



THE TOP 5 CALL CONNECTION TRENDS AFFECTING YOUR DEALERSHIP'S BOTTOM LINE

Why Are Your Phone Leads Not Converting?

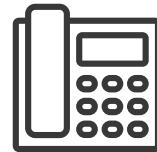
In this comprehensive e-book, you'll discover:

- ✓ *The difference between a connected call and an answered call*
- ✓ *Common trends dealerships see that affect their call connection rates*
- ✓ *Top reasons for unconnected calls*
- ✓ *Tips to improve your dealership's call connection rates*
- ✓ *Why call connection matters*



Connecting your dealership's phone calls is the first step toward bringing in new, valuable customers. Promptly connecting callers to someone who can help is a fundamental phone skill directly tied to your bottom line, yet is often overlooked or misunderstood. Many dealers don't understand the difference between connecting a call and answering the phone when it rings. Just because a customer talked to your receptionist, doesn't mean the call was connected. **In 2020, the average dealership connected only 61.06% of their phone calls.** While this score may have been impacted by the COVID-19 outbreak, has the average connection rate increased since?

ANSWER VS. CONNECT



Answer: The customer's call is picked up, whether by a person or machine, based on a technical pick-up signal.



Connect: The customer gets connected ear to ear with a qualified agent who can answer the customer's inquiry.

It is important to understand the difference between a connected call and an answered call to ensure each customer is getting immediate help before calling the dealership down the street. Call connection focuses on prioritizing every call and ensuring customers are promptly helped with their needs to give quality customer experience and improve call conversion rates.

THE 5 TRENDS

AFFECTING YOUR DEALERSHIP'S BOTTOM LINE

#1

- ▶ **CONTINUOUS RISE IN INBOUND CALL VOLUME**

PG 3

#2

- ▶ **409 CALLS ARE NOT CONNECTED EACH MONTH**

PG 4

#3

- ▶ **HITTING VOICEMAIL (WITHOUT LEAVING A MESSAGE!) REIGNS AS TOP REASON FOR UNCONNECTED CALLS**

PG 5

#4

- ▶ **SLIGHT IMPROVEMENT IN OVERALL CALL CONNECTION**

PG 6

#5

- ▶ **DECREASE IN CALL CONNECTION AT THE BEGINNING OF THE WEEK**

PG 7

TREND 1

CONTINUOUS RISE IN INBOUND CALL VOLUME

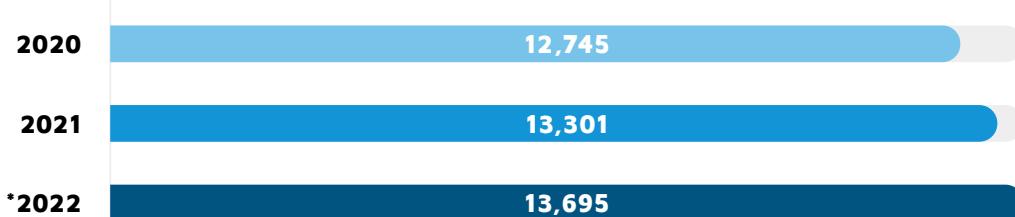
In 2020, the average inbound call volume per dealership was 1,060 calls per month. Between January and August of 2022, the average inbound call volume per dealership per month jumped to 1,141 calls. As call volume continues to have a steady increase year over year, call connection continues to be a challenge for dealers. As the phone rings more, staff have an even more difficult time managing the phones to ensure they are not just answering when it rings, but connecting calls to qualified agents.

