

NADA PREVIEW

Online retailing products take the spotlight

Companies improve on their initial tools

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We will help you meet your customers where they want to be.

That's the promise of software providers offering tools to enable online vehicle transactions.

That means doing as much of the deal online as the shopper wants to.

At last year's NADA convention, many vendors featured their first iterations of tools for start-to-finish online car-buying. This year, those companies, and more, will show enhanced tools.

For example, Michael Eggerling, product marketing manager at CDK Global Inc., expects to see more precision and unique details on vendors' digital products at the convention this year.

"This year, what can those vendors

launch on top of that platform? What additional bells and whistles and functionality [will they have] to take what they've built and make them work even better to address different parts of car-buying process?" he said.

Added Kasi Edwards, vice president of marketing at Reynolds and Reynolds Co., "Car dealers are no longer compared to other car dealers. They are compared to all other retailers. I expect a lot of folks to be discussing those changes in the consumer experience."

Here is a sampling of what to expect at the convention.

CDK Global

Before the convention, CDK will launch Connected Car 2.0, the latest version of its e-commerce product for dealership websites. It enables



Edwards: Dealers are compared to other retailers.



Wittenmyer: Start online, but finish at a store.

consumers to get accurate price quotes and structure deals online before visiting stores. Connected Car 2.0 features a simpler, cleaner and more portable user experience. At the convention, the company will tell more, demonstrating the progress it has made toward end-to-end auto retailing, Eggerling said.

CDK's team wanted to build a model that supports the traditional dealership sales process, while still meet-

ing customers' expectations, he said.

"Our goal has been to build a platform that does a really excellent job of integrating with the processes [dealerships] already have and removing some of the steps that are more cumbersome, bringing them online or automating them while maintaining the dealers' ability to make money and remain profitable," he said.

Reynolds and Reynolds

Dealership management systems giant Reynolds and Reynolds now likes to think of itself as a provider of retail management systems, indicating a shift from helping dealers manage a store's internal operations to a more consumer-facing role.

It aims to enable customers to do as much of the transaction as they want online.

"The key is to use the assets that are already there in the dealership to create the deal building process for the consumer," said Jon Strawsburg, vice president of product planning. That means using all the pieces of the purchase process — "the inventory, the negotiation, the calculations that include things like the accurate tax bill" — within the retail management system.

Customers won't enter their information into a separate Web portal, he added. The information they input goes right to the store's DMS.

"When it's time to close a deal, it is a done deal in the dealership," he said. That is a significant difference from the online vehicle-selling process offered by most website and other providers. "We actually deliver a bona fide deal to the dealership, as opposed to just a qualified lead," Strawsburg said.

ELEAD1ONE

ELEAD1ONE, known as eLead, last month launched DealBuilder, an online car-buying application that guides customers through the transaction remotely or in the dealership. The product connects with eLead's customer relationship management system.

During the pilot's first three weeks, only 10 percent of customers at eLead's five pilot stores had done the entire transaction online. Most customers went through the first, the first two or the first three steps online and then picked up where they left off at the dealership.

That's not surprising. Customers often want to value their trade-in or discuss financing options in the store, said Bill Wittenmyer, partner at eLead.

RouteOne

RouteOne will show enhancements to its products, specifically in e-contracting and digital retail technology.

"Everything that RouteOne supports, we want to extend to online so that dealers can deliver the experience and functionality to a customer online and have that smoothly transition to the in-store experience. That is true with the e-contracting space. It is true with the digital retailing services," said CEO Justin Oesterle.

The company will show dealers a new functionality of Remote Document Delivery, an electronic signature component. Car buyers can access and sign a finance contract and F&I product contracts remotely. Those contracts then are immediately accessible to dealerships.

Last year, RouteOne launched its Digital Retail platform, which now has 1,700 subscribers. A mobile point-of-sale tool is included in all the subscriptions so that customers can enter their information from anywhere. When customers fill out credit applications and related information, the data automatically populates in the RouteOne system.

RouteOne will also hold Innovation Hours during the NADA Show with six of its vendor clients: CarSaver, AutoFi, WebBuy, Roadster, Auto-Gravity and Drive Motors. The company will show how those vendors' products link with RouteOne's technology and how the dealer will see that connection in the F&I office, COO Brad Rogers said. **AN**

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AHMED 'This generally means scam'

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request seemed suspect. I had only days left on my lease and hadn't yet found my dream vehicle. In a rush to find the perfect car, I went online and reached out to multiple dealerships across the country to learn whether the stores could deliver to me in Detroit, and whether I needed to physically come in to finish the transaction.

Seeing my urgent emails, one salesperson responded: "Time crunch from several states away? Never want to visit the dealership? Want us to ship the vehicle? No thanks. We aren't interested in this type of business. This generally means scam."

I called the salesman's cellphone to tell him that I felt insulted and to explain my situation. After an unproductive conversation, we resumed emailing each other. From there, he understood why I was rushed, apol-

ogized, and explained how the dealership — which has a decent business in online sales within its region — has had problems with fraud.

"I should have been more professional and inquisitive rather than accusatory," he wrote. "In my haste, I jumped to conclusions rather than trying to determine your motivation through additional fact finding."

The dealership later explained that it didn't believe in entirely online shopping for this very reason.

I ended up finding a 2015 Mazda3 hatchback — at a higher trim level and cost than I had wanted — through Mazda's CPO site. I signed the papers upon pickup.

After I left the dealership, I received a call from the harried salesperson. In the rush to close the deal, the dealership had forgotten to take my down payment. I was already halfway home, so I wondered, could I complete the payment online?

The answer: Nope. So I dutifully pulled off the highway, turned around, and returned to the dealership. Some things are just easier in person. **AN**