

# Automotive SEO Vendor Questions

## 1. Can we talk to other dealers you work with?

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### **Any potential SEO vendor should let you talk to multiple current clients.**

We all know that what a vendor promises and what a vendor can deliver are not always the same. How are they actually performing from the view of someone in “your shoes”?

When getting references, don't just talk to the reference, but ask to speak with someone in a similar role to your own at that dealer. Vendors sometimes develop relationships with GMs, but the GM may be unaware that the marketing manager is frustrated with the vendor's performance or communication. Alternatively, vendors may build relationships inside dealerships which is undoubtedly beneficial to their work together, but that personal relationship may also color the view of their actual performance. It is useful to get multiple perspectives on vendor performance from different positions within the same dealer.

### **Recommendation:**

Call and speak to the references they have provided. Ask specific questions in addition to gauging the overall satisfaction they have with the vendor.

### **Some sample questions to ask:**

- How happy are you with the service?
- Have you seen an increase in leads? Sales?
- How often do you meet with them?
- What is the vendor reporting like? Can you make decisions based on it?
- Can you tell me about a success you have had with this vendor?
- What is your favorite thing about working with this vendor?
- What would you change about the vendor?
- Is there anything else I should know about working with them?

## 2. How long have you worked with your oldest clients?

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### **You should avoid vendors who can't keep long term clients.**

Every vendor in automotive marketing loses clients. There are countless reasons that this can occur: consolidation of marketing to a single vendor/group, OEM considerations/realignment, changes in ownership or management, etc. SEO can also take time to really see the fruits of a strategy paying off as content takes time to build authority with search engines. It's important to be able to see a vendor's strategy over time and how well their

efforts pay off beyond the 6-8 month mark. Long term clients can also show how their work aligns with Google's best practices, and if their previous efforts have fallen victim to any algorithmic or manual penalties.

**Recommendation:**

Find vendors who have long term clients that are able to demonstrate success. Find the clients they mention on Google and look at their search performance. Check out their Google My Business, blogs, and content pages. Are they easily found in search, or do you have to dig for them?

**3. How do you stay up to date with Google's changes?**

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**Vendors should have in-house training and attend SEO conferences.**

SEO is a fast-moving industry, and changes frequently happen that can affect your website. Ensuring any potential or current SEO company stays up to date on current trends, tools, and best practices can mean the difference between you being prepared for upcoming changes (as in the recent example of mobile-first indexing) and getting caught short. A good ongoing, internal training program will help ensure they stay current with the latest search tactics, happenings, and updates throughout the year.

**Recommendation:**

A good SEO company should have a structured program which includes having their employees read articles, take online training, and listening to videos or podcasts. Additionally, they should have an annual outside training budget for things like conferences and on-site training. Examples of popular conferences include Mozcon, Pubcon, Internet Battle Plan, and SearchLove.

**Bonus Vendor Question One:** Do you have anyone speaking at events?

**Bonus Vendor Question Two:** Do you have any videos/podcasts featuring employees we can listen to?

**4. How many other dealers do you work with in my market?**

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**For best results, find a vendor offering on-brand exclusivity in your DMA.**

Serving many masters in the same geography for the same brand can be difficult. Writing unique content about vehicles can be difficult, as there is a lot of potential for duplication. When building local links, targeted unique links tend to be much more valuable than links shared by competitors. If a terrific link opportunity arises, then how would they decide which in-market client receives the link? Additionally, if you are successful in getting competing in-market dealers to page one, how will they decide which client you optimize in an attempt to gain position one in a Google Search Result?

## Recommendation:

Try to find a company that offers on-brand exclusivity in your DMA. Additionally, ask for two same-brand clients and look at the work the vendor has done for each. Are the blog and on-page content different?

## 5. Do you do Local SEO?

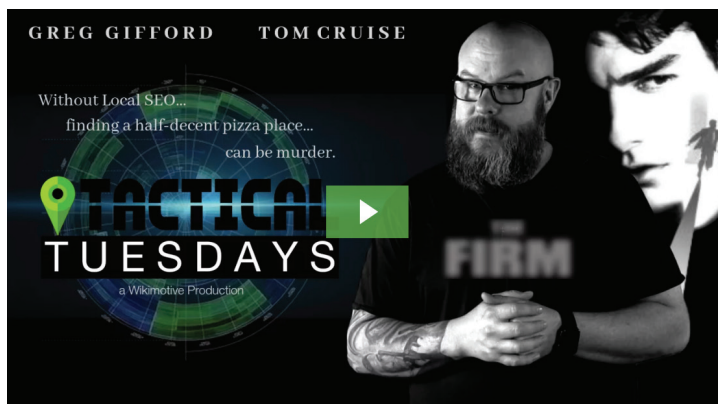
### Local SEO is vital to success and is an absolute must for automotive dealers.

