. Location



Case Study

Diehl Automotive gets local with the Renegade.

Objective

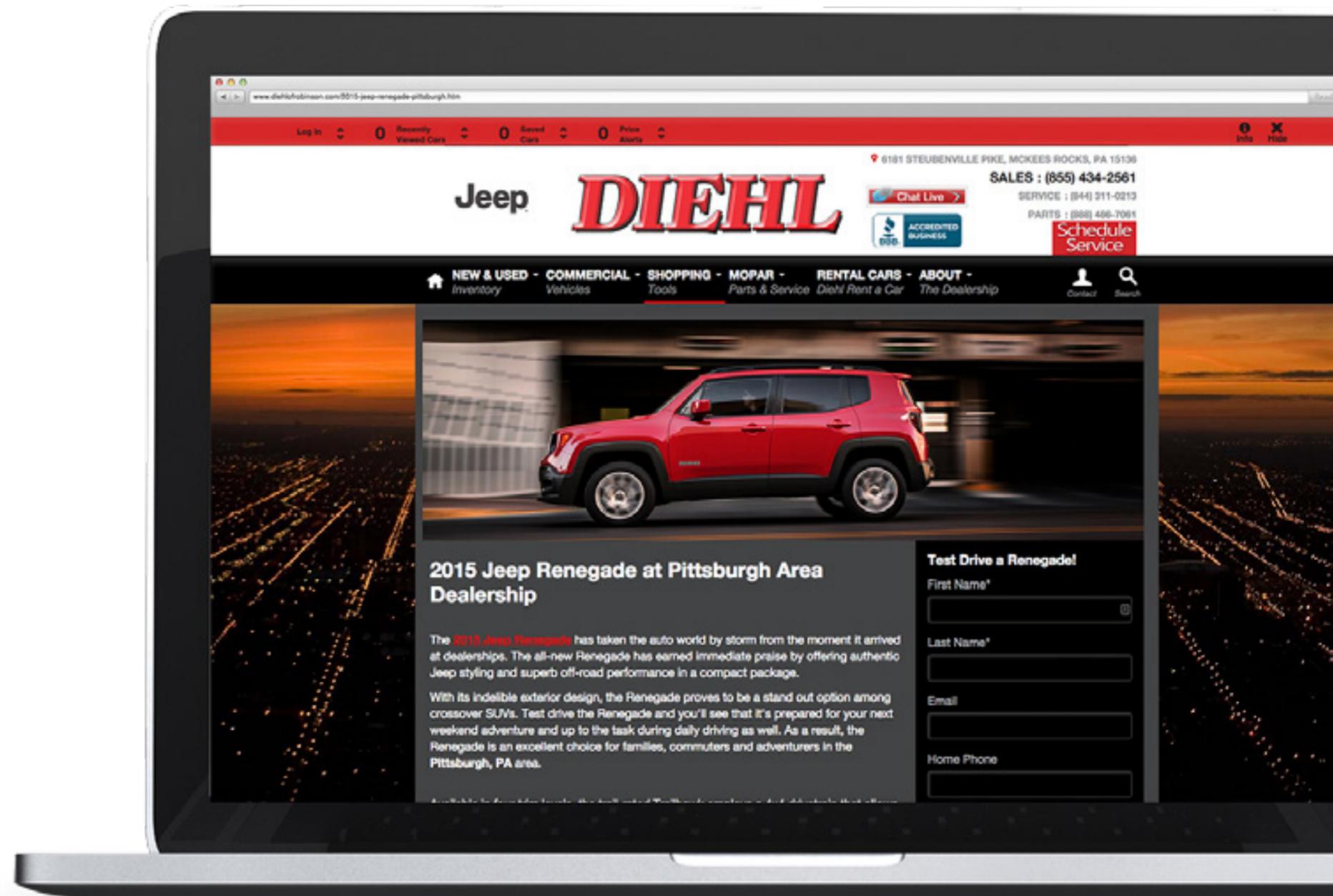
Diehl Automotive sought to spotlight particular models across multiple markets.

Action

The dealership team at Diehl created pages designed to increase organic visibility for the Jeep Renegade by geo-targeting Pittsburgh. The page included high quality 100% original copy, vehicle specs, compliant images, a direct sales path and an interactive map—all of which provided a resource for searchers interested in this particular, popular vehicle.

Result

The page is currently #3 in Google for “jeep renegade pittsburgh” even though the dealership is 35 miles outside of the city.



3. Personalization



Focus on humans, and the algorithm will follow.

SEO success depends on connecting people to your dealership.

Accordingly, your content should give shoppers a feel for what it's like to begin a relationship with your team—one that will ultimately result in the sale of a car. The content on your website is a first step toward creating that positive first impression, and it's a powerful way to ensure that search engines take note of the quality content you're creating.

In short, today's search engines reward personal and local content written for human beings over outdated SEO aimed solely at appeasing algorithms.



3. Personalization



Three ways to personalize your website, and drive high rankings in the process:

Enhance your “About Us” and staff pages.

Everybody has a story to tell, and everyone likes to do business with someone they feel they know—even if it’s just a little bit of color about special interests and hobbies. In fact, even your dealership has a story that will likely show how it is a valued part of the community family. This type of warm and human content helps bridge the “online to in-store” experience, and the fresh content will enhance your SEO rankings.

Share how you care.

Your dealership does more than move metal. Incorporating the “personal” side of your business into your content strategy will help deliver a rich experience that search engines will reward. Start by creating blog content that publicizes your philanthropy, cross-linking to the organizations you partner with and detailing the extent to which you give back to your community.

Share the moments that make your dealership part of the community.

