

Automotive Dealerships' Showrooms and Service Centers: The New Digital Media Frontier

Branding, customer experience and sales can all benefit from the right signage strategy.

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Digital media continues to make inroads into a wide variety of retail spaces, offering businesses an opportunity to promote the brand, educate customers about products and increase overall customer engagement. One vertical in which digital media is driving results is car dealerships, which have two target audiences: potential buyers entering the showroom to look at cars and car owners coming to service centers for repairs or tune-ups. This white paper, sponsored by international digital media applications provider YCD Multimedia, discusses the benefits of digital media in automotive dealerships.

Digital media in the showroom

In the showroom, digital media can be used to create an overall richer buying experience for customers. Digital media is designed to improve the experience so the customer feels comfortable and at ease in the environment. Today, more and more car dealerships are looking at digital media as an effective medium to communicate their brand and create the right ambiance in their showrooms. They also use music suitable to their brand positioning, values and target audience.

Toyota recently wanted to enhance its customers' experience while simultaneously promoting its brand and products. To achieve this goal, Toyota teamed up with YCD Multimedia to create Toyota FM, a radio station that includes 105 automotive centers across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

On this channel, music alternates with clear Toyota messaging. Music creates a calm, pleasant atmosphere for the customer. Remote programming allows for targeted content to be determined by location, calendar and the time of day. Instead of one-size-fits-all content, it is targeted to



Digital media in the showroom increases customer and employee satisfaction and boosts customer awareness of the product.

reflect customer traffic patterns, regional preferences and demographics. The radio station can be scheduled automatically according to centers' individual opening hours. Toyota reported increased customer and employee satisfaction across all of its U.K. locations and higher customer awareness about premium features and post-purchase service plans.

“Personalizing music and commercial messages substantially enhanced the Toyota customer experience, creating an exciting and stimulating brand experience in the showrooms,” said Neil Broad, national manager for Toyota in the United Kingdom.

But digital media provides more than just a more welcoming, pleasant atmosphere. It also can enhance sales and customer knowledge of the inventory. Customers can use touchscreen displays to browse through a dealership's entire catalogue. Instead of having to wait for a salesperson, a customer can take the initiative and use the signage to learn about the different models of cars available and the different pricing options. They can even learn about makes and models that aren't on the showroom floor. Customers get to visualize what a car looks like in different models and with different features. Such capability saves the dealership valuable space by not forcing it to have every model of a car on display, giving the showroom a more open, less cluttered feel.

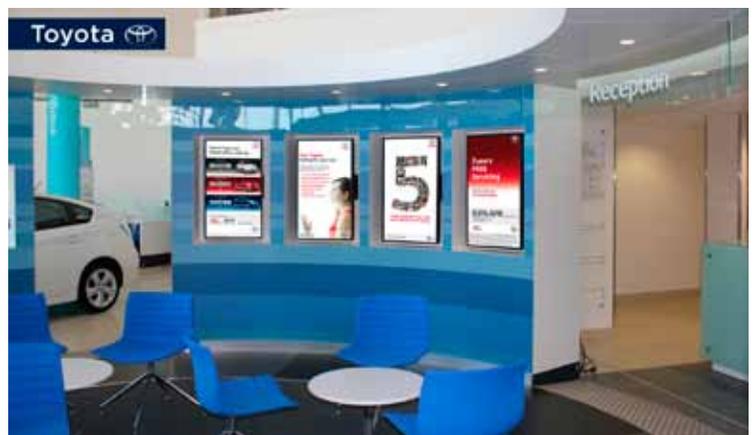
“The whole setup, from the color scheme right through to the digital screens, is exceptional and now provides a first class, comfortable and modern environment for our customers,” said Chris Dennis, marketing manager for Toyota World Group. “The staff are delighted and loving their new surroundings.”

If a customer chooses to wait to be seen by a sales associate, the signage can shorten the perceived waiting time by providing entertainment content in the form of news, weather or music channels interspersed with brand messaging. Marketing messages can put customers in more of a buying mindset before the salesperson arrives. This messaging can upsell customers on different features or additional products, compare the dealership's vehicles to competitive vehicles and allow the franchisee the power to offer targeted, local messages to the customers.

Not only can digital media help with sales, branding and customer communication, it also can help with employee training and communication. Digital media can be used to show training content to employees, and it can serve as a tool for sales associates to research and learn more about the vehicles they are selling.

Digital media in service centers

In most people's minds, the image of a service center is a dark, dirty one. They're typically viewed by customers as grubby,



Creating a more pleasant environment with digital media can help improve what is typically a stressful experience.

industrial settings that people visit out of necessity, not choice. Customers at service centers usually feel stressed and inconvenienced about their car needing repairs, and are anxious about the financial implications.

Because customers in service centers are often anxious, digital media can be used to keep customers entertained while they wait, lightening their moods. In addition, digital media relieves stress by displaying humorous or engaging content. The media also can give the service center a cleaner, more modern feel, as if customers are waiting in a high-end lounge instead of a garage.

The digital media also can upsell additional products or services, as well as offer educational content. Service center customers will likely be interested in hearing tips on topics such as safe winter driving, reducing fuel consumption and road safety.

Just as in the showrooms, service centers can use digital media for employee communications. While many businesses send messages to employees via email, service centers don't have this luxury because most employees are often working on a car and not at a computer. Digital media can be used to relay important messages to employees in a clear, efficient manner.

About the sponsor: *YCD Multimedia was founded in 1999 and has offices in the United States, the United Kingdom and Israel. With more than 2,000 customers around the world, YCD is dedicated to combining state-of-the-art digital signage technology with international media expertise.*