

AS SEEN IN

CANADIAN AUTOWORLD

FOCUS ON MARKETING AND E-COMMERCE

Preparing for the age of electronic transactions



Ian Reilly
FROM THE
CORNER OFFICE

A 2008 industry article on the state of e-commerce in dealerships included predictions from automotive experts that the all-online, “electronic sale” would become the norm for dealers within five years. One expert went so far as to predict the demise of the dealership Internet department because all car deals would be handled over the Web.

While the prediction for an all-online new car deal hasn't fully been realized, there's no denying the automotive industry has taken a number of steps over the past eight years to prepare for an age of electronic transactions.

When it comes to the dealership busi-

ness, the dealers I talk to now are preparing their stores for electronic transactions and an e-commerce model that eventually will encompass the entire buying cycle and all of the activities associated with a purchase.

To do that, they've added a new criterion for evaluating new technologies for the dealership. In addition to seeking tools that help dealership employees be more productive and efficient and that make the dealer's enterprise more profitable, dealers also are judging whether new technologies help support an e-commerce model in every department.

Examples of those tools include implementing new Web technologies that enable consumers to do as much research as possible on the dealer's website – make and model, price, and finance options – all before entering the dealership.

It also means implementing electronic transactions for service and parts, such as systems that enable consumers to make online service appointments on the dealer's website, at any time, in real time.

And, it extends to electronic tools beyond

the dealer's website such as newer payment technologies that integrate with the DMS.

These tools enable dealers to deliver convenient and secure payment experiences to customers across all channels – in store, online, and over the phone.

These are the kinds of technology tools that help dealers implement processes that save employees time and help make dealerships more efficient.

These same technologies also form the building blocks to facilitate an end-to-end electronic sale in the long run.

It's clear the automotive industry is embracing e-commerce more and more every day.

As dealers prepare for the coming age of electronic transactions, they are examining new tools to make their enterprise more efficient and profitable as well as judging the utility of each tool in supporting e-commerce for the dealership.

Ian Reilly is the vice-president of sales at Reynolds and Reynolds Canada. **RAV**

