REVIEW

Unlocking The Truth Behind Your Website's CTA Strategy

How CCR Shows the Reality of Dealer Website Conversions

PASCHGROUP

Introduction

With automotive retailing experiencing significant headwinds, dealers are looking to optimize the conversion rates of their websites to increase sales opportunities. To help dealers optimize website conversion, we started a project designed to measure the overall form conversion rates (FCR) of their websites and built a framework to measure the CTA Conversion Rate (CCR) of popular website software tools for trade, payment, credit, and service.

CCR is measured by dividing the number of leads generated by a CTA button by the number of times it was clicked. This metric can help dealers **understand which online tools are easier for consumers** to use and ultimately increase sales opportunities. But be warned, websites with strict cookie compliance settings tend to miss roughly one-third of conversions in GA4 campaign tracking.

TradePending is a popular vendor which provides dealers with website retailing tools. As we inspected dealership websites of the Automotive CXO Network members, many websites had their trade software on their websites. Some of the stores only had their trade tool and others had what we call their Power CTA Stack: trade, payments, and credit.

In this research report, we will share how overall website conversion rates improved when dealers added all three CTA buttons to their Vehicle Detail Pages when they previously only had trade tools.

> **Across OEM brands and website platforms, the TradePending retail tools created measurable lift (25-100%) in lead form conversions because of high CCR rates.**

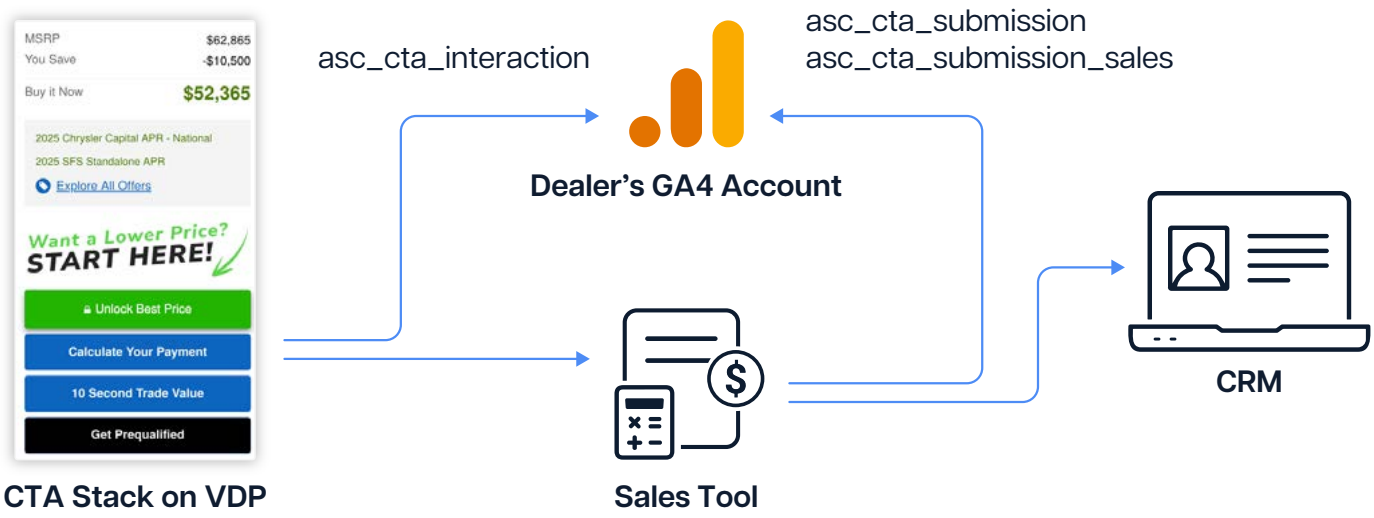
However, one of the biggest revelations in this research was where we found the full story of website engagement and conversion rates. This could only be seen in Google Analytics (GA4) using the website shopper events which follow Automotive Standards Council (ASC) specification. When we looked at the data, the throughput of TradePending software set the high bar for the automotive industry.

When dealers take the time to understand the data which is freely provided in Google Analytics and compare those numbers to what is found in the CRM, website conversion optimization insights will emerge. Dealers who are looking to automate the CCR calculations for all the website CTA buttons and then track the Form Conversion Rate (FCR) over time should subscribe to KPEYE software.

