



LEADVENTURE®

The State of the Dealer

What Over 40,000 Customers
Reveal About Digital Growth,
Demand, and the Road Ahead

2026

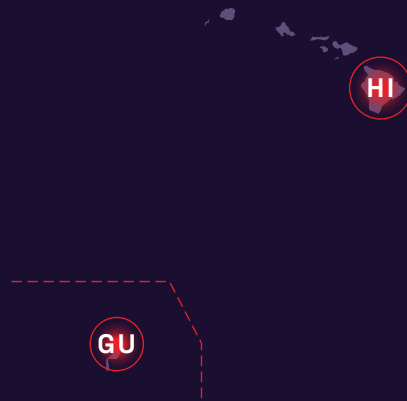
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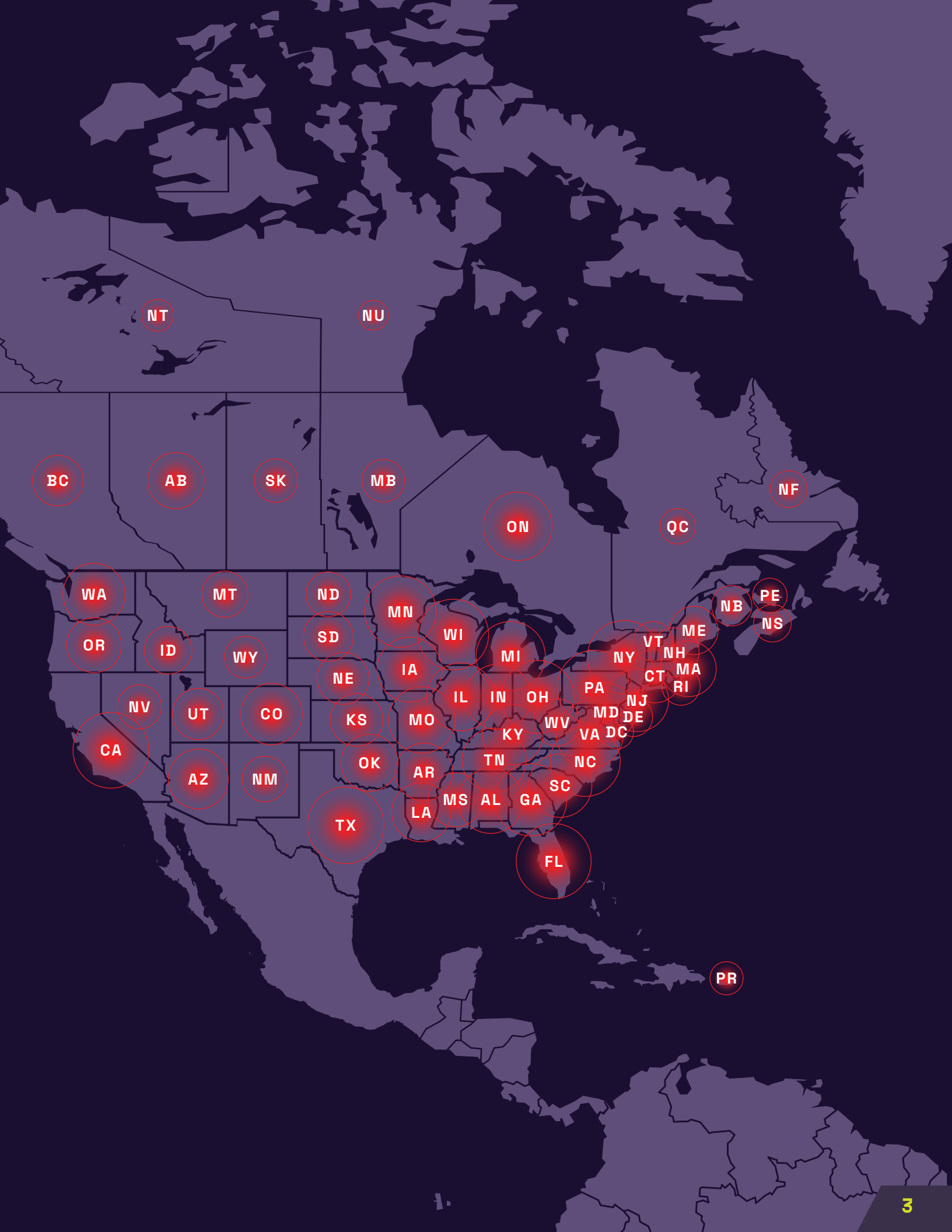
Executive Summary



The goal of The State of the Dealer: 2026 is not to showcase data. It is to define what “good” looks like in 2026—across the full buyer loop—so you can identify where demand leaks and fix it fast.

This report draws on observed behavior across **40,000+** dealerships, paired with insights from industry leaders working directly with dealers every day.





The 2026 Pressure Is Real

Teams are leaner. Tool stacks are heavier. Paid attention costs more. Demand is uneven. Buyers move faster—and “discovery” is getting filtered through AI and aggregated shopping experiences.

The penalty for weak fundamentals is higher than it was even a year ago: incomplete listings, unstable publishing, broken inquiry paths, slow responses (especially after hours), and scheduling/confirmation failures that quietly erode demand.

AI is accelerating the divide. Dealers are already using AI to optimize listings, generate content, and predict purchase timing. The question is no longer if AI matters—but whether you are applying it operationally.

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The most pressing challenge is to utilize the power of AI in our dealerships. AI is like a river—if your competitors are already in it, standing on the bank guarantees you fall behind.”

DAVID PARKER

President, Parker Business Planning



What Winning Looks Like in 2026

It’s not size, spend, or experimentation. It’s reliability across the loop: clean publishing, complete listings, working inquiry paths, consistent follow-up (including after-hours), service scheduling that holds together, and reporting leadership trusts.

This report establishes a credible baseline for what “good” looks like in 2026. It’s built on observed dealer and shopper behavior across the LeadVenture ecosystem—not opinion. Data is used selectively to support clear standards and decisions you can act on right away.

The dealers who win in 2026 will not chase every new thing. They’ll execute the fundamentals exceptionally well—so there are fewer dead ends and fewer silent failures at every stage of the buyer loop. This report shows what to check and how to lock it in.



