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The New Showroom Front Door



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Jumpstart Automotive Media's marketing VP explores a technology that offers huge potential for the automotive industry to provide more in-depth, immersive user experiences.

[In my last article](#), I discussed ways that automotive marketers are forging more personal connections with targets and customers through some new web-based products. This week I'll get even more personal, exploring technology that allows people to come alive on a page with out-of-the-box video messages.

Virtual Spokesperson technology humanizes the delivery of content to online audiences and enables brands to create an emotional connection on the web. Using tools like Rovion's InPerson platform, a chosen brand spokesperson appears seamlessly on top of other website content -- outside of the walls of traditional video players-- reaching a high level of personal engagement online.

I recently had a conversation with Len Ostroff, CEO of Rovion, to investigate out how auto marketers, specifically, have been using his technology to resolve business challenges. I was surprised to find out that hundreds of dealer groups, as well as smaller standalone dealers, are using the technology platform; even more so than national OEM brands.

Local dealers compete intensely against one another for eyeballs, to grab attention and invite consumers into their online showrooms (and eventually the brick and mortar showroom). What's unique about Rovion and other virtual spokesperson technology providers is that they deliver this experience in a non-interfering way, creating a 3D experience that breaks through the clutter often found on dealer websites.

Of course, once dealers have completed the heavy task of getting consumers to their online showroom front doors, they must persuade them to stay.

Dealers historically have spent a ton of money to show off their showrooms and inventory in TV commercials. Virtual spokespeople provide a similar and even more interactive experience. Not only do dealers understand and enjoy seeing a moving, talking human on their online storefront (sometimes themselves), but they see the immense value in being able to direct consumers to very valuable parts of their site. Take a look:



Kudos to [MileOne](#) for being a very progressive dealer group in utilizing this technology, which provides a nice, approachable introduction to the daunting looking homepage (MileOne has over 10,000 vehicles in stock in 65 dealerships). InPerson technology has contributed to increased interactivity on their homepage, increased time spent overall, deeper site visits and increased lead generation. Essentially, MileOne is retaining more customers on their site and promoting action.

Although the majority of Rovion's work has been on the Tier 3 level, they have also worked with national OEMs [to build sales promotions](#).



Regarding production, Rovion provides services to write scripts, book talent, shoot videos against a green screen and encode and compress the finished videos, all of which are very important considerations for marketers looking to run a campaign with this technology ([check out this example](#)). In addition, the company is focused on building out a network of ad partners, to make distribution and promotion of campaigns easier for auto marketers.

Looking ahead, Rovion has some interesting things in the works for the rest of '07 and into '08. "In-Person Plus" will combine a floating unit and a page-based unit (skyscraper, banner, 300x250, et cetera). The banner can either launch the InPerson unit by a click or mouse-over, or the InPerson can start

playing a video (all while staying in synch). Ostroff said, "Imagine this for automotive with b-roll of the car while the spokesperson describes the features of the car."

Similar to both eStara and LiveMarkets, companies like Rovion are poised to leverage the significant growth of both Tier 2 and 3 auto marketers. The potential is huge for the automotive industry to provide a more in-depth, immersive user experiences on OEM, regional dealer and local dealer websites.

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