Measuring Conversions & Engagement in Google Analytics

Before we share the summary findings from the dealers we studied, it is important for dealers to understand how lead conversions are recorded in Google Analytics vs lead counts in the CRM. The count of sales leads will always be **higher in GA4** compared to lead counts in the CRM, and we will explain why in greater detail.

Figure A



When a consumer clicks on a CTA button to start a trade, payments, or credit workflow, the software vendor or the website platform will send an event in Google Analytics called **asc_cta_interaction**. The event can also include the name, color, and position of the button on the page.

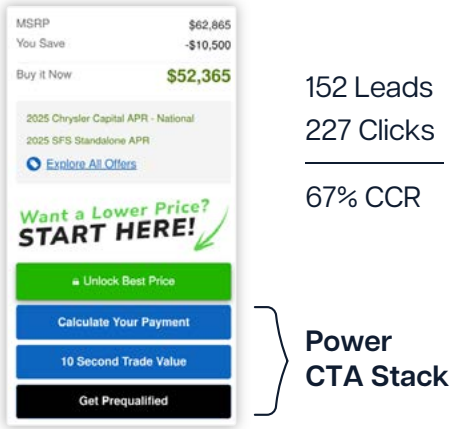
In the example above, when a consumer clicks the CTA called "Calculate Your Payments," the TradePending workflow starts and soon the consumer can provide their contact information.

When the payment form is completed and the consumer clicks on "submit," the software vendor must send an event into Google Analytics called **asc_form_submission** and **asc_form_submission_sales**.

Dealers can take the number of form conversions created by each CTA workflow and divide that by the number of CTA button clicks to get the CTA Completion Rate (CCR). A high CCR indicates that the consumers find the tool easy to use and were willing to exchange their data for something in return.

Let's look at an example of how to do the CCR math for a Trade CTA shown in Figure B.

Figure B



Looking in Google Analytics, there were 227 clicks on the CTA button labeled "10 Second Trade Value" (asc_cta_interaction) which started the TradePending trade process. There were 152 form conversions from the trade tool (asc_form_submission_sales). The CCR is 152 divided by 227 = 67%. Approximately 7 out of 10 people who started the trade process completed all steps.

We are taking time to explain this math because the dealer ***will not*** *see 152 leads in their CRM.*

How CRMs Process Website Leads

Let's say that the CRM only shows 112 leads for TradePending's trade tool for the given time period and not 152 which was logged in GA4 (Fig. B). A dealer could think that the trade tool was underperforming or they might think that the TradePending reports are overreporting success metrics. However, we discovered that the CTA stack design impacts who gets credit for the lead.

If dealers have lead gates on a vehicle's selling price, more consumers will likely enter their information on the form associated with the price unlock (i.e., Unlock Best Price) before trade, payments, or credit. Since the unlock price leads would likely hit the CRM first, any trade, credit, or payment lead **will not** be associated in the CRM lead source report as TradePending. This is the same limitation with any CRM because of first click attribution models which generate skewed lead performance reports.

> **CRM lead conversion reports provide valuable data, but dealers should never use them as the sole measure of their website tools or marketing campaigns' success.**

However, the price unlock conversion is not a true exchange of value, which masks the value of subsequent leads generated by retailing tools which **offer an exchange of value** for customer data. It is important for dealers to properly weigh the signals they received from payment and trade tools over simple price unlock leads.

Here is an example (Fig. C) of how bad the masking can be when a simple unlock is used to capture customer information, not shopping intent. We can see that 1,250 leads were sent into the CRM from TradePending retailing software but according to the CRM, TradePending only had 460 leads. The unlock instant price CTA takes the initial lead credit in many examples we analyzed, with trade or payments coming in minutes later.

