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THE LATEST SERVICE, PARTS AND COLLISION NEWS

Pied Piper finds gap in service scheduling

Making appointments more effective online than by using phone

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Dealership websites handle service requests more effectively than phone calls, averaging a score of 71 out of 100 compared with 61 for phone requests, according to a new study.

For the first time, the 2026 Pied Piper Auto Dealer Group Service Scheduling Effectiveness Study distinguished between the two channels, revealing a 10-point gap that reflects less room for human error online.

How survey was done

Pied Piper sent 4,163 service requests to every dealership within 31 auto groups across the U.S., and also evaluated four independent service center brands for comparison. They assigned each dealership and service center a service scheduling effectiveness score out of 100 based on more than 40 metrics related to service revenue and customer loyalty. Within the groups surveyed, overall scores ranged from a high of 80 to a low of 47.

"The difference is that top-performing dealer groups remove friction. Customers get where they need to go quickly, schedule service with less effort, and know exactly what happens next," Pied Piper Vice President of Metrics and Analytics Cameron O'Hagan said. "Lower-performing groups not only make scheduling harder, they fail customers far more often."

One-third of dealership service requests come through its website, prompting Pied Piper this year to begin independently tracking how well those are handled, Pied Piper CEO Fran O'Hagan said.

Average website performance scores were higher than those for phone service because there is less room for human error — although software can still fail, he said.

AI not a big factor

Artificial intelligence has proven to be a weak spot in customer service, O'Hagan said. Chatbots fail to connect phone customers with human assistance about one-third of the time, and that disconnect usually happens one to two minutes into the conversation, O'Hagan said.

Pied Piper's report said chatbots have "dramatically improved" responses to routine service requests. However, none of the top dealership groups relies heavily on AI, he said.

"All of them are at the top of the rankings because of relentless focus from the management of the dealer group and also their processes," O'Hagan said. "They experiment with AI, but they certainly don't rely on it."

Independent service centers scored nine points higher than the overall industry average in phone service effectiveness, but lagged behind the industry website average by 36 points.

Nevertheless, independent shops are a competitive threat to dealership groups because of scheduling reliability, quick service and overall higher quality in service calls, the report said.

"Independent service centers have become formidable competitors. They've built their reputation on speed and convenience, and they currently outperform the typical dealer group when customers schedule service by phone," Cameron O'Hagan said in the same statement.

Where dealerships placed

The five dealership groups with the highest overall Service Scheduling Effectiveness score were MileOne Autogroup, Group 1 Automotive, Berkshire Hathaway Automotive, Napleton Auto Group and Bergstrom Automotive.

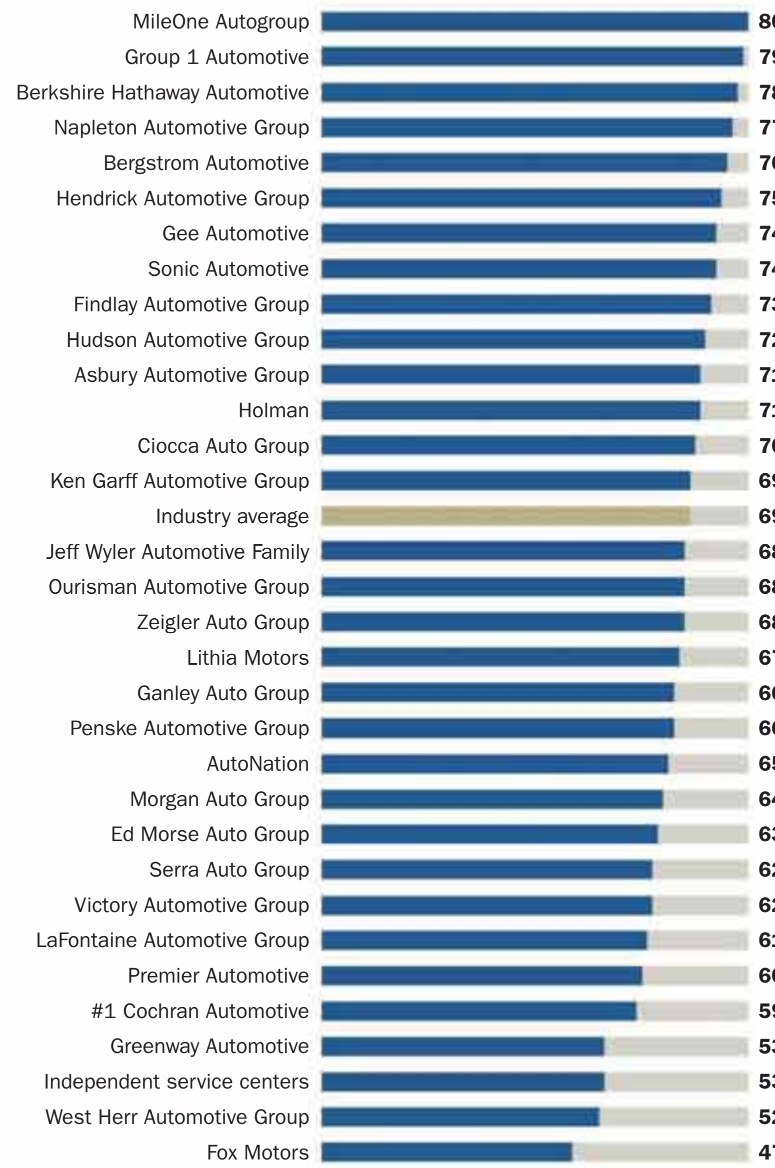
The overall lowest-scoring groups are Fox Motors, West Herr Automotive Group, Greenway Automotive, #1 Cochran Automotive and Premier Automotive.

