



Winning with Reviews

HOW RBM OF ALPHARETTA DECREASED SEM SPEND THROUGH POSITIVE CUSTOMER FEEDBACK

David Ellis, General Manager at RBM of Alpharetta in Georgia, knows that in an increasingly competitive marketplace, it's important to make his dealership stand out. And with a smart marketing mix that relies on multiple platforms to spread the word about his business, standing out is exactly what he and the team at RBM have been able to do.

But, they've taken it one step further: By increasing reliance on customer reviews and online reputation management, Ellis has **reduced the SEM spend at RBM by 25%.**

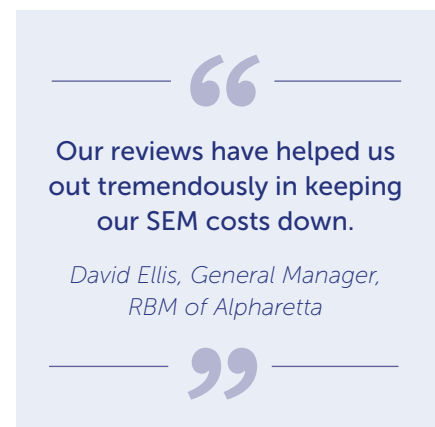
"We were spending most of our marketing budget on SEM and SEO," said Ellis. "Return on those investments is very hard to track. Who sees it? Who clicks on the online banner ads?" Measuring shoppers' online journeys and sources of influence when finding a dealership continues to be a challenge, because they consult so many resources – so rather than trying to funnel more money into SEM, Ellis and his team turned their focus to bolstering RBM's online reputation via an incredibly valuable, informed set of individuals: their customers.

As a result, the dealership has gone **from spending around \$4,700 a month on SEM to \$3,500 – without losing business.**

Decreasing SEM spend was a team effort, and depended heavily on sales staff doing their part to solicit reviews. RBM has implemented a tiered pay plan for sales reps that depends on review volume and quality; they need to reach a certain number of customer reviews per month to move up to the next tier, and those reviews must be five stars. **"The more five-star reviews they get, the more they get paid,"** said Ellis. **"It helps them receive their full bonus, and it helped us decrease our SEM spend."**

Everyone wins: Reps receive more income; the dealership boosts its online reputation and decreases SEM spend; and customers get a better idea of what to expect from RBM.

What's more, the reviews that mention sales reps by name instill a sense of pride in those employees about the work they do and where they do it. By shopping for not just a car or a dealership, but a specific sales professional, customers enter the car-buying process feeling informed and confident.



TURN TO LEARN MORE





Winning with Reviews *(cont'd)*

"It all goes back to the process," said Ellis. "You have to have an efficient process to make this work. Sales reps understand what it is. They realize customer reviews not only help their pay, but increase their visibility."

Soliciting reviews has become part of the sales process at RBM, said Ellis. "My office is next to the delivery area, and nine times out of 10 I hear the sales representative telling the customer they'll be receiving an email and to please leave a review." **Marketing materials both in and outside of the dealership also tout the dealership's distinction of being a Dealer of the Year, and encourage customers to share their experiences with other shoppers.**

"Externally, it's all in how we get the word out to our customers," Ellis said of how to increase review volume. "We post our reviews on our website and have different widgets on our homepage – Google, Yelp, DealerRater, Cars.com – available for customers to quickly and easily leave a review."

According to Ellis, **the dealership plans to become more aggressive in courting reviews from service customers, not just those from the sales side.** In the near future they'll be sending tailored email communications, similar to those they send to sales customers, to people who've had their vehicles serviced at RBM. "Our service department touches more customers than our sales department, and does a great job – but has fewer reviews," he said.

Overall, a reduced dependency – and spend – on SEM, and an increased reliance on customer reviews to tell RBM's story and promote its great reputation has been a win all around. "Word of mouth is number one," said Ellis. And with reviews as positive as the ones RBM has generated, it's easy to see why.

“

You have to have an efficient process to make this work. Sales reps... realize customer reviews not only help their pay, but increase their visibility.

*David Ellis, General Manager,
RBM of Alpharetta*

”



About RBM of Alpharetta

345 McFarland Parkway
Alpharetta, GA 30004

www.rbmofalpharetta.com

David Ellis, General Manager

About DealerRater

DealerRater, a Cars.com company, is the world's leading car dealer review website with more than three million service and sales reviews across 41,000 U.S. and Canadian dealerships, including a North American network of more than 5,600 Certified Dealers. More than 14 million consumers read DealerRater content across the web each month. By offering a product suite that allows qualified dealerships to manage reputation and achieve higher SEO rankings, DealerRater supports new customer connections by growing online presence.