The 2026 operating environment will be defined by dealer leaders who adapt and improve at a record pace. The past three years have demanded resilience and adjustment. **Now the requirement shifts from reaction to disciplined acceleration.**

JARED BURT

CEO, Herohub, "The Dealership Performance Divide"

HEROHUB®

What you get from this report:

01 A clear baseline for what "good" looks like in 2026

02 A closing checklist your leadership team can run

03 Proof points based on observed signals across the ecosystem (not opinions)

Role Index: How to Read This Report



OEM Decision Makers

AI and discovery changes, inventory discipline, top brand visibility, win the race to discovery, LeadVenture ecosystem



Marketing Leaders

Industry trends, 2026 strategy playbook, pass/fail checklist



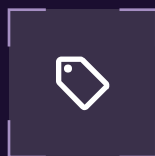
Owners / GMs

Executive Summary, industry trends, winner-takes-most reality, 2026 strategy playbook, pass/fail checklist, LeadVenture ecosystem



Parts / Service Techs

Service scheduling, post-sale follow-up



Sales Managers

Modern buyer loop, after-hours capture, inventory merchandising, nurture/retargeting basics



Tech Ops / IT

2026 complexity, AI and discovery changes

02

Industry Trends:

What's Changing in 2026



The 2026 Backdrop: Stabilization, Not a Reset

The whiplash is over. This isn't a "reset." It's a stress test.

High capital costs, rising compliance burdens, and polarized demand can expose weaknesses you could ignore before. When attention costs more, small cracks become real leaks.

In a tough market, stores make less money from "new ideas" and more from other things:

- ◆ Fewer broken handoffs
- ◆ Cleaner information
- ◆ Tighter weekly discipline
- ◆ A buyer experience that works even when you're busy, short-staffed, or closed



The Modern Path to Purchase Is Now a Loop

The path to purchase is more multi-session and “research-heavy.” Shoppers browse, leave, return, compare, and even involve a second decision-maker. That’s why page views outpace leads: people are “circling” before they commit.

This is not a linear funnel. It’s a connected loop that turns unit and service demand into repeat business.

Performance breaks down most often at the handoffs between these stages.





The 2026 Reality: Complexity Is the Tax on Growth

Complexity didn't show up as one big change. It piled up—more tools, more channels, higher expectations, and leaner teams. Complexity is survivable. **Mystery failures are not.**

And the margin for error is smaller than it used to be. Structural cost floors are rising (tariffs/surcharges, compliance load), so when demand leaks out of the process, you feel it faster.

AI is becoming more common in daily dealership tasks such as sorting leads, scheduling appointments, taking inspection notes, detecting fraud, and reviewing accounts payable.

As a result, managing and overseeing these processes is becoming increasingly important.

AI is accelerating the divide. Dealers are already using AI to optimize listings, generate content, and predict purchase timing. The question is no longer if AI matters—but whether you are applying it operationally.



AI Is Reshaping Discovery—and Only What's Reliable Gets Seen

AI didn't replace the fundamentals. It raised the penalty for weak fundamentals.

Shoppers are using AI tools to summarize options and narrow choices faster—often before they ever click into your site. If your listings are incomplete, your pricing fields are inconsistent, or your inquiry paths are broken, you don't just lose conversion. You can lose discovery.

What's changing right now:

- ◆ **Discovery Compresses:** Shoppers compare faster and trust what's easy to validate
- ◆ **Expectations Rise:** Buyers expect fast answers and clear next steps (no dead ends)
- ◆ **Trust Signals Compound:** Reviews, consistency, and accuracy influence humans and AI summaries

“

I've been scared of AI. I'll flat out say it. But after seeing it in action, it opened my eyes. It feels like you're talking to somebody—not clicking through a maze.”

