



## New Marchex Institute Study Reveals Phone Calls Can Make or Break the Automotive Customer Journey

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*Auto Manufacturers Investing in Call Analytics Are Capturing Share from Competitors*

SEATTLE--(BUSINESS WIRE)--Nov. 13, 2018-- Marchex (NASDAQ: [MCHX](#)), a leading provider of call analytics that drive, measure, and convert callers into customers, today released a new [report](#) measuring the call-handling performance of major auto manufacturers during the first half of 2018. Results from the study illustrate the importance of phone calls in the auto customer journey and OEM sales and service strategy.

"In today's hyper-competitive auto market, manufacturers are looking for new ways to get an edge," said Matt Muilenburg, head of automotive at Marchex. "Our call intelligence data shows that consumers are calling auto dealers during the purchase process – they want to know if a specific make and model is in the showroom and what financing and incentives are available. With sales calls converting to a purchase at four times the rate of email, how these calls are handled can be critical – perhaps the most critical – to generating sales revenue and keeping potential buyers from turning to competitor brands."

Additional key findings from the study include:

- **Phone calls are driving more appointments, moving them to the top of the priority list for OEMs.** Between 2017 and 2018, the number of new sales opportunities from calls increased more than 50 percent. The number of appointments rose more than 30 percent, and the number of soft commitments to visit a dealer nearly doubled.
- **When OEMs optimize call handling, customers commit to services more frequently.** In 2018, auto manufacturers booked appointments, sold parts or received soft commitments for service 51.6 percent of the time, a 20.6 percent improvement over 2017.
- **OEMs are starting to prioritize phone calls in the sales process.** Just over half of OEMs in the study have improved their overall failed call rate. Six of the 11 auto manufacturers saw a decrease in failed call rates, representing a 5.4 percent improvement over last year.
- **Dealerships are quicker to pick up the phone.** The average hold-time abandon rate decreased for eight of the 11 auto manufacturers analyzed, resulting in a 33.3 percent improvement between 2017 and 2018.
- **Automated attendants, like Interactive Voice Response systems or voicemail services, drive customers away.** In 2018, dealerships reduced the use of, or streamlined, these systems, resulting in more conversations at the dealership. Even so, caller abandons while navigating automated systems comprise more than half of all failed calls, and nearly 10 percent of calls overall to a dealership.

Calls are critical in the path to purchase. With phone shoppers purchasing cars 28 percent of the time over shoppers who connect over email who convert only 7 percent of the time, it's clear that the phone call is a prime opportunity to turn a prospect into a customer. In fact, auto dealers who invest in the phone call as a key marketing and sales channel are seeing an increase in new customer wins, retention of current customers and, ultimately, revenue. According to a [recent Forrester report](#), customers who initiate a phone call convert 30 percent faster, spend 28 percent more and have a 28 percent higher retention rate.

Marchex solutions are leveraged by some of the largest and most successful brands in the automotive industry, including the top three largest U.S.-based manufacturers. For this study, the Marchex Institute analyzed more than 11 million calls to over 2,800 dealerships from 11 auto manufacturers during the first half of 2018. A set of key performance indicators were evaluated for each brand, including unanswered calls, calls abandoned by customers due to interactive voice response (IVR) or reaching a voicemail, calls abandoned after being placed on hold, and calls abandoned while being transferred to an agent.

This is the latest in a series of reports that identify call handling challenges in the auto industry and highlight how brands can turn callers into customers. Marchex is helping OEMs accelerate sales via phone calls through a course of industry best practices. Visit the [Marchex blog](#) to learn more and view the full series of call-handling performance reports.

### About Marchex

Marchex understands that the best customers are those who call your company – they convert faster, buy more, and churn less. Marchex provides solutions that help companies drive more calls, understand what happens on those calls, and convert more of those callers into customers. Our actionable intelligence strengthens the connection between companies and their customers, bridging the physical and digital world, to help brands maximize their marketing investments and operating efficiencies to acquire the best customers.

Please visit the Marchex [blog](#) or @marchex on Twitter (Twitter.com/Marchex) to learn more.

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