Whether it’s a contest, a car club event or something else, creating content and images about your events and activities provide vital color and depth of character to your digital experience. Remember, keep your YouTube and Google+ pages populated—and refreshed on a consistent basis by using social media best practices.

3. Personalization



Case Study

Waconia Dodge, Chrysler and Jeep gets personal.

Objective

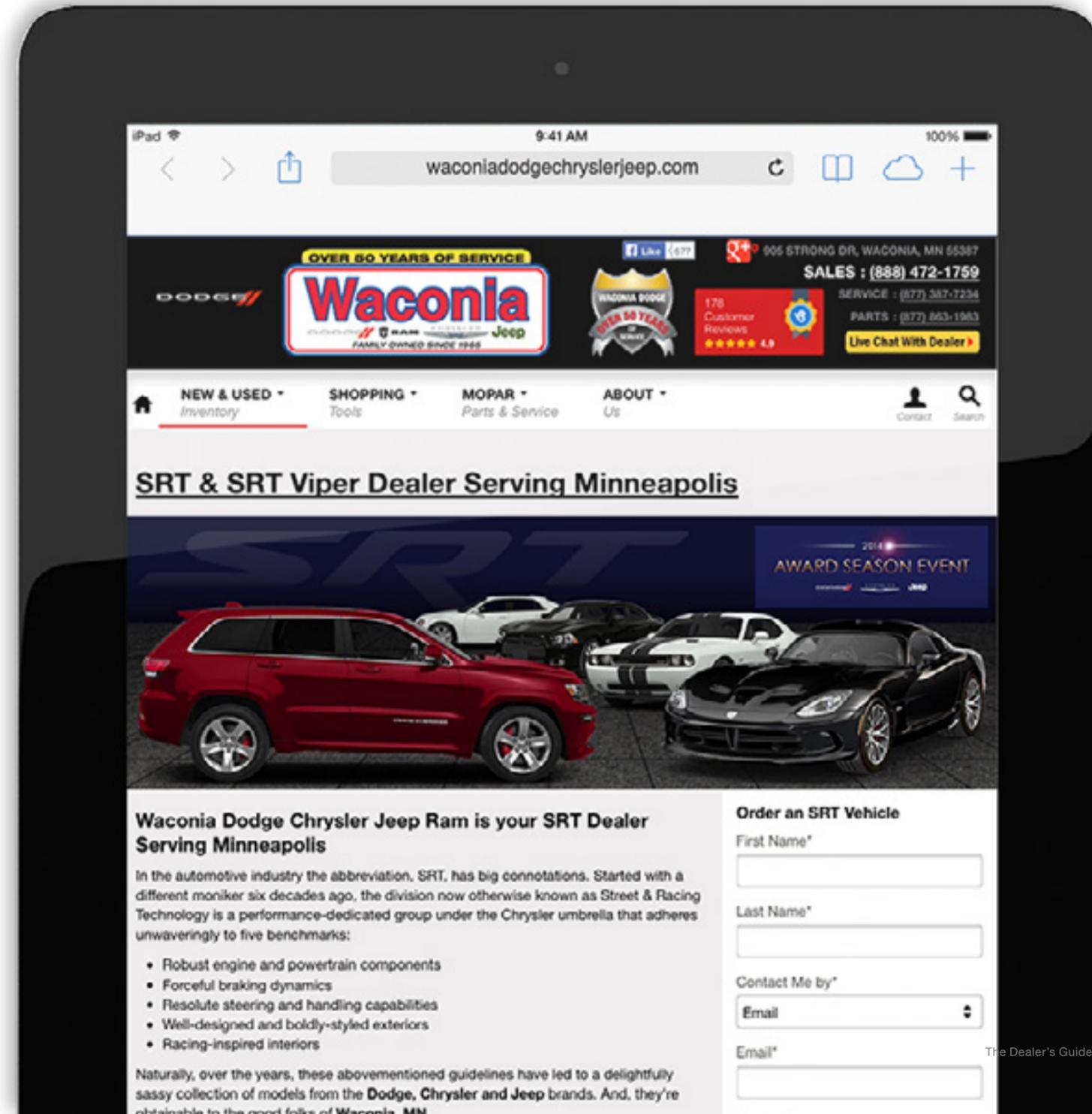
This family-owned dealership sought to connect with customers seeking high-performance models.

Action

Using quality content and compliant images, the Waconia team created a custom page that allowed them to retain visibility and rankings for Viper and SRT models, even when the cars were not in inventory.

Result

The page currently ranks #1 for “minneapolis viper dealer”, “minneapolis srt dealer”, “minneapolis srt” and #2 for “minneapolis viper”.



Key Takeaways

Three pillars to SEO success, and how to measure them.

Creating a search optimized website is a continual process of developing good habits, ensuring fundamental SEO best practices are dialed in and building quality content over time. The most successful dealerships don't go it alone, and work with a partner who can combine strategic best practices and a content strategy with the technical science of SEO. However, any dealership can continually refine their SEO strategy, building off of the three pillars of SEO performance:

1. Relevance

- Create resources, not landing pages.
- Solve customer problems: What are your customers looking for? How can that be communicated on your website?



2. Location

- Consider market opportunities within—and beyond—your immediate market.
- Update your Google+ local presence.



3. Personalization

- Instill customer confidence by creating resources that bring your staff and dealership culture to life—including photos, bios and dealership events.



Once you start actively optimizing your approach to SEO, be sure to track the results, adjust and plan your next steps accordingly. Consider tracking the three most critical KPI's:

- Visits: Total traffic to website.
- Organic Visitors: Search engine traffic.
- Form Submissions: Leads from qualified visitors.

Transforming Automotive Retail

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