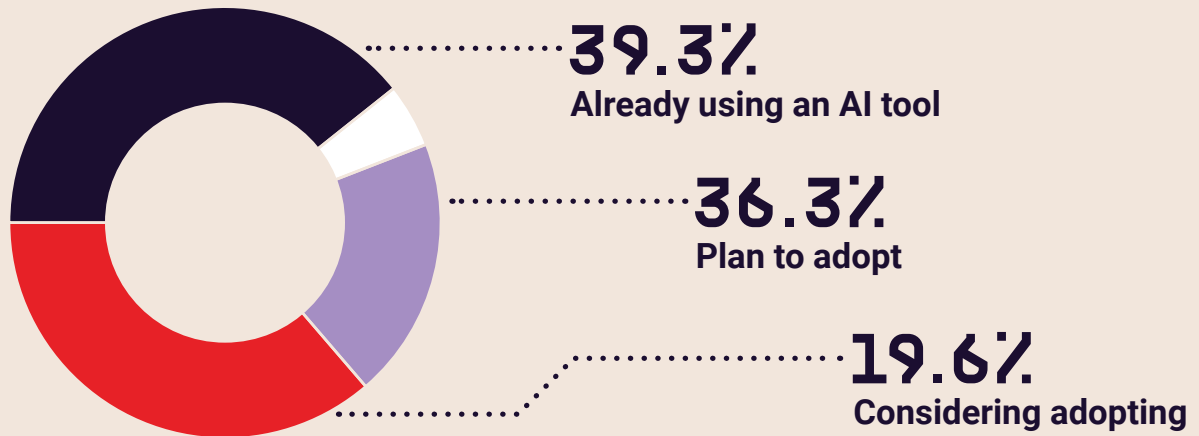
DARIN AGENTER

President, Allstar Service Center

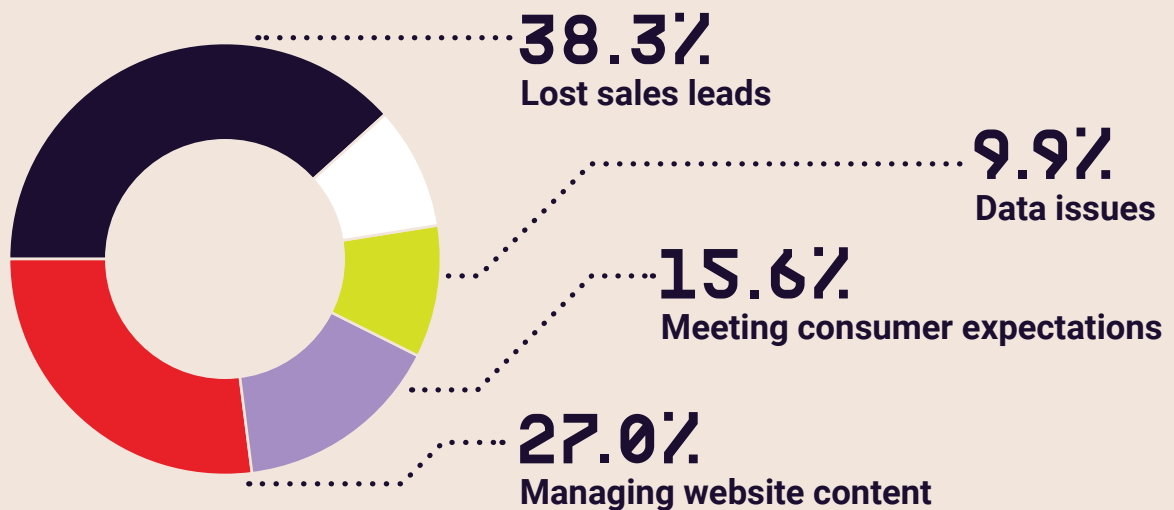


One consumer signal worth taking seriously: In Cars.com's "AI in Car Shopping Consumer Survey," **97%** of AI users said AI will impact their car purchase decisions.

AI is no longer a novelty inside dealerships—it's becoming embedded in daily routines. Dealers are using AI to predict repurchase readiness, write SEO-ready content and follow-up messages, and streamline service documentation. See how quickly AI tools are showing up inside stores (from a survey pool of 168 dealers):



And when dealers were asked what challenge they want AI to help solve (from a survey pool of 141 dealers):



AI won't replace your team, but a dealer using AI effectively may outperform one who isn't.

Bottom line: AI will not "paper over" broken processes. It will amplify what already exists—good or bad. The advantage is not replacing people. It is removing manual friction so your team can focus on conversion and relationships.



Inventory Discipline Is the Silent Profit Lever

Across verticals, aging inventory is one of the fastest ways to erode margin and increase risk.

Industry lending benchmarks suggest:

GOOD

Two complete inventory turnovers annually.

+ BETTER

Up to four complete inventory turnovers annually.

USED INVENTORY

Three to six complete inventory turnovers per year.

Too much non-current inventory is one of the leading causes of dealer failure. It quietly increases floor plan expense, forces margin erosion, and drains cash. Top-performing stores treat aging as a weekly performance metric—not an end-of-quarter surprise.



Our industry benchmark is to stock no more than 20% of the current model year's purchases by the end of July when the next year's models are introduced, and to reduce to no more than 10% by the end of August."

DAVID PARKER

President, Parker Business Planning



Seasonal Demand Trends

Seasonality still matters—but the takeaway in 2026 is less “hope the market helps” and more “be ready when buyers show up.”



Agriculture

- ◆ The agriculture market is stable but seasonal: online shopping activity rises into spring, then softens through late summer and fall, with steady interest overall but highly concentrated buying windows.
- ◆ Dealers should expect a competitive year where conversion, speed, and follow-up decide who gets the sale.



Heavy Equipment

- ◆ Online demand is significantly stronger than last year, with shoppers doing deeper research without immediately contacting dealers.
- ◆ Going into 2026, dealers should prepare for higher volume and tougher competition by staffing and responding faster during peak periods, and by improving conversion basics so the increased traffic turns into more real opportunities.



Independent Auto

- ◆ Independent auto supply appears stable and managed tightly, with less dramatic seasonality than other verticals. Performance will hinge less on “market tailwinds” and more on how well you source and cycle vehicles.
- ◆ Spring and Q4 are prime acquisition windows. Build two major campaign flights with an offer, inventory refresh, and staffing coverage.
- ◆ Speed matters: every extra day in reconditioning is lost selling time in a stable inventory environment.



Marine

- ◆ Marine is showing tight major “new unit” categories on a year-over-year basis, with an average **20.81% decrease per dealer**.
- ◆ Excess non-current inventory is the #1 risk factor for marine dealers. Staying current is not optional—it is survival.
- ◆ Off-season isn't dead—it plants the seed for spring performance. Dealers who run winterization/service messaging and “reserve for spring” maintain a pipeline.



Outdoor Power Equipment (OPE)

- ◆ OPE shows a clear seasonal cycle from January into late spring/early summer and then trends down through the rest of the year.
- ◆ 2026 success will come from execution rather than a huge market lift. Front-load marketing and staffing coverage ahead of spring peak, then shift later in the year to conversion, follow-up, and service/parts offers to keep revenue steady as shopping and leads naturally cool.



Powersports

- ◆ Dealers are operating with meaningfully fewer units on hand than last year, with an average **14.43% decrease per dealer**.
- ◆ Powersports dealers are competing in a market where availability matters more than endless selection.
- ◆ Pre-season matters more than peak. The biggest lead wave tends to be late winter to spring. Plan your strongest demand-capture and “season readiness” messaging before everyone else ramps spend.



Recreational Vehicle (RV)

- ◆ RV inventory is closer to balanced-to-competitive conditions rather than scarcity, **with an average 1.64% increase per dealer**. RV dealers are seeing more traffic, leads, and sales.
- ◆ The new challenge now that supply and demand have stabilized is that dealers need to return to marketing their dealerships to stand out. For 2026, dealers should front-load marketing and sales readiness in the first half of the year and early Q3 (when demand and lead intent are naturally strongest), then focus the back half of the year on nurturing traffic to become next year's customers.



Tire & Service

- ◆ The market is healthy overall, but half of shops are not maintaining enough marketing throughout the year, and a meaningful segment is operating on thin margins and highly sensitive to cash flow.
- ◆ Tariff-driven price increases and technology advancements in vehicles are compelling shops to raise labor rates and invest more in certifications and technician training.
- ◆ Your #1 competitive advantage is appointment immediacy. “Book today/tomorrow” beats “10% off” if competitors can't get them in.