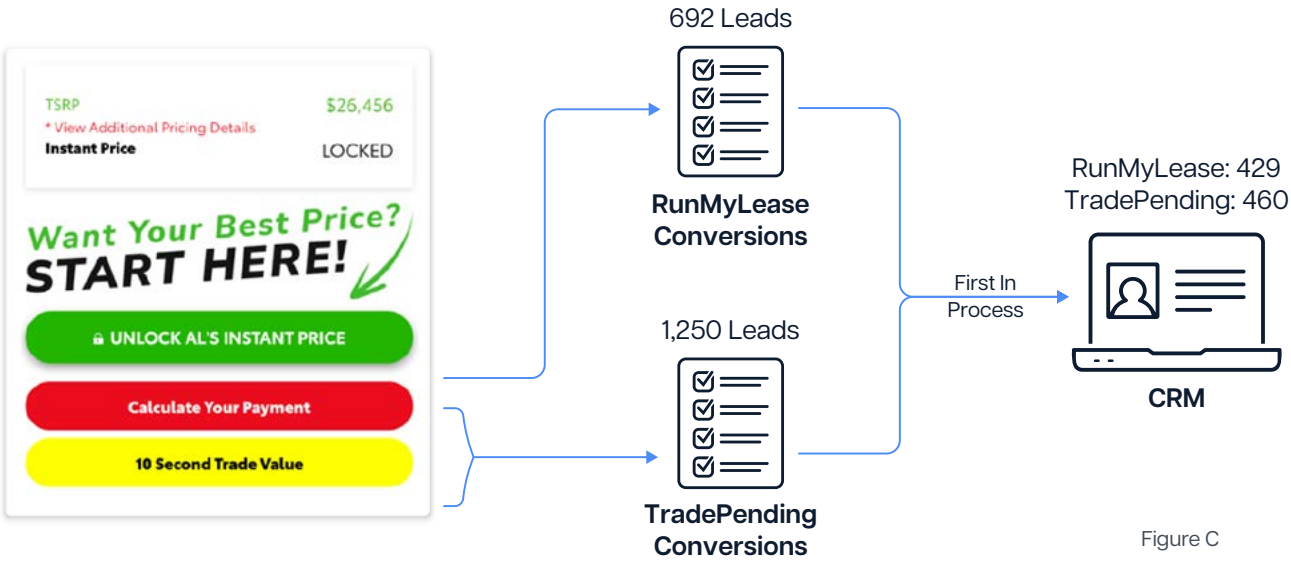


Figure C

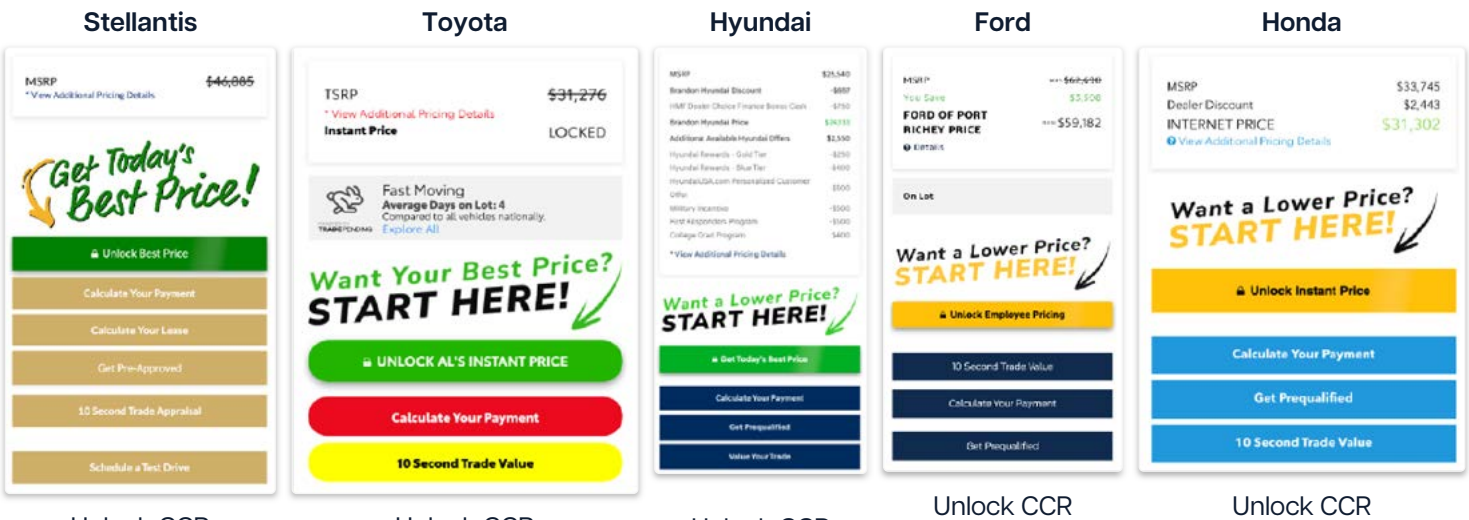
Despite the masking, TradePending was the #1 lead source for the majority of stores in the Morgan Auto Group (75 stores). These lead signals are sent to the CRM in the hope that the sales associate will see the duplicate lead signal and acknowledge that the consumer submitted a trade or calculated their payments also.

