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Digital Strategies That Go Beyond Leads



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Jumpstart Automotive Media's Jim Irving talks about understanding how autos consumers use media, how shifting trends affect ad strategy and why the coolest digital innovations might not work for you.

Jodi Harris: You recently were promoted to VP of strategic media development at Jumpstart Automotive Media. What does your new role entail at the nation's largest auto-centric ad network?



Jim Irving is VP of strategic media development for Jumpstart Automotive Media. Irving is responsible for assisting the nation's top dealer groups develop appropriate marketing strategies and a tactical plan that can most effectively help them accomplish their goals. In addition, Irving has more than six years as a digital strategist and innovator for automotive manufacturers.

Jim Irving: My role is essentially to act as a media consultant to the top dealer groups in the nation. This can range anywhere from providing advice on the overall on and off-line marketing mix to educating dealers on the rapidly evolving digital media space.

In addition to providing consultative services, I serve as the liaison between the dealer group (client) and Jumpstart Automotive Media's contextual and behavioral ad networks, search marketing and new car leads. After strategy has been set and a tactical ad plan is in place, it is my job to act as the eyes and ears of the client and ask the key questions that need to be asked in order to drive improvements, such as determining why one creative size is performing better than another or how to integrate a better call to action into the creative message.

Harris: How do you charge for these consultative services?

Irving: Our consultative services are free. We make our money only if our ideas and products work. If they are successful in helping clients achieve their goals, they continue to participate in our targeted display advertising, search marketing and new car leads programs

Harris: What is the most common piece of advice you offer dealers?

Irving: When developing your media strategy, always start with understanding the way consumers use media. Create a mechanism (or develop the right relationships) to stay on top of the latest trends such as new innovations in digital marketing and even more importantly trends that signify shifts in the way car shoppers go through the research process.

Don't get caught up in the latest and coolest digital innovation unless it is being adopted by a meaningful slice of your target audience. Keep an eye on how your potential customers actually use media and make sure your marketing dollars are targeted on whichever media they are using *today* to do their research.

Harris: What is the most common mistake you see dealers make?

Irving: There are actually two common mistakes that come to mind. The first is that many dealers think that they have a digital strategy covered simply because they buy leads. Leads are just one tactic that supports a larger digital strategy that dealers should be employing. The reality is that the vast majority of car shoppers are using the internet as their research tool of choice-- yet only a relatively small percent are actually submitting a lead. Should dealers buy leads? Absolutely! Their digital media strategy just needs to also take into consideration the larger percentage of car shoppers who are using the web for research and are not submitting a lead.

The second mistake is that if you find yourself developing your media strategy with the rationale being, "This is how we have been developing strategy for years," it is very likely that there is significant room for improvement within your marketing plan.

With the digital landscape changing by the minute and audiences becoming increasingly fragmented, it is reason more than ever to find trusted partners over just vendors. It is equally as important that digital media companies invest in deeply experienced professionals who can bring this digital IQ to their customers.

Harris: Describe the process for which you plug in and assist a dealer group with your services.

Irving: Plugging in is very easy. It really begins by understanding the particulars of the dealer group, which includes things like identifying the locations of showrooms, franchises they represent and the current process for which strategic media decisions are made.

Once communication begins, I work with the dealer group to identify the level of consultative advice they would like. From there, we identify the goals and current challenges, and I then come back with strategic recommendations and a plan to achieve the desired goals.

Jodi Harris is the managing editor of iMedia Connection's Driving Interactive. [Read full bio.](#)