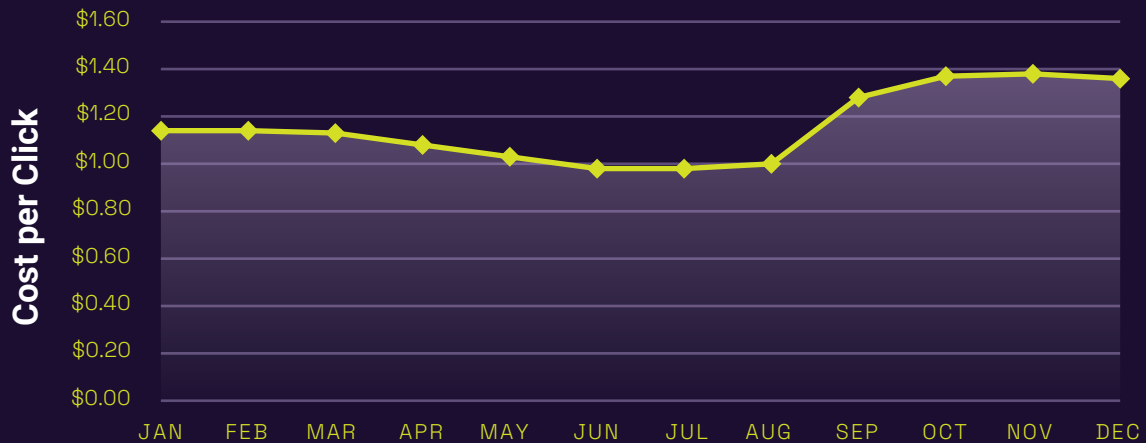
Trailer

- ◆ Trailer has a healthy, steady market with improvements compared to last year. Leads are also higher, but they soften later in the year, suggesting that while people continue browsing, fewer are contacting dealers.
- ◆ The 2026 opportunity is less about “getting more traffic” and more about converting the traffic you already have.



Paid Search Got Pricier While Demand Softened

Dealers are feeling a painful combo: **Cost-per-click (CPC)** rose 19.3% by the end of 2025, while click-through rates (CTR) and conversion rates dropped.



This is due to several factors:

- ◆ Affordability sensitivity is stretching decision cycles.
- ◆ Competition for paid placements increases cost.
- ◆ Shoppers compare longer, convert later.
- ◆ Term extension behavior can slow replacement cycles, raising the importance of retention and service value.

A simple reminder that's easy to forget when you're staring at CPC: Cost alone isn't the truth. Competition is the hidden driver.

What to watch instead:

- ◆ Cost per inquiry
- ◆ Cost per conversion
- ◆ Lead quality by channel (not just volume)



Track the whole funnel. Clicks are nice, but cost per inquiry and cost per conversion will tell you if paid search is working.”

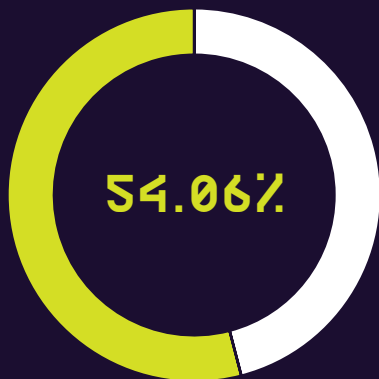
BILL KOEHN

Director of Digital Marketing, LeadVenture





After-Hours Is Now the Middle of the Funnel



You might run “open to close.” Your shoppers don’t. Buyers shop on their schedule, and **54.06%** of them are online outside of standard business hours. That means after-hours is where discovery turns into consideration—especially on mobile.

After-hours coverage is no longer a “nice feature.” It demands protection.

The businesses that turn after-hours traffic into tomorrow’s leads are the ones whose websites keep the digital “lights on” even after the doors close. Detailed inventory listings, after-hours coverage, or AI chat, and even online checkout let shoppers do things on their schedule.



Vehicle Detail Pages Are the New Showroom Floor

If inventory is not consistently published and merchandised, conversion improvements will not matter because buyers never see the unit. Buyers want to pre-inspect online. Photos reduce uncertainty. Pricing context helps them self-qualify. Clear specifications prevent wasted trips.

In a sample of 50 dealers with the highest inventory turn, we found:

83.30%

of units include pricing

72.05%

of units have at least one image (averaging **10.2** images per unit)

Only
20.92%

of inventory is 90 days or older

More than half of browsing occurs on mobile, making layout clarity and merchandising essential.



Unit Types Shoppers View the Most

Utility Tractor • Compact Track Loader
Conventional with Sleeper • Coupe • Pontoon
Residential Zero-Turn Mower • Touring Motorcycle
Travel Trailer • Enclosed Car Hauler

Top Brands Earning the Most VDP Views by Vertical (by Market Share)

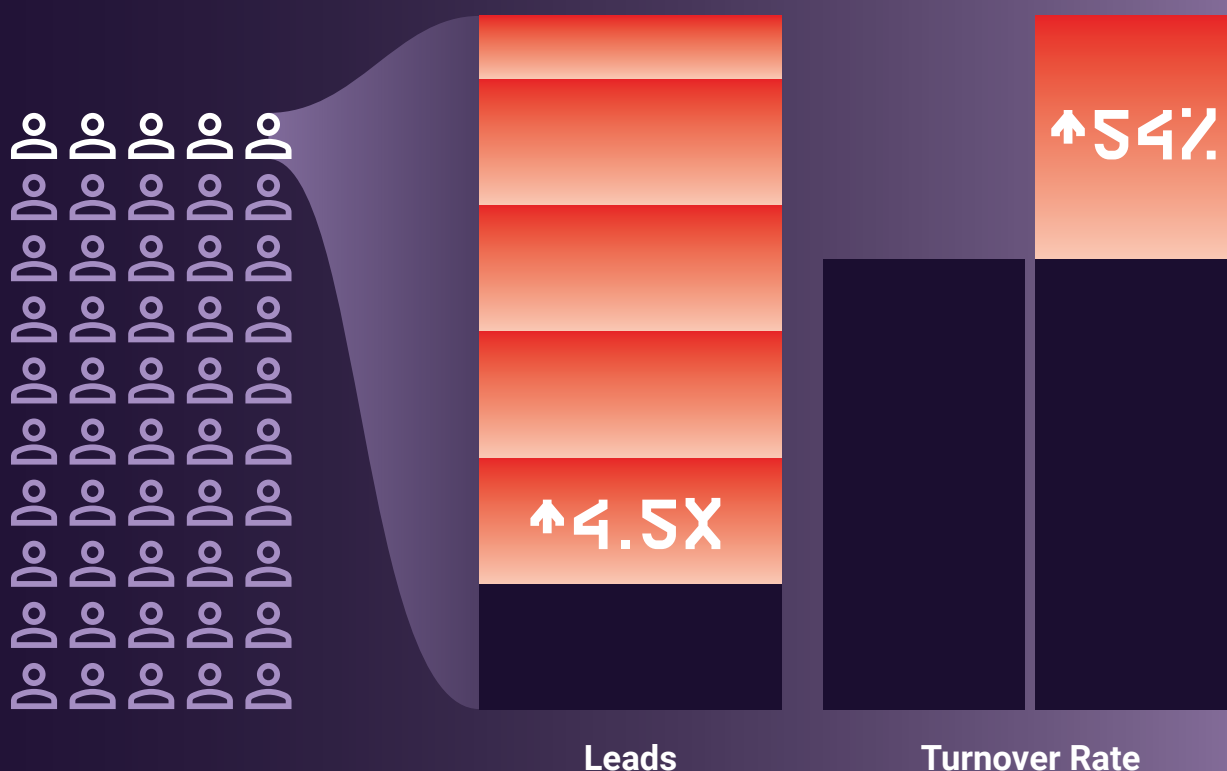




Winner-Takes-Most Markets Are Real

In many markets, demand concentrates. Execution compounds: reliability, merchandising, and follow-up determine who captures share.