What we also discovered is that CRM platforms are **not designed** to trigger new workflows or messages based on the second or third lead source, which may have higher value than the first lead source. The first CRM that incorporates fluid communication with audiences based on weighted lead sources will stand out from the competition.

How Many People Complete the RunMyLease Unlock?

I'm sure that some readers are asking about the CTA Completion Rate (CCR) for the unlock price CTA. The CCR will depend on the math box and pricing which is disclosed, so here are a few examples of CCR calculations for a simple price unlock which requires the consumer to allow a text message to be sent to their phone to confirm that their data is correct.

Figure D



Stellantis	Toyota	Hyundai	Ford	Honda
Unlock CCR **18.5%**	Unlock CCR **25%**	Unlock CCR **35%**	Unlock CCR **38%**	Unlock CCR **40%**

The range of CCR for the same CTA message is very large. This begs that additional research be done to understand the impact of extra CTA buttons (i.e., Stellantis example) or the OEM brand messaging on the website.

What Happens to Website Conversion When Payments Are Added?

We looked at stores which already had the TradePending Trade CTA who decided to add the TradePending Payments and Credit CTA buttons. The stores replaced their digital retailing CTA when it was permissible by the OEM. In some cases, there were two payment tools on the dealer's VDP (i.e., eShop or Capital One).

All stores who switched out their digital retailing tools with the TradePending Power CTA stack saw a net increase in form leads.

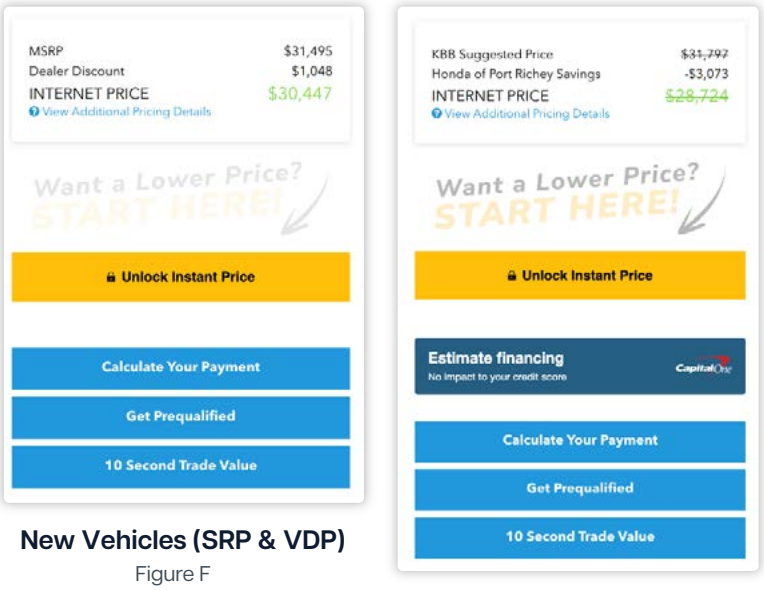
The Power CTA stack was a strategic win for the Morgan Automotive Group with two stores seeing a 100% net increase in form leads.

Figure E

July 2025	Total Increase in Form Leads	TradePending Form Leads
Land Rover	22.0%	52.0%
Toyota	30.9%	39.4%
Honda	102.5%	27.5%
Infiniti	104.9%	48.8%
Hyundai	34.6%	56.3%
BMW	45.9%	39.0%
CDJR	20.6%	32.0%

Interestingly, the Honda store still had a low overall percentage of TradePending leads. When we looked at the data, it had likely occured because they added a Capital One digital retailing CTA in June to calculate payments (Fig. F).

Having multiple CTAs that perform the same function, like calculating a payment, can be confusing for the consumer and clutters the page. In this particular case, we like to see both options because the Capital One tool is branded and well recognized by consumers, so it has a high CCR and appears to enhance total conversion rates.



New Vehicles (SRP & VDP)

Figure F

The TradePending Payments tool generated 110 leads and Capital One generated 134. The addition of Capital One was a net increase of total leads although some conversions were diverted away from TradePending because of the prominent positioning and branded logo on the CTA button.

This reinforces the need to calculate CCR in Google Analytics to see that lead source data can be influenced by CTA designs, conflicting vendor tools, and a price unlock feature.

