



Jeff Smith's County Chevrolet Goes All in on Digital—and New Car Sales Jump 50%

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Jeff Smith's County Chevrolet has undergone a revolution—a marketing revolution, that is. The small-town dealership went from primarily using traditional media to going all in on digital. Thanks to high-impact digital efforts and making the car the star of its website, sales are up 50%.

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The Challenge

[Jeff Smith's County Chevrolet](#) in Essex, Ontario, prides itself on being a small-town dealership and digital marketing pioneer that moves more and more cars each year. But it wasn't always this way. Just a few years back, sales were stagnant, and the dealership's marketing dollars were hard to measure and track. Jeff Smith, the dealer principal, and his team had dabbled in digital, but their dollars were primarily allocated to traditional media, mostly newspaper.

Jeff saw that [advertising on digital could be the way to reach potential car buyers](#) throughout his market. "We realized that digital was a great opportunity for us because it's just as easy for someone 20 minutes away to shop on our website as it is to shop on a dealership's site that's right around the corner," Jeff said.

The Approach

Making the leap to all-digital marketing

Even though the dealership had relied on traditional media for decades, the choice to go all digital was fairly obvious to Jeff and his team. They wanted to [advertise to car buyers where they are](#), "and it was becoming blatantly obvious where people were spending their time," Jeff said. Jeff thought the transition might be difficult or complicated, but in the end, the hardest part was phasing out relationships with print vendors he'd known for a long time. Learning how to use and get the most out of the digital tools was a simpler process than he'd anticipated—and everyone was pleasantly surprised by how quickly sales turned around.

"With traditional advertising, we were often reactionary. Now we have a sustained strategy that we plan in advance and can adjust as needed on the fly."

The dealership uses a variety of digital tactics, putting an emphasis on [Google Search Ads](#) and [YouTube ads](#). Jeff's team handles much of its search budget internally, casting a wide net within his market and focusing on specific make and model keywords. For searches that line up with cars the dealership has in stock, clicks go directly to the corresponding vehicle details pages.

In addition, Jeff and his team use [YouTube](#) primarily as a branding tool. Animated video ads are geographically targeted and feature the latest promos and deals.

The team has loved the flexibility of digital. "With traditional advertising, we were often reactionary. We didn't really plan in advance; we would just heavy up spending after a bad month. Now we have a sustained strategy that we plan in advance and can adjust as needed on the fly," Jeff said.

Revving up vehicle product pages to meet car buyers' needs

As a small dealership, County Chevrolet knows it can't compete based on economies of scale, but it can be agile and [create great experiences for its customers](#). A key component of its new all-digital strategy was a new website.

The focus was providing potential buyers with as much up-to-date information as possible through its vehicle detail pages, including photos, videos, and prices. "We've worked hard on driving quality traffic of local people who are ready to look at cars to our site. So when they get there, we need to reward them with all the information they need to analyze a car and put it on their shopping list," Jeff explained. On County Chevrolet's website, the car is the star.

County Chevrolet has been pleased to see that [giving people access to the information they need in the moments they need it](#) has paid off with customers of all ages. The other day, Jeff's team helped a 55-year-old woman who came in with a picture of one of its cars on her smartphone and said, "I want this car." The website puts customers in the driver's seat—to research and make choices on their own time. The investment has paid off big time. Since 2014, time spent on site has increased by +27%, and new site visitors have increased by +30%.

Measuring results on every dollar

As with most small business owners, every dollar matters to Jeff and his team. When they were doing mostly print, sales and ROI by channel were tough to pin down. With digital, they've been able to track their ad spend against key metrics like emails, site visits, calls, and live chats and, of course, new car sales. "Now we can be ad-spending snipers. We measure results instantly and can put resources where they'll perform the best based on simple ROI calculations."

As soon as County Chevrolet went all in on digital, sales momentum picked up.

Car Sales by Year



Going all in on digital has breathed new life into the dealership, expanded its pool of customers, and led to growth in nearly every key metric. "Being a part of this turnaround in sales has been fun for everyone at the dealership. I'm excited to see how we can use digital to continue to build our brand and help more customers drive off the lot happy," Jeff concluded.

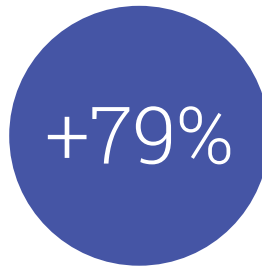
The Products

YouTube TrueView
Google Pay-Per-Click Ads

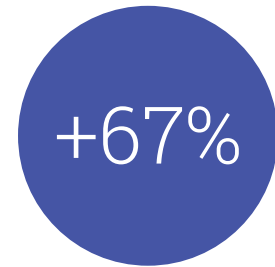
The Results



increase in new car sales since going all in on digital



increase in website visitors since 2014



increase in County Chevrolet's site page views since 2014