The top 10% of dealers drive 4.5x more leads and turn inventory 54% faster on average.



This isn't just "the rich get richer." It's what happens when the buyer loop is reliable:

- ◆ Units are visible where shoppers look
- ◆ Listings answer questions
- ◆ Inquiry paths work
- ◆ Response is consistent
- ◆ Follow-up doesn't die after the first touch

In a stress test market, "good" is the store that runs fewer leaks weekly.

03

What It Takes to Be Successful in 2026

The Growth Engine in 2026

In plain terms, a growth engine comes down to three outcomes:

- 01** Bring in more buyers
- 02** Increase customer value (sales + service + repeat business)
- 03** Run it in one connected loop so nothing slips through the cracks





In 2026, Reliability Is the Strategy

**You don't get there by piling on tactics.
You get there by building a loop that holds together:**

- ◆ Inventory shows up where shoppers search
- ◆ The site is easy to shop on
- ◆ Every inquiry lands
- ◆ Every handoff works
- ◆ Follow-up continues beyond the first response

**Reliability is the whole game, because every broken step
leaks demand you already earned (and often paid for).**

The 2026 Strategy Playbook

Buyers bounce between Google searches, maps, social marketplaces, YouTube walkarounds, text messages, phone calls, and “is it still available?” moments.

Your job is simple to say and hard to execute: **Show up early. Prove you are genuine. Make the next step painless. Then deliver an experience that confirms trust.**

Below is a stage-by-stage playbook for what “good” looks like.

Win the Race to Discovery: Reliability & Consistency

The trigger is usually a life moment:

- ◆ “Need a family RV for summer.”
- ◆ “Truck for work.”
- ◆ “Boat for the lake.”
- ◆ “My unit needs service before the season.”
- ◆ “Street bike for commuting.”

“

Customers research across multiple brands and narrow to a short list. As giants chip away at small-business market share, adapting has become essential. We want to show up where they shop and capture as much visibility as possible.”

CHAD WHEELER

Online Specialist, Stark Street Lawn & Garden



Then come broad searches and social: “best,” “cost,” “reviews,” “near me,” “common problems,” “is X model worth it.” Maps and local listings matter here. Local search results are influenced mainly by relevance, distance, and prominence (popularity).

If you want to win discovery in 2026, build your strategy ahead of “peak season.”

Don't Skip the Basics of Online Discovery

Even with AI influencing search behavior, Google still matters. Keep your discovery strategy basic—and correct. You should have consistent business info across listings (name/address/phone/hours).

Your “about” and “why buy here” content should clearly state:

- ✓ Certifications and expertise
- ✓ What you sell
- ✓ Why you carry certain brands/lines
- ✓ What services you provide

Treat your Google Business Profile like a sales and service storefront:

- ✓ Correct categories (sales and service)
- ✓ Accurate hours (including seasonal)
- ✓ Real photos
- ✓ Real departments
- ✓ Fresh posts tied to arrivals, events, and service seasonality
- ✓ Reviews that mention what you sell/service (not just “great place!”)

Keep an eye on other platforms (Yelp/Facebook/BBB). AI-driven answers can pull from more than just your Google profile.

Launch Paid Ads Ahead of Peak Demand

Don't “set and forget” your paid ad budget if you live in a seasonal region. Seasonality repeats itself, and a “planned curve” usually beats reactive month-to-month changes.

A practical rhythm:

1. Keep an always-on baseline (brand and core high-intent searches)
2. Layer seasonal lift on top
3. Review weekly; adjust monthly
4. Start ramping ~30 days ahead of peak demand



Turn Lookers into Leads

At this stage, shoppers are narrowing choices and testing you.

Do you respond? Do you know what you're talking about? Do you treat me like a real buyer?

Let Shoppers Browse on Their Schedule

When more than half of your traffic happens after hours, "coverage" becomes part of the consideration. But this doesn't mean your team has to burn the midnight oil.

After-hours coverage options (pick what fits your store):

- A. Chat/text coverage with clear routing
- B. AI-assisted chat/text for first capture and triage
- C. Better on-site search so shoppers can self-serve answers

Treat SRPs and VDPs Like the Showroom Floor

If merchandising is unstable, paid spend leaks. You can't "market your way out" of it. Your top-performing peers are converging on two winning models: price-transparent retail and heavier visual proof. In both cases, the winners keep inventory fresh and listings credible.

Here's what a good VDP looks like:

- ◆ Photos that show condition, not just glamour angles
- ◆ Accurate listings with descriptions that answer the common "am I wasting my time?" questions
- ◆ Mobile-first layout (key info at the top; avoid pop-ups blocking the important details)

Offer Low-Pressure Opt-Ins

Shoppers who are "just looking" don't want a sales call. Offer incentives like **price drops and back-in-stock alerts** and on your VDPs that encourage shoppers to submit a lead form in exchange for value. Once they're in your CRM, you can follow up in ways that match what they looked at.

“

At any given time, only a small slice of your list is actively shopping a new unit—so automated emails keeps potential customers engaged until buying time.”

BRAD CANNON

Director of Email Automation, LeadVenture





Recapture Opportunities: Retarget & Follow-Up

A lead once lost isn't always lost forever.

Create Nurture Sequences for Leads that Didn't Buy

Scenario: A shopper visits a vehicle page and, two days later, receives a follow-up email prompting them to revisit. Unit retargeting emails work because they follow real behavior. It's the digital version of "still thinking about it?" without making it weird.

Pair Paid Search with Direct Retargeting Emails

Shoppers loop across channels. Your retargeting should too.