Trade and Payment CCRs are Different

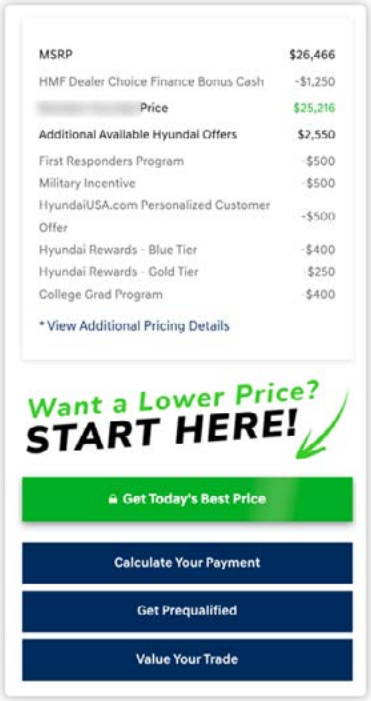
It is important to understand that the amount of data you request from consumers in forms or online sales processes may cause your leads to decrease.

In the case of one Hyundai store with a simplified CTA, shown here (Fig. G), the CCR for payments was computed as follows for the month of July:

299 payment leads / 803 clicks on "Calculate Your Payment" = 37%

The payment leads were high quality and quantity. They also closed at a very strong rate which makes the true value of their CTA stack. When any online process is longer than a streamlined market report workflow in the "Value Your Trade" CTA, the CCR will be lower.

Figure G



299 Leads
803 Clicks

37% CCR

Power CTA Stack

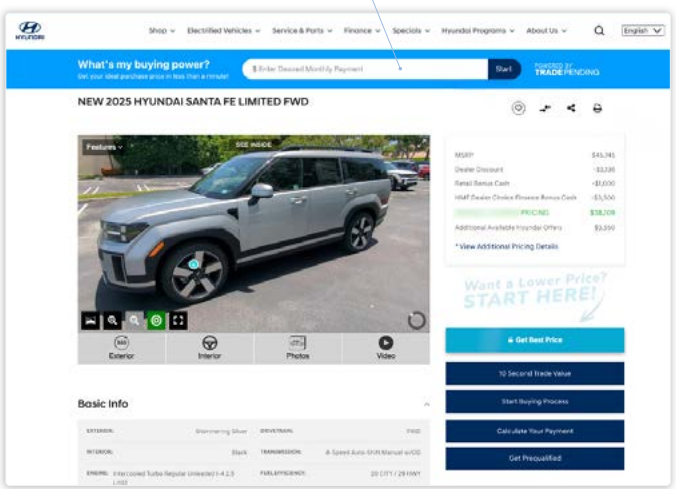
Overall Conversion Also Impacted by Design

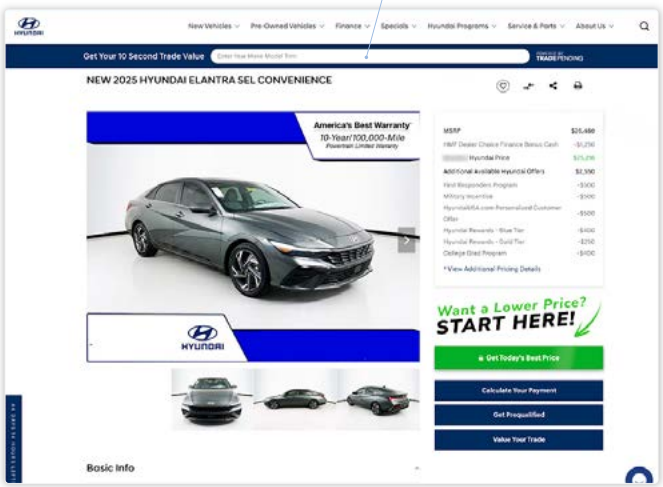
Some of the dealers we studied had the TradePending Power CTA Stack as shown above (Fig. G) but also added additional "pre-opened" TradePending tool options as shown below (Fig. H). The integration of CTA buttons and pre-opened tools appears to generate additional "net new" leads for dealers. We have asked TradePending to upgrade their support of the ASC specification to indicate when pre-opened forms are started so we can more accurately measure total CCR.

