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Hybrid Vehicles in the Aftersales

Napleton Automotive Group was honored by performance measurement firm Pied Piper Management Co. three years running for having the fastest and

Future

It's no secret – hybrid vehicles are gaining traction in markets around the globe. Manufacturers are jumping off the battery-electric vehicle (BEV) bandwagon to give customers the hybrid vehicles that they want while balancing their new-vehicle portfolios with BEVs to meet tighter standards for carbon emissions.

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[best response times on Internet sales leads.](#)

But Brian Napleton, the group's director of operations, was disappointed last year to finish last out of 17 large dealership groups in [Pied Piper's Service Telephone Effectiveness](#) study.

Napleton said the group "felt we did a very good job handling service calls." The results, he said, "were a





















reality check we were not expecting and we were forced to make changes to ensure that result never happened again."

The Oakbrook Terrace, Ill., group improved 14 points this year to finish second in Pied Piper's latest study of how well some of the largest dealership groups responded to phone calls to their service departments.

Phone effectiveness ranking

Napleton Automotive Group finished last in a 2023 ranking of fastest and best response times to Internet sales leads among large dealership groups. The group climbed to 2nd this year after making changes including adding phone numbers to store websites so that service appointment calls go directly to its business development center. Here is the 2024 ranking.

	Score	Change from 2023
Serra Automotive	68	+9

Napleton Automotive Group		65	+14
Berkshire Hathaway Automotive		64	+1
Group 1 Automotive		64	-1
Hendrick Automotive Group		63	+2
Holman Automotive		63	-
Ken Garff Automotive Group		63	+1
Greenway Automotive		62	+4
Morgan Auto Group		62	+1
Ourisman Automotive Group		61	-
Victory Automotive Group		61	+2
Dealership group average		60	+2
AutoNation		59	+3
Sonic Automotive		59	0
Herb Chambers Auto Group		58	-3
Ganley Auto Group		57	-4
West Herr Automotive Group		57	+3
Asbury Automotive Group		56	+2
Hudson Automotive Group		56	-
Penske Automotive Group		55	+1
Lithia Motors		52	0

Source: Pied Piper Management Co.

Napleton scored a 65 out of 100; **Serra Automotive**, which improved nine points from 2023, took top honors with a score of 68. Berkshire Hathaway Automotive and Group 1 Automotive tied for third with a score of 64.

"We took the results from the [2023] survey to heart and decided to train and measure accordingly," Napleton said. "We have an in-house centralized **service [business development center]** that handles the majority of our stores which has great employees and leadership that really embraced the survey and took immediate action."

Among the changes, Napleton added direct phone numbers to its dealerships' websites so that service appointment calls go directly to the business development center to cut out the transfer from the store to the center and decrease the overall call length.

Napleton also signed up for monthly reports from Pied Piper to ensure it was on track.

The result? Compared with its 2023 numbers, the group trimmed the average customer wait time to speak with someone in the service department from 70 seconds to 40 seconds.

Searching for quick response times

The 2024 Pied Piper Service Telephone Effectiveness survey was conducted between January and July by phoning the service departments at every dealership location owned by each of the 20 dealer groups studied.

Service effectiveness scores ranged from 0 to 100 and were calculated from

a mix of individually weighted measurements that support a customer's mission of quickly speaking with a service representative who can schedule an appointment within a reasonable amount of time.

Sixty-two percent of the total score was determined by efficiency measurements, while 38 percent was determined by quality measurements – where dealerships provide a proactively helpful experience that goes above and beyond a customer's basic expectations.

The 2024 dealer group industry average score was 60, up 2 points from last year. The average time for service customers to reach a service adviser or business development center dropped from 82 seconds in 2023 to 57 seconds in 2024. Service appointments averaged four days out, one day sooner on average than last year.

Hang-ups

But it was not all good news. How often a service customer hung up the phone without making an appointment because of no response, endless time on hold and other reasons increased from 11 percent in 2023 to 13 percent this year.

"Successful service departments value customer loyalty, and a customer's attempt to schedule service is the first interaction that fosters this loyalty," said [Pied Piper CEO Fran O'Hagan](#). "Customers who encounter challenges when scheduling service may choose to go to a different dealership or independent repair shop, or they may decide to replace their vehicle as well as their dealership."

Serra Automotive took the crown in part because it had the second highest rate of "mission acceptable" service calls – reaching a service adviser within

one minute and scheduling an appointment less than one week out – 76 percent of the time on average. The industry average was 53 percent.

The group also had the lowest rate of "mission failure" calls – a customer hanging up without making an appointment – occurring less than 1 percent of the time. The industry average was 13 percent. Serra had the lowest average time to reach a service adviser at 31 seconds compared with the industry average of 57 seconds.

The overall industry had customers placed on hold for more than two minutes at a rate of 13 percent of the time; no Serra Automotive callers were placed on hold for more than two minutes. Lastly, Serra dealerships averaged three days out for a service appointment, less than the industry average of four days.

"Paying attention to service phone calls is well worth the effort," O'Hagan said. "Customers who find it simple and easy to schedule service are on the path to higher loyalty, not just for future service needs but also when purchasing a new vehicle."

Napleton said his group is not yet content with how they handle service appointment calls.

"We were very pleased to see the big increase [year over year] but if I'm being honest, I definitely wanted to be No. 1 not No. 2," he said. "We will continue to improve to make sure next year we come out on top."