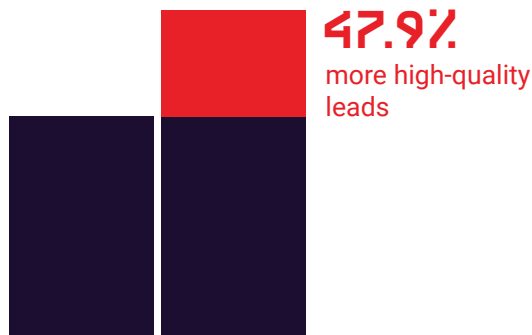
- ◆ Paid ads reach them where they keep researching (but you pay for every click)
- ◆ Email reaches them directly in their inbox (but depends on them opening it)

Together, you cover more ground without relying on one channel to do all the work.

Win Conversions: Create a Customer-Centric Approach

This is where stores lose deals due to slow follow-up, sloppy handoffs, or the classic "we never got that lead."

Give Shoppers Control of Their Online Experience



If pricing and financing context are locked behind "Request Quote," you risk lots of low-intent form fills from people still collecting info...or losing real buyers who won't wait for an answer.

"Request Quote/Request Price" is the most-submitted lead form because price is the first question shoppers want answered. That is why dealers using digital retailing tactics (such as unit-page pricing calculations) generate **47.9% more high-quality leads.**

Be the First to Follow Up

Set a simple standard for your team:

- ◆ Reply in **5–15 minutes** when possible
- ◆ **First response should do two things:**
 - ◆ Confirm availability
 - ◆ Offer two time slots to visit

This isn't about fancy. It's about not letting the buyer drift.

The first dealer to respond usually controls the conversation.

Treat Vendor Support Like Part of the Buying Loop (Because It Is)

Top dealers don't judge software by features. They judge it by whether the day-to-day holds together: inquiries land, follow-up continues, scheduling works, and reporting aligns with the store's view.

Hold your partners to the vendor standard:

- ◆ **Reliability** (monitoring and alerts; no missing leads)
- ◆ **Simplicity** (one workflow, not five logins)
- ◆ **Proof** (reporting matches CRM/call logs)
- ◆ **Control** (you can edit listings and access your data)
- ◆ **Speed** (clear escalation and response times)

Turn One-Time Buyers into Loyal Customers & Brand Advocates

After purchase, buyers either settle into ownership...or hit their first issue. This is when they decide whether they will recommend you or warn people to stay away.



Treat Service Scheduling Like a Sales Process

With longer ownership cycles, fixed service capture matters more. Lightspeed composite data shows sales down **3.7% year-over-year** while parts and service are up (**parts +9.6%, service +2.5%**).

SALES
↓ **3.7%**

PARTS
↑ **9.6%**

SERVICE
↑ **2.5%**

A “good” service experience looks like: **Easy online scheduling, confirmations that go out, modify/cancel that works, and a clear handoff from online to the lane.**

Send Post-Purchase Follow-Ups that Feel Human

Turn a recent sale into a fresh opportunity by sending a personalized message or offer. Here’s a simple cadence to keep new buyers in your pipeline:

- ◆ **24–48 hours:** “Everything working? Any questions?”
- ◆ **2 weeks:** “Quick tips + how-to resources.”
- ◆ **30 days:** “First service/check-in/accessory needs.”
- ◆ **Seasonal:** Winterization, pre-season inspection, storage, battery checks, etc.

Keep the Pipeline Warm

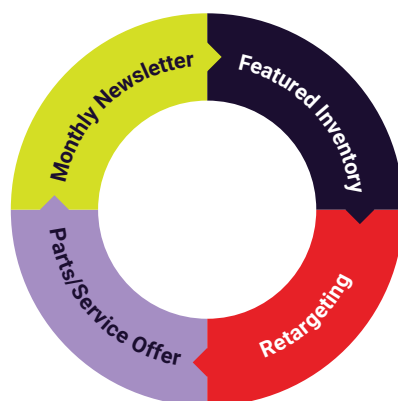
Your existing customer list is your best audience because they already know you. Keep them connected to inventory and service so you stay top-of-mind between purchases.

“

[Off-season pipeline is] likely not something that many dealers have recognized and are using to coach their salespeople. The veterans probably have learned, but the new guys may not realize that today’s tire kickers are next spring’s buyers.”

MARK SHEFFIELD

LeadVenture Advisor, Woods Cycle Country



Scenario: You send an email out to your entire audience base featuring your latest inventory. A previous customer clicks on a listing and, within a few days, receives a personalized offer to take another look. They decide it’s time to trade in or upgrade their ride. Six months later, they received a reminder about service maintenance with a discount. They continue to receive your monthly newsletter, attend your advertised store events (even bringing their friends), and become one of your biggest brand advocates.



Strategy Cards



Powersports

- ◆ **What's Changing:** Faster decision cycles and higher sensitivity to availability. Demand is polarized between premium and value buyers.
- ◆ **What Buyers Expect:** Quick answers on availability/condition/price; easy-to-use filters or intuitive onsite search; genuine photos.
- ◆ **What Breaks Most:** Inconsistent inventory fields; stale availability; SRP routing that forces extra clicks.
- ◆ **Highest-Impact Bet:** Standardize the inventory experience so buyers can quickly and confidently find the right unit.



Marine

- ◆ **What's Changing:** High-ticket and trust-driven, with heavy comparison shopping, strong used demand, and growing fractional ownership models.
- ◆ **What Buyers Expect:** Clear pricing context, accurate specs, and a pressure-free next step.
- ◆ **What Breaks Most:** Missing price context, thin VDPs, and inconsistent specs that undermine trust.
- ◆ **Highest-Impact Bet:** Repeatable merchandising standard that clearly explains pricing and simplifies the next step.



Recreational Vehicle (RV)

- ◆ **What's Changing:** Long consideration windows and heavy revisits make attribution tougher. Dealers face expanding used late-model competition.
- ◆ **What Buyers Expect:** Rich VDP detail, consistent pricing, and helpful follow-up that supports revisits.
- ◆ **What Breaks Most:** Thin VDPs, inconsistent response timing, and generic follow-up cause buyers to disengage.
- ◆ **Highest-Impact Bet:** Combine strong VDP merchandising with steady year-round marketing presence beyond peak season.