The difference between high and low scorers is not about software and suppliers — something all dealership groups have fairly equal access to, Fran O'Hagan said. What separates top performers is being in touch with customers and recognizing when the system isn't working, he said.

"It's invisible. If you don't actually measure it, you don't actually know when it is failing," he said. "The only people who know it's failing are the customers, so I would say the reason that there are dealer groups who perform really well is relentless focus by top management."

Best and worst service appointment scheduling

The 2026 Pied Piper Service Scheduling Effectiveness Study measures how effectively dealerships help customers schedule a service appointment by phone or through the dealership website. More than 40 criteria are combined to produce a single score ranging from 0 to 100. Here are the dealership groups ranked by average score.



ASE buys WrenchWay tech platform

COURTESY OF TURBO TIM'S

WrenchWay and the National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence have teamed up on efforts to increase technician numbers before. Now, they'll put a finer point on education outreach.

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To bolster its efforts to recruit the next generation of automotive technicians while supporting current ones, the National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence acquired online platform WrenchWay, which is dedicated to promoting and improving technician careers.

Financial details of the June 30 deal were not disclosed.

Jay Goninen, president of WrenchWay, said Dave Johnson, CEO of the National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence, admired the platform but believed the institute, known as ASE, should lead such workforce initiatives.

"Now that we're coming together, we're able to bring a lot of those things that he had desired," said Goninen, who will become vice president of industry development, connecting ASE's audience with WrenchWay's software and mobile app.

WrenchWay's team of 13 employees will move to ASE, working specifically on building the nationwide initiative.

"Modernizing ASE has always meant more than updating our tests. It means rethinking how we serve technicians, shops, educators, and the next generation entering the industry," Johnson said in a statement. "WrenchWay has built something remarkable and together we can deliver on that vision at a scale neither of us could achieve alone."

The goal of the acquisition is to end the decades-long shortage of automotive technicians, Goninen said. The National Automobile Dealers Association estimates an annual shortfall of 37,000 trained technicians, which drives up wait times and costs for vehicle repair as well as lost revenue for dealerships.

Salary isn't the problem; the average compensation is almost $90,000, Goninen said. The issue is a lack of education, he said.

ASE will bring in WrenchWay's platform, which already is used by 3,500 schools, to target students years before they enter the workforce. The ASE Connects initiative — which was launched in January by the two organizations — will remain free for high schools and postsecondary schools, introducing students to local repair shops and dealerships.

"The next step is to really continue to drive everything that's made ASE Connects successful already in building those school relationships," Goninen said. "Now, looking at ASE more holistically, what can we do to elevate the brand? What can we do to bring more value to what ASE has to offer?"

WrenchWay and ASE have partnered in the past. In 2024, ASE joined WrenchWay's School Assist program, which finds classroom resources for automotive programs in high schools, community colleges and trade schools.

And the two organizations have teamed up on WrenchWay's annual Voice of the Technician survey, which polls those in the industry about the issues holding the profession back.