

Jumpstart Launches In-House Digital Lab



By [Douglas Quenqua](#), The ClickZ Network, Mar 25, 2008
[Articles](#) | [Contact Douglas](#) | [Subscribe](#)

Jumpstart Automotive, an ad network specializing in automotive sites, is launching an in-house agency called Jumpstart Labs to help clients develop digital creative and strategy.

Jumpstart claims to reach more than 8 million car shoppers a month through its network of 15 automotive Web sites and, thanks to behavior tracking, an additional 12,000 general-interest sites. However, CEO Mitch Lowe said Jumpstart clients are often restrained by a lack of digital expertise. Jumpstart Labs will consult with those clients to help them take full advantage of the network's capacity.

"Local dealers tend not to have digital agencies, so they need someone to help with strategy and execution," he said. "And at the national level, car manufacturers tend to have a lot of 'bandwidth' constraints. We can be an extension of the ad agency for the manufacturer, or we can come up with idea and execution [for the local dealer]."

Eva Maidenberg, former associate creative director at Publicis Modem in San Francisco, will serve as senior director of Jumpstart Labs. Prior to Publicis, Maidenberg was senior art director at Digitas.

The unit will launch with a staff of six, most coming from other digital shops, according to Lowe. "Some have auto experience, but right now we're really just looking for great digital strategists," he said.

The economic downturn makes now an appropriate time to launch such a venture, said Lowe, as many marketers are shifting their focus from brand-building efforts to more direct sales pitches.

"We're in a unique position, because we can reach the people who are in the market to buy a car now, and those people only enter the market once every three or four years," he said. "If media is all about reaching the right person with the right message at the right time, we have the right people at the right time, and now we can help our clients develop that right message."

Jumpstart Labs will also be able to adjust clients' messages on the fly depending on feedback data, Lowe said, a distinct advantage to having creative staff in house.

Auto manufacturers have been shifting their ad dollars online in recent years at an even greater rate than most marketers, thanks to the explosion of consumers researching, and frequently purchasing, cars on the Web. But new research suggests those numbers could grow even faster thanks to the slowing economy.

According to a Kelsey Group survey [released last month](#), 62 percent of auto dealers plan to increase their Internet spending over the next 12 months, while only 17 percent said they would increase their traditional media spend. Forty-six percent said they actually planned to decrease their spending on traditional media in that period.

One of the major attractions of the Internet for auto dealers, according to the report, is video. Fifty-nine percent of respondents said they planned to use video on their sites in the next 12 months, up from 33 percent the previous year.