Trailer

- ◆ **What's Changing:** Buyers span utility and lifestyle needs, making specification precision increasingly important.
- ◆ **What Buyers Expect:** Clear categories, fast routing, and specs aligned to real-world use cases.
- ◆ **What Breaks Most:** Confusing SRPs, weak filters, and missing specs create false matches and wasted time.
- ◆ **Highest-Impact Bet:** Improve SRP and VDP clarity so buyers reach the right unit faster.



Outdoor Power Equipment (OPE)

- ◆ **What's Changing:** Demand remains seasonal, with battery platforms rising and robotics gaining traction in select segments.
- ◆ **What Buyers Expect:** Availability, fast contact, and visible local service credibility.
- ◆ **What Breaks Most:** Missed peak-season calls, slow routing, and thin listings lose high-intent buyers.
- ◆ **Highest-Impact Bet:** Strengthen inquiry routing and local credibility during peak demand windows.



Independent Auto

- ◆ **What's Changing:** Affordability pressure, trust, transparency, and fraud prevention shaping buyer decisions.
- ◆ **What Buyers Expect:** Honest pricing, clear condition details, and fast confirmation of availability.
- ◆ **What Breaks Most:** Incomplete listings, routing failures, and slow responses.
- ◆ **Highest-Impact Bet:** Improve listing completeness and routing reliability to eliminate silent failures.



Tire & Service

- ◆ **What's Changing:** Appointment outcomes and retention matter as much as acquisition.
- ◆ **What Buyers Expect:** Clear service options, easy booking paths, and quick confirmation.
- ◆ **What Breaks Most:** Broken booking paths, missed calls, and weak online-to-lane connections reduce retention.
- ◆ **Highest-Impact Bet:** Connect digital actions to booked appointments and retention workflows.

Recap:

What “Good” Looks Like in One View

If you only remember five things from the playbook, make it these:

- 01** **Show up early in discovery:**
Clean business info, strong local presence, reviews that match what you sell/service.
- 02** **Make shopping frictionless on your site:**
Inventory is easy to find, listings answer the basics, and the mobile experience holds together.
- 03** **Keep inquiry paths working—especially after-hours:**
Capture is consistent even when the store is closed.
- 04** **Respond fast and clean:**
First response confirms availability and offers next steps.
- 05** **Keep working the deal after the first “no”:**
Nurture, retargeting, and post-sale follow-up feed repeat business and service.



Run This First:

Treat this as a pass/fail checklist.

01

Publishing stability and inquiry path integrity:

- Are units publishing everywhere they should?
- Are forms/calls/chat/text landing where they should?
- Are after-hours inquiries captured and routed?

02

Listing completeness and navigation clarity:

- Do listings consistently show the basics buyers need?
- Are SRPs clearly categorized with filters that work?
- Can a shopper get to the right unit in a few clicks?

03

Response discipline and coverage:

- Who owns speed-to-response?
- What's the after-hours plan?
- Are handoffs clean between internet leads and your sales team?

04

Reporting alignment:

- Do your numbers match what your managers feel on the floor?
- Do you review a weekly pass/fail score card the same day every week?
- Are owners and backups assigned for each stage?

If you do nothing else, **eliminate silent failures**. They are expensive precisely because they are invisible.

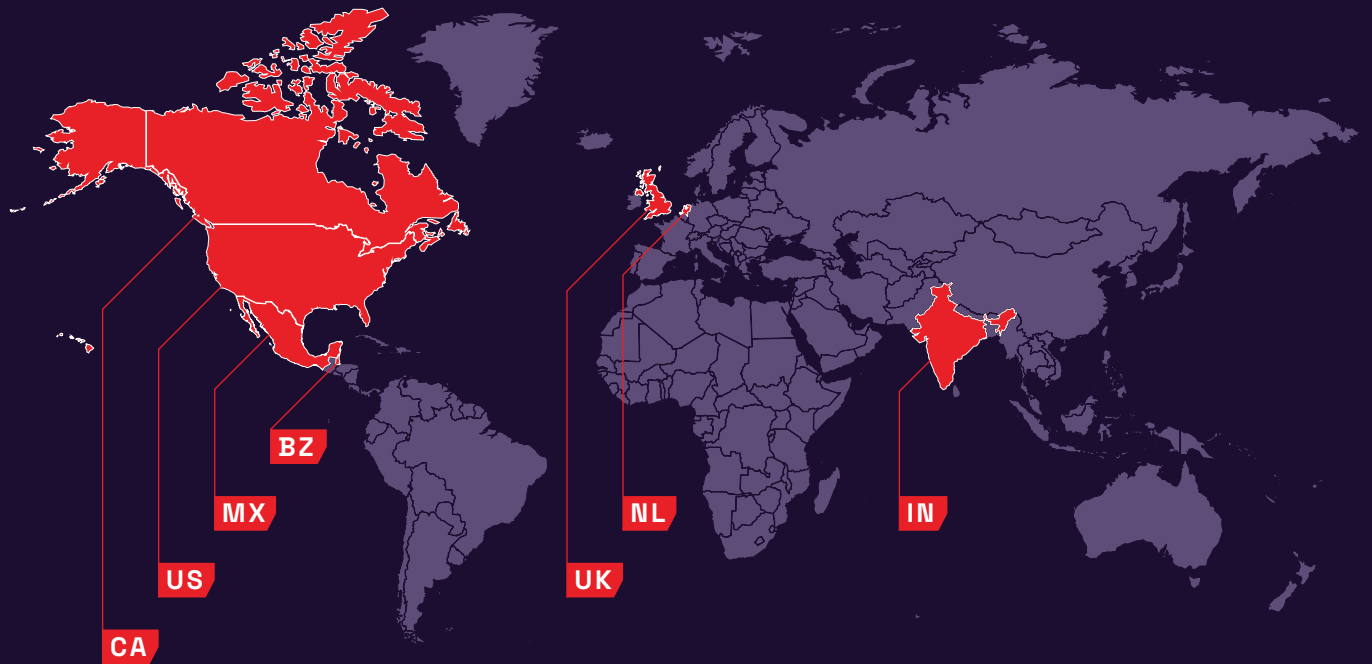
04

The LeadVenture Ecosystem



LeadVenture supports over 40,000 dealerships and service centers across 12 verticals through brands including Dealer Car Search, Dealer Spike, Frazer, InteractRV, Net Driven, Room58, TCS Technologies, and others—each purpose-built for the industries they serve.

Our mission is to give dealers a reliable digital foundation, a connected marketing engine, and clear data so they can make confident decisions every day. But technology alone isn't the advantage.