Buying Power Tool as a Pre-Opened Banner

Figure H

Trade Tool as a Pre-Opened Banner



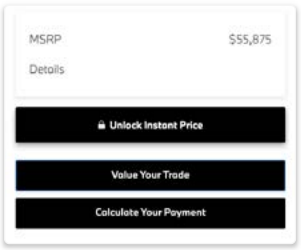


Variations by OEM Brand

The ratio of payment leads to trade leads was another data point which we inspected, and as you can see below (Fig. I), the ratio varied greatly. The Hyundai store had the lowest number of trade leads compared to payments, and luxury brands like Land Rover, BMW, and Lexus had the highest number of trade leads as a percentage.

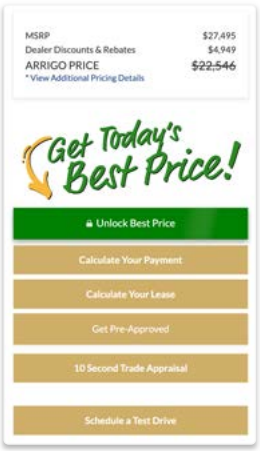
Figure I

BMW



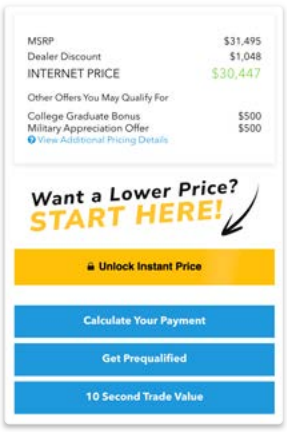
287 Payments / 259 Trade
Ratio: 1.11

CDJR



434 Payments / 114 Trade
Ratio: 3.81

Honda

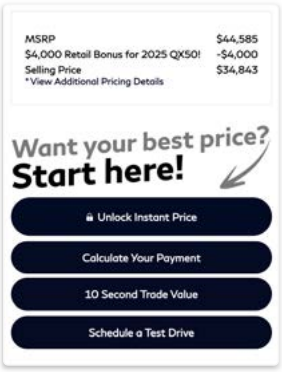


335 Payments / 114 Trade
Ratio: 2.93

Hyundai

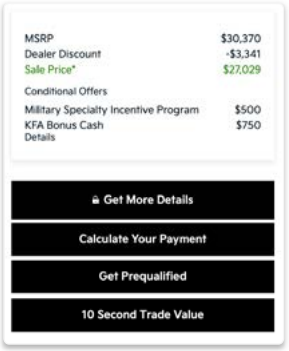
346 Payments / 42 Trade
Ratio: 8.24

Infiniti



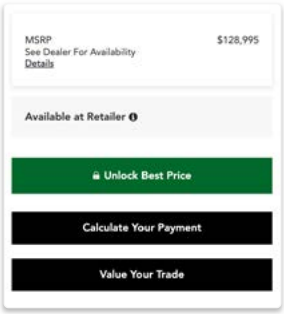
179 Payments / 31 Trade
Ratio: 5.77

Kia



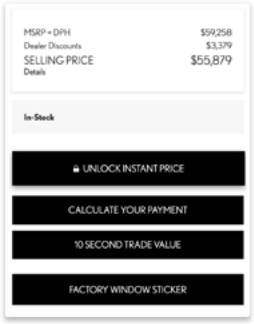
410 Payments / 125 Trade
Ratio: 3.28

Land Rover



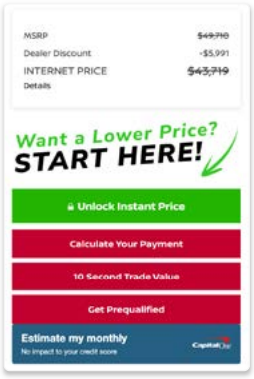
123 Payments / 79 Trade
Ratio: 1.55

Lexus



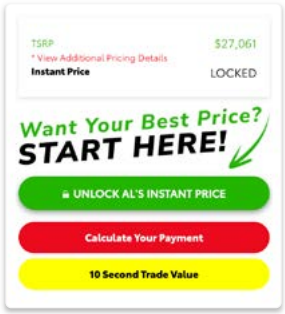
291 Payments / 233 Trade
Ratio: 1.25

Nissan



279 Payments / 183 Trade
Ratio: 1.52

Toyota



907 Payments / 343 Trade
Ratio: 2.64

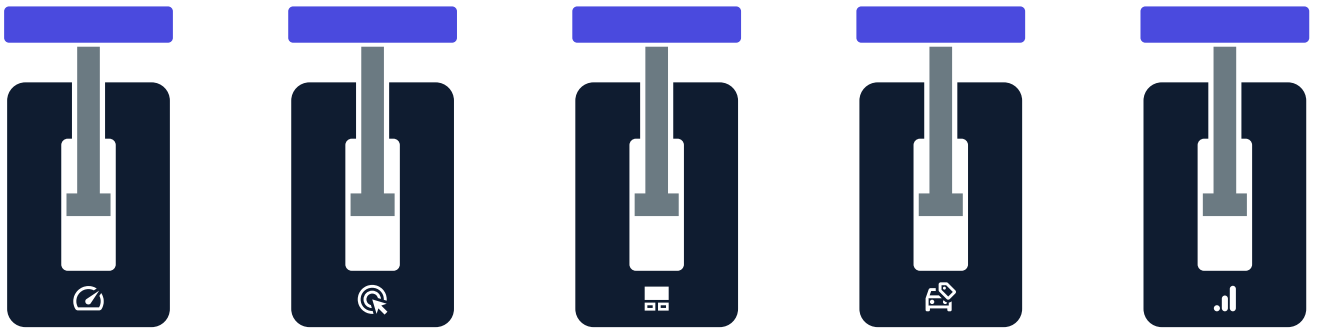
Additional research will be coming on the colors, designs, and number of CTA buttons used which may impact overall conversion rates. Dealers who would like to quickly test and measure the CCR for their website pages and start tracking FCR more intentionally can accomplish this by subscribing to KPEYE.

Automating CCR Using KPEYE

The practical reality is that marketing managers do not have the extra time to manually pull the data needed to calculate CCR for each CTA button on four types of pages: new SRPs, used SRPs, new VDPs, and new VDPs. The other complication is that dealership managers change CTA button text or tools on a regular basis.