Google uses more than one algorithm when determining what results to return for a search. To show in the coveted three-pack at the top of the page, Google uses the local algorithm based on proximity, prominence, and relevance. In fact, in a recent study conducted by Moz, they discovered that only 8% of the local pack had organic results below the three-pack, proving the need to have strategies to address both local and organic algorithms. You can read that article [here](#). Local SEO requires much more than just citation and directory management in 2019. There is much more weight given to things like the following:

- **Google My Business Signals:** Things like proximity, keywords in a business name, and category selection.
- **Relevant Inbound Link Signals:** Including link anchor text, the number of backlinks, and linking website authority.
- **On-page Signals:** Keywords in titles and body content, presence of Name, Address, and Phone Number (NAP), and your domain authority.
- **Behavioral Signals:** Check-ins, in-store visits via cell phone triangulation, wifi or beacon, mobile click to call, and click-through rate.
- **Social Signals:** Engagement across social platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

## Recommendation:

Find a vendor focused on local SEO, with a comprehensive strategy that addresses all the ranking signals associated with local SEO. For a complete reference into ranking factors, check the latest Local Search Ranking Factors from [Moz HERE](#).



For more on Local SEO, see SEO superstar Greg Gifford

[Click Here for The Video](#)

## 6. What do you do for Google My Business?

**This should include categories, photos, reviews, Q&A, posts, and more.**

Google My Business (GMB) is often the first thing users searching for your business will see. Having an optimized GMB can help you outrank your competition in the map pack, and is a tool to enhance and facilitate conversations with our customers. GMB allows users to ask questions, receive contact information, provide pictures or reviews of a business, send messages, and get directions.

### **Recommendations:**

At a minimum, they should be doing profile optimization like updating holiday hours and reviewing suggested updates, creating Google posts, and answering any Q&A questions. For instructions on how to do a quick assessment of your current GMB, you can click here: [GMB Self Assessment](#).

## 7. How often do you actually look at my Google My Business listing?

**Your GMB listing is your new home page and should be reviewed at least weekly.**

While not every aspect of the GMB needs to be touched every day, you need to make sure you are having reviews answered, both positive and negative, as well as any Q&A questions. Google My Business can also take suggestions from users and local search guides, and occasionally changes business information based on their suggestions.

### **Recommendations:**

Someone should be looking at your GMB a minimum of once a week. Ideally, reviews and Q&A should be answered daily, as customers looking for a response on a review or question may be time sensitive - especially the negative ones. You should also verify any upcoming holiday hours or recent changes.



To learn more about the prominent role of GMB, here is a Wikimotive Tactical Tuesday highlighting its importance:

[Click Here for The Video](#)

## 8. What are your exact services? What's delivered monthly as part of your strategy?

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### Your vendor should be able to supply a detailed list quickly.

Search Engine Optimization can encompass a lot of different areas and approaches. It's important to make sure that a vendor is performing SEO in line with your needs. As an automotive dealer, you need to focus on not only technical SEO but local SEO and content marketing as well.

### Recommendations:

Car Dealers should focus on a strong local SEO strategy, along with ongoing content and ongoing technical SEO. Inside of these realms, there is a lot of room for differentiation, and you should ask for a detailed breakdown of what services you will be getting specifically.

**Local SEO:** Do they handle citations? Where? Do they do local link building? Do they handle your Google My Business?

**Technical SEO:** They should have a plan and an understanding of how to make changes to your website platform, as well as an understanding of how to optimize it for crawlers and users alike. A good technical SEO initiative may contain 404 page monitoring, 301 page monitoring, SSL monitoring, domain expiration, changes in DNS, robots.txt, sitemap.xml, crawl optimization, implementation of structured data, and page speed improvements.

**Content Marketing:** They should create unique, interesting, and original content with a plan to market it. Are they doing unique landing pages? Blog posts? Will these focus on local SEO or just model terms? Generally, content should be longer and of better value than your competitors for the same keyword.

## 9. How many hours do you spend on my dealership each month?

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### Quality SEO takes time. Avoid anyone spending less than 16 hours.