With 1,700+ employees across seven countries—
including more than:

600 in support and
customer service

250 engineers globally

300 customer-facing and creative specialists

Our ecosystem is built around human partnership at scale.

On average, that equates to 1 LeadVenture team member
for every 22 dealers we support.

Our ecosystem provides a unique lens into observed behavior across dealer websites, inventory interactions, inquiry paths, and follow-up activity—representing over 6.1 million units sold in the last year alone.



The Impact of Our Solutions

Meet the products and features that drive higher inventory turnover for our dealers.

Automated Email Marketing (AEM)

Dealers who added AEM to their advertising mix saw an average **30.85% increase in inventory turnover.**

↑30.85%

Email Performance: 16.9% click-to-open rate (CTOR) versus a typical benchmark around ~5–6% CTOR (HubSpot).

↑16.90%

Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

Dealers investing in organic visibility in addition to paid ads saw an average **8.62% increase in inventory turnover.**

↑8.62%

Reputation Management

Dealers using Reputation Management saw a **14.33% higher inventory turnover** than those without.

↑14.33%

Used Unit Accelerator Tools

Dealers who use our suite of Used Unit Accelerator Tools saw **41.42% higher inventory turn** versus dealers who don't.

↑41.42%

Dynamic Incentives

Dynamic Incentives significantly enhance visibility of manufacturer promotions and inventory turnover: **24% of site visitors view incentives** linked to inventory on SRP and VDP, compared to just 0.8% without Dynamic Incentives.

↑24%

When OEMs use Dynamic Incentives, their dealers have a **3x higher lead conversion rate** than dealers without them.

↑3X

What We're Bringing to Dealers in 2026

Products you can expect to release to help tighten the loop and turn inventory faster.

In 2026, our innovation strategy tightens the buyer loop through AI-powered capabilities—including **AI Search, AI Service Writer, and AI Description Writer**—designed to improve visibility, accuracy, and speed.

We believe AI should amplify strong fundamentals, not replace them. At scale, our focus remains the same: reliable systems, human expertise, and solutions that help dealers turn inventory faster.

05

Closing Perspective

Reliability Is the Advantage

2026 will not reward the busiest dealers; it will reward the most reliable ones.

The winning stores won't chase every new tactic or tool. They will be the ones whose inventory consistently shows up, whose listings answer real buyer questions, whose inquiry paths hold together, and whose follow-up continues beyond the first touch. Their systems will work even when teams are lean, traffic spikes occur, or the doors are closed.

The market is not asking for more noise. It is asking for fewer dead ends. Dealers who tighten the loop, eliminate silent failures, and execute the fundamentals exceptionally well will find that growth becomes more predictable—even in an uncertain market.

That is what “good” looks like in 2026.

A man with short, light-colored hair and a beard, wearing glasses and a white button-down shirt, stands in a car dealership. He is looking towards the camera with a slight smile. The background shows several cars on display, including a white sedan and a dark SUV. The lighting is bright and even, typical of a modern dealership interior.

Acknowledgements

This report reflects the work and insights of people who are close to dealers every day—inside stores, in data, and in real-world decisions.

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Your experience, expertise, and willingness to contribute strengthened and made this report more relevant to the dealers it's designed to serve.



Appendix

Methodology & Definitions

Methodology Snapshot

- ◆ **Date Range:** January to December 2025
- ◆ **Sample:** 40,000+ dealers in Recreation, Equipment, Tire & Service, and Independent Auto verticals
- ◆ **Data Sources:** Website analytics, product dashboards, internal subject matter experts
- ◆ **Process:** Extracted data from internal systems, interviewed subject matter experts

Glossary of Marketing Terms

- ◆ **Click-Through Rate (CTR):** The percentage of people who see an ad and then click it.
- ◆ **Click-to-Open Rate (CTOR):** Among the people who opened the email, the percentage who clicked.
- ◆ **Conversion:** A “next step taken.” It’s the action you want a shopper to complete.
- ◆ **Cost-per-Click (CPC):** What you pay each time someone clicks your paid search ad.
- ◆ **Cost per Conversion:** What you paid (in ads) to generate one tracked conversion (often the same as an inquiry, depending on how you set it up).
- ◆ **Cost per Inquiry:** What you paid (in ads) to generate one inquiry.
- ◆ **Digital Retailing:** Tools that let shoppers do more of the deal online (payment estimates, trade value steps, financing steps, reserving a unit, etc.).
- ◆ **Directories/Local Listings:** The places your store information appears online (Google, Yelp, Facebook, BBB, and others). Consistency matters.
- ◆ **Inquiry:** Any action a shopper takes to raise their hand and ask for something—price, availability, a callback, an appointment, a quote, a trade value, financing info, etc.
 - ◆ **Examples:** form submit, phone call, chat message, text message, “schedule service” request.
- ◆ **Lead:** A shopper record you can follow up with—usually tied to contact info (name, phone, email) and a specific action or interest.
 - ◆ **A simple way to think about it:** An inquiry is the action. A lead is the person (and their details) created from that action.
- ◆ **Listing Completeness:** A complete listing provides shoppers with enough information to decide whether to take the next step.
 - ◆ **Price Shown:** The unit listing includes an actual price (not “call for price,” not blank). Price context helps shoppers self-qualify early.
 - ◆ **Photo Count:** The listing has enough real photos to reduce uncertainty about condition, features, and any obvious defects. A single photo is better than none, but it rarely answers real buyer questions. More photos usually means fewer “basic” questions and fewer wasted trips.
 - ◆ **Required Fields:** The key inventory details are filled in consistently so filters/search work and shoppers trust the listing. Common required fields include: year, make, model, type/category, condition (new/used), trim/package (if relevant), VIN/stock number, and major specs that matter in your vertical.
- ◆ **Organic Search:** Unpaid search results—traffic you earn through content, listings, and trust signals (not ads).
- ◆ **Paid Search:** Search engine ads you pay for (usually Google/Bing). You’re essentially renting attention.
- ◆ **Search Results Page (SRP):** The inventory results page on your website—the list of units after a shopper searches or filters.
- ◆ **Session:** One visit to your website (or app) by a shopper. A session can include multiple page views.
 - ◆ **Example:** A shopper lands on your SRP, clicks two VDPs, then leaves. That’s one session.
- ◆ **Vehicle Detail Page (VDP):** The page for a specific unit (photos, price, specs, call to action).



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