Increasing overall website conversion rates are extremely important for dealers who want to get the most from their marketing investments, Brian Pasch decided to get back into software development and create a tool that gives dealers the data they need to control the five factors which impact website conversion rates.

Figure J



Five Factors That Impact Conversion

If you look at these five "levers" which can change website conversion rates, all take time to collect the necessary data and then track how the data changes when one of these levers are changed. In factor one, for example, dealers who reduce the number of unused GTM containers and scripts on their websites may find that it take 30 days to see a change. Measuring website performance every two weeks in an automated fashion allows for easier measurement over manual speed testing which managers forget to run.

Factor three (which focuses on CTAs) plays a critical role in conversion rates, but few dealership managers will take the time to dig into Google Analytics and calculate CCR in a thorough manner. One of the more popular report pages in KPEYE is the CTA analysis for all four types of inventory pages.

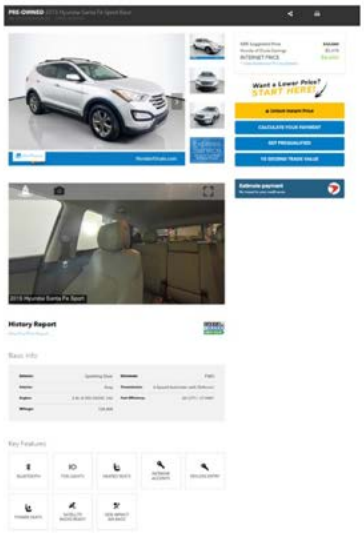
In the example below (Fig. K), dealers can see how each CTA button performs on a Used Car VDP. We have found that CTA buttons can perform differently on new and used car pages. Dealers are shocked to see the vast variations. So much that dealers are shocked to see variations.

Figure K

Primary CTA Analysis - Used Car VDP

CCR of used car VDPs during reporting period; DM = Data Missing

CTA Name	Clicks	Users	Eng. Rate	Conv.	CCR
Unlock Instant Price	1,092	989	5.7%	456	42%
Calculate Your Payment	1,308	1210	6.9%	528	40%
Get Pre-Qualified	312	301	1.6%	100	32%
10 Second Trade Value	512	509	2.7%	56	11%
Estimate Payment	332	325	1.7%	152	46%



For example, the 10 Second Trade CTA for this dealer's used car VDP was 11% but on their new car pages the CCR was over 24%. That is why we encourage dealers to analyze every website and OEM brand individually. We have seen TradePending score as high at 45% CCR and Payments range from 20-60%, so testing one store and one type of page is a huge error.

