

## So, What About Minnie?

By Cliff Banks

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**Most dealerships probably would delete an online lead from "Mickey Mouse." Not David Shear – he turned the lead into a sale.**

The Bob Howard Automotive Group sold a car to Mickey Mouse.

At least, that was the name on an Internet lead e-mailed to the Oklahoma City dealership, No.2 on the *Ward's e-Dealer 100*.

Many Internet managers probably would have deleted the e-mail, assuming it was another one of those bogus leads.

David Shear, the Internet director for the Group 1 Automotive-owned store knows enough to know what he doesn't know. Pursuing the lead, he learned Mickey Mouse is the e-mail address of a real person who was in the market for a car.

"I'm not sure I know a good lead from a bad lead anymore," he says. "We should always evaluate ourselves."



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### Tools Used by e-Dealer 100 Dealers

#### Lead Management Tools

Compass (AutoNation Inc.)	44
WebControl (Autobyte Inc.)	17
Net Trak	16
Prospector (Cobalt Group)	4
Higher Gear	3

#### Website Companies

Reynolds Web Solutions	70
Izmo Cars	10
BZ Results	9
Dealerskins	4
Dealer.com	3
MarketTrends	2
Cobalt Group	1
Hyperdrive Technologies	1

#### Third-Party Sites

Cars.com	84
AutoTrader.com	83
Dealix	76
CarsDirect.com	75
Autobyte Inc. (and affiliates)	75
AutoUSA	67
Kelley Blue Book	46
eBay Motors	11
Vehix.com	7

Cherry picking leads, or working ones that seem most promising, is an easy habit to fall into. So is coming up with excuses on why a lead didn't lead to a sale.

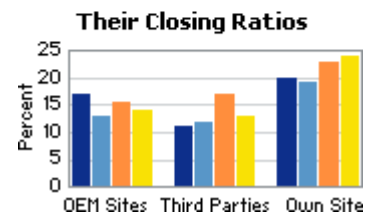
"We've all done it," Shear says. "It was a bad lead.' 'There was no phone number.' 'There was no response.'"

Often Internet staffers are forced to choose among leads because they have too many. Studies show an Internet salesperson should handle no more than 80 a month.

Many dealerships may respond to an initial e-mail, but not follow up. Nancy Buell, Internet director for Ira Toyota, (30th on the *Ward's e-Dealer 100*) also owned by Group 1, says the time to stop working a lead is when the person asks you to stop.

Bob Howard Automotive and Ira Toyota in Danvers, MA, both have fairly intense follow-up processes using e-mails and phone calls. They contact the shopper every day for seven days, then follow up monthly after that.

Shear tells of one lead in which 11 follow-up e-mails drew one response. That was in February. In November the dealership sent a season's greeting e-mail. The recipient bought a car four days later.



iMotors	6	Another prospective buyer did nothing for six months, then, after receiving a follow-up e-mail, drove home in a new vehicle the next day.
NewCars.com	4	
CarSoup	4	

Much of it has to do with timing. But it requires little effort to keep following up leads. They're in the e-mail database already. A software program can automate the process.

"I think a lot of us could find sales just by going over old e-mail addresses," says Shear.

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