



Tom Wood Toyota Scion Brings Reputation to Life Online with Reviews

DEALERSHIP PROFILE:

Tom Wood Toyota Scion
4202 Lafayette Road
Indianapolis, IN 46254

General Manager: Brian Hefner
E-Commerce Director: Diana Weaver

Key Reputation Management Stats

- 4.9/5 stars on average with 425+ Dealer Reviews on Cars.com
- Double-digit growth in sales over the past two years, much of which is due to the store's online reputation
- Customers have driven 50+ minutes to work with dealership employees based on reviews

How Tom Wood Toyota Scion Does It

- Buy-in from senior management
- Transparent processes that solicit customer feedback
- In-store and online promotion of reviews
- Adaptive management and consistent coaching

A Valuable Heritage

It's not often a retailer can claim more than 50 years in business, but at the Tom Wood family of dealerships, a focus on three core values – honor, integrity and loyalty – has made them valuable members of the communities in which they operate since the first Tom Wood dealership, Hedges Pontiac, was founded in Indianapolis in 1967. The dealer group has since expanded to 17 franchises throughout Indiana, Kentucky and Minnesota, each with a strong reputation built on providing excellent customer service and investing in their local communities.

With this sound foundation in place, Brian Hefner, General Manager of Tom Wood Toyota, and Diana Weaver, E-Commerce Director, saw an opportunity to bring the store's reputation to life online. The pair incorporated processes to encourage customers to share their experiences through online reviews and empowered their staff to create vocal advocates of the dealership.

As a result, the store, which sells between 100 and 150 units per month, has seen double-digit growth in sales over the past two years and is among the leading dealers in the region in terms of online review volume and quality.

"I attribute 10 to 15 percent of our total sales each month specifically to customers who came in after reading reviews, and another 30 to 40 percent are likely influenced," Hefner said.

Recruit, Train and Retain Reputation-Driven Talent

"Success is not measured by the number of franchises or locations an organization has; it's measured by the people associated with them," said the late Tom Wood, illustrating the emphasis placed on hiring, training and retaining talent that contribute to long-term sustainability and growth. As a result, hiring at Tom Wood Toyota is something that involves the whole organization, currently 55 employees strong.

"Every manager has to be on board when we hire a new person, because everyone in the store has the potential to overlap," said Hefner. "We've all got to agree that the person will improve our team."

Through formal training and an adaptive management style that uses customer feedback to coach new employees, Hefner and Weaver constantly help employees support the store's values and consultative approach to sales. Weaver monitors incoming reviews across all platforms on a daily basis and distributes them to the appropriate store managers. Then, in short one-on-one meetings, the manager and sales associate review the feedback.

"99.5% of the time it's positive," said Hefner. "We give them their well-deserved praise and treat anything they may have been able to do better as a coaching moment."

Driving a Reputation-Driven Culture from the Top

Getting honest customer feedback isn't always easy, but rather than leave criticism to chance, Hefner and Weaver do their best to address any issues before a customer even leaves the store.

"If a customer has something negative to say about their experience, I want to hear it," Hefner said. "We use everything as an opportunity to train our staff and improve our processes."

As part of this effort, Hefner displays "Immediate Feedback" posters throughout his store, outlining customer expectations and soliciting feedback if those expectations are not met by sharing his direct contact information.

In addition to his in-store accountability, Hefner makes a point to personally reply to all the reviews the store receives, good or bad, leaving his name and title in the response in an effort to show transparency and extend relationships.

Sharing Reviews Offline

Seeing an opportunity in promoting their store's reviews, Hefner and his staff distribute postcard-sized handouts referencing Cars.com, Google+ Local, DealerRater and Yahoo Local as a way to share their reviews with everyone that comes into the store – not just those who research the store online. The same handouts are also used after purchase to encourage customers to share their positive experience.

"We like to give our customers choices, rather than force them to one specific site," said Hefner. "However, referencing specific sites that previous customers have found valuable lends credibility and helps us build review volume across multiple platforms."



TOM WOOD'S VOLUME-DRIVERS

- "Immediate Feedback" signs used to ensure customer satisfaction
- In-store handouts that promote and solicit reviews on multiple sites
- Email processes that encourage staff to share their reviews
- Personal response from the General Manager on all incoming reviews
- Highlighted reviews on the dealership's website

The dealership also makes a point to send links to the store's reviews to any customers who submit a traditional chat or email form lead. The added trigger lets customers who may have not known about the store's reviews get a sense for what they're experience will be like.

"Our first response is always personal and from a specific sales associate," said Hefner. "He or she will answer all of the customer's questions and provide additional information about comparable vehicles. It's also when every associate shares the stores' online reputation."

Though the exact phrasing is left to the individual sales associate, many reference the "pride" or "great care" Tom Wood has in its reputation and include links based upon the site the contact came from.

Extend Your Reach

According to a recent survey by Digital Air Strike, nearly one third of car shoppers will travel more than 50 miles to go to a dealership with great reviews, and Tom Wood Toyota is no different.

The results speak for themselves, with the store routinely pulling shoppers from outside of Indianapolis.

"We typically see about 10% of our shoppers come in all the way from places like Bloomington and Lafayette because of the positive reviews they've read online," said Weaver.

Weaver also shared the impact reviews can have upon building a salesperson's own individual brand as well as the dealership's.

"In some cases, customers will want to work with a specific salesperson based on a review they read that mentioned the employee by name."

Gaining Momentum

In less than two years, the store has received over 700 reviews across multiple platforms and is looking forward to continued success thanks to a focus on recruiting the right people, training them to succeed and equipping them with processes that work.

"It's almost taken a life of its own," said Hefner. "Like handing over the keys to a new customer, we just know to do it now."



"It's how we promote ourselves, especially on the new-car side," said Hefner. "You can buy a new Camry anywhere, so it's important to let potential customers know that they'll have a positive experience by working with us."