How To Interpret CCR Variations

From our testing, CTA buttons perform very differently on OEM pages which are only allowed to show MSRP (i.e., Mercedes or Subaru). Since KPEYE automates the analysis, dealers can test different CTA button text to improve CCR. For example, a CTA button labeled "Unlock Instant Price" may not work very well on a Subaru new car VDP, so the dealer can try a button which says "Show Dealer Price" and still utilize the same unlock form technology.

By changing CTAs, and letting them run for 30 days, dealers can improve Form Conversion Rates (FCR) by increasing the CCR on each type of inventory page. That is why each time KPEYE is run, it analyzes the deign and calculates the CCR for:

1. New SRPs **2.** New VDPs **3.** Used SRPs **4.** Used VDPs

When dealers have easy access to all the data to help design tests for the Five Factors which impact website conversion, then meaningful improvements can be seen. Since total conversions are tracked in KPEYE every time the report is executed, dealers can see trends in overall conversion, conversion by CTA, and conversions by traffic channel to better guide their marketing and tech partner decisions.

General CTA Suggestions

By studying dealer website designs for many years, we have seen hundreds of different designs and CTA approaches. If success is to be measured by the number of leads generated by a website page design, and not page load speed, then we have some suggestions to consider. We challenge dealers to consider if they have a clear sales process on their website which matches their sales experience in the showroom.

1. The primary CTA button should stand out on the page, so if the OEM allows it, the button should be a different color.
2. There is no value to having more than five CTA buttons on a VDP.
3. If the primary CTA button has no real exchange of value (i.e., only a reduced price) or "check availability," dealers need to measure the CCR to see if the consumers are not playing the lead game. For example, if the CCR is under 25%, is that CTA worth disappointing 75% of shoppers?
4. The CTA buttons should reflect the primary research questions of a shopper, which often comes down to answering this question: can I afford this vehicle?
5. If affordability is a primary concern the shopper will want to know: 1) The finance rate they qualify for; 2) Their monthly payments based on a reasonable downpayment; and 3) The value of their trade. Having three CTA buttons for these questions makes practical sense.
6. Consumers rarely schedule a test drive via a CTA button, so remove it.
7. Reconsider the "Check Availability" CTA to be used only on used car VDPs. The CCR on used car pages is < 20% and significantly less on new car pages, so eliminate it on new car VDPs.
8. Do not have two different trade tools on your VDP or website.
9. If you have two digital retailing tools on a VDP, verify that both tools are generating equivalent offers, rebates and payments. If the tools present conflicting data, remove one.
10. Test your VDP designs on a mobile phone:

    - See if the CTA buttons are of similar size and are aligned properly.
    - See if your chat pop-up is covering up your CTA stack or is popping up too much and will cause friction with the consumer.
    - See if your website vendor has added a "call us" CTA button on a VDP. If yes, make sure the button is sending ASC events so you can see if consumers are using this dynamic CTA button. You should also make sure this CTA is using a DNI phone number.
    - See how much scrolling is needed to get to the CTA stack and does the CTA stack fit onto one screen.

Closing Thoughts

More work is needed to study the impact on conversion rates and CTA design. When the primary CTA button is a basic unlock, the CCR rates are very low. In fact, most "unlock" CTA messages have a CCR lower than 25%. This means that 75% of the consumers who wanted to know the selling price of the vehicle did not want to exchange their contact information. This is a strong statement about payment disclosing strategies.

We believe that the more dealers lean into conversion optimization, they will rely on conversion tool partners, like TradePending, to guide testing and optimization projects. The team at TradePending has evolved their vision for automotive retailing to help their customers see measured improvement in online conversion rates, moving from a seller of retail tools (i.e, trade, payments, credit) to a conversion optimization specialist.

TradePending is a dealer's conversion optimization partner. Their retail tools have extremely high engagement rates and provide consumers with an exchange of value. This exchange creates higher quality leads because it shows the consumer is more committed to the transaction other than just seeing a selling price.

With CCR rates at 67% and higher for trade, and 37% and higher for payments, dealers can see that consumers are finding these retail workflows extremely easy to use and valuable in their shopping journey. When dealers compare these metrics with their current retail CTA messages and software, they will be able to see a clear path forward to higher conversion rates.

We are encouraging dealers to invest more time in optimizing website conversion rates. KPEYE software allows dealers to quickly obtain the data they need to make better website design decisions. Whether dealers calculate CCR manually or using KPEYE, the CCR metric is a new KPI which needs to be part of monthly marketing discussions.