While every company can claim to be performing the same tasks (and often will), you can gauge the priority a company places on activities by the time devoted to specific tasks. A local SEO initiative should heavily favor local link building and content, as well as Google My Business activities. A good technical SEO campaign should work on optimizing a crawl path for spiders from search engines, and ensure your site can render content for both users and spiders. It should strive to remove redirects, broken links, and add structured data to your pages. Good content takes time to write, and you should be cautious of anything that seems unrealistic for the hourly spend.

## Recommendation:

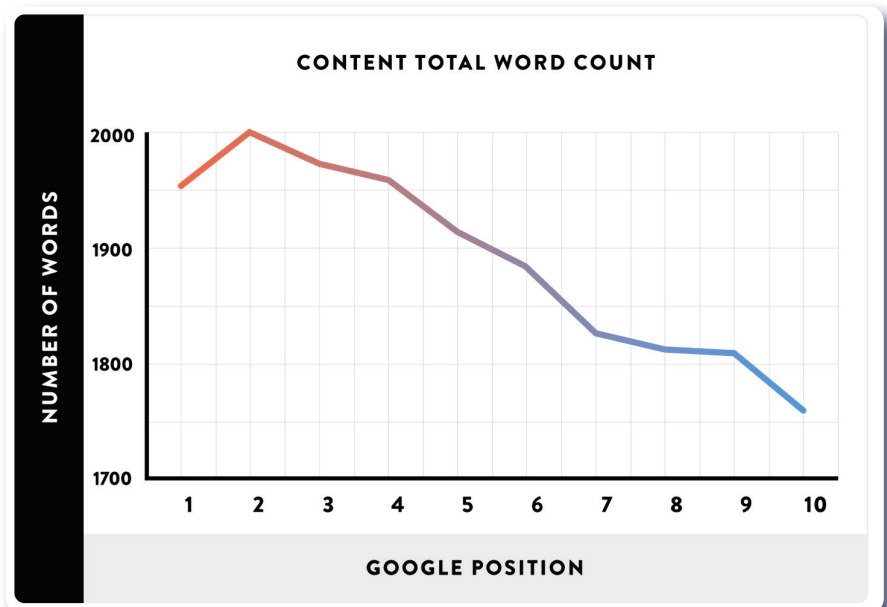
While not all agencies bill or track hourly, they should be able to tell you how much time your monthly deliverables will take. If a provider only spends a few hours a month serving your business, or worse, can't report at all on how many hours are spent on your specific dealership each month, it's a strong warning sign that you may not be receiving the service you need.

## 10. How much content will I get each month, and how long is each piece?

**You need at least two or three pieces of content, and the length should be at least 1,000 words each.**

Recently, Backlinko did an in-depth ranking survey highlighting commonality among ranking pages on over one million searches. In looking at average content length, a clear trend emerged. Longer form content ranks higher. In fact, the average word count of a Google first page result is 1,890 words.

*Graph from Backlinko*



## 11. How often do you actually touch my website?

**If a vendor does not answer at least once a week, run away - fast.**

An SEO vendor should be looking at your website at least weekly, verifying their content pages look and function as intended, as well as verifying proper on-page ranking signals. Additionally, posting content at least once a week will ensure you have fresh content, and having them submit pages regularly to Search Console for indexing will ensure content is ranked as quickly as possible.

## Recommendation:

A vendor's current rework and content schedule should include them logging into your website and performing assessments or adding content weekly. Having a content strategy with adequate publishing cadence can increase your crawl budget with Google.

## 12. Do you do link building? What's your strategy?

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### **Directory sites don't count. You need real local and industry links.**

Link building is a time consuming, specialized skill set in SEO. It's no small task to know how to correctly discover links (learn/extract from current business relationships) in addition to having the skill set to approach people and ask for the link in the correct way. It is easy to come across as "spammy," so good communication skills and having a good follow up/monitoring process is essential. Having a dedicated team can ensure you have a comprehensive link building process that pays dividends. A lot of vendors claim to add a large set amount of links a month, sometimes in the hundreds. These are typically paid links, often bought off bulk websites like Fiverr, which are both low value and may result in a penalty from Google. Good links are difficult to build, and a guarantee of a high number of links month after month is usually a sign of some less-than-ethical SEO.

### **Recommendation:**

Look for a vendor that has a dedicated link BUILDING, not a link BUYING program. Make sure they have a process to acquire natural links based on existing or possible business relationships; links that the business has earned.