Are your agents and staff overwhelmed with the number of calls coming into your dealership? Consider implementing a Sales and Service BDC to help handle the volume, as well as help with making outbound calls, if you do not already have one. Another suggestion would be to hire a part-time staff member who can be dedicated to the phones. This way, if the customer's agent is unavailable at that time, the part-time staff can help with any questions they can. If they are unable to answer any questions, they should take notes

and relay back the agent so they can call them back immediately. They can also send texts or outbound call updates if the agent takes longer than expected and, if needed, transfer the call to a manager. This is similar to the receptionist role; however, they are not interrupted by customers entering the dealership. Lastly, try implementing phone bridges. This will help reduce irrelevant calls by having the customer select 1 for Sales, 2 for Service, 3 for Parts, etc., as soon as they dial your dealership's number.

These days, customers are calling every dealership that may have their desired vehicle. It's the dealership's job to capitalize on each opportunity and effectively handle this increased call volume in order to convert these opportunities into appointments before another dealership connects their call first. ***Assuming the monthly call volume average stays consistent for the remainder of 2022, the average call volume per dealership will be 13,695 calls per year!***

AVG CALL VOLUME PER DEALERSHIP IN 2020, 2021, AND 2022



*2022 call volume projected based on data available from January to August of 2022.

TREND 2

409 CALLS ARE NOT CONNECTED EACH MONTH

On average, 409 calls go unconnected each month at a given dealership. That is a lot of money left on the table if the customer is never followed up with. There is a lot of opportunity here that your dealership needs to take advantage of. Make sure your agents are calling back each customer in a timely manner who is sent to voicemail, left on hold, leaves a voice message, or leaves a message with your receptionist.

Try implementing soft phone skills when calling these customers back to ensure they are getting excellent customer service and choosing your dealership over another.

This call script may look like apologizing for the missed call, using their name throughout the call, listening to their concerns and needs when discussing their vehicle of interest, answering any questions they have, setting a firm appointment time and date for them to come in, and sharing all the information and instructions they need for their upcoming appointment. Be sure to give a follow-up call as their appointment approaches to show that you value them as a customer and always smile on the phone while speaking!

On average, 409 calls were not connected per dealership each month in 2022!



TREND 3

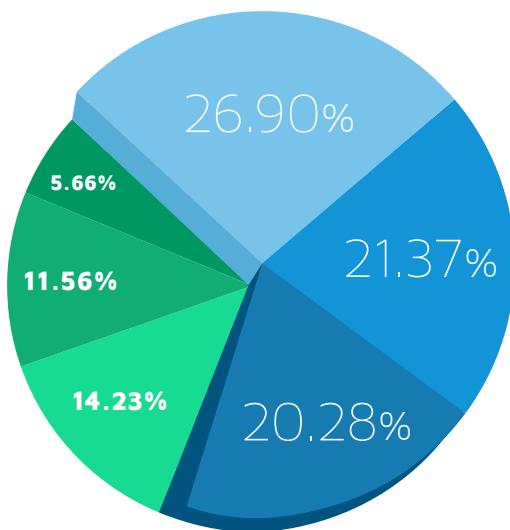
HITTING VOICEMAIL (WITHOUT LEAVING A MESSAGE!)

REIGNS AS TOP REASON FOR UNCONNECTED CALLS

Where did these 409 calls go? Unconnected calls may be callers who were left on long holds and decided to hang up, callers who got in contact with the receptionist who told them to call back at a later time for various reasons, or callers who went straight to voicemail. The list goes on, but the idea is that unconnected callers never got ear to ear with a qualified agent and never had the opportunity to convert to a test drive or appointment.

In 2022, the number one reason for unconnected calls was because they were sent to voicemail and never left a message, closely followed by customers who did leave a voicemail message and customers who hung up while on hold.

While customers who were sent to voicemail may have called after hours or on a day your dealership may not be open, that is still a large percent of callers who never made it past the answering machine. If they did, many were left stranded on hold. **The average hold time is 3 minutes**, yet many customers are only willing to wait up to 30 seconds on hold! Make sure your phones are manned to ensure callers make it past the answering machine and skip the long hold times. Every time you hear the phone ring, it's money calling!



REASONS WHY CALLS WERE NOT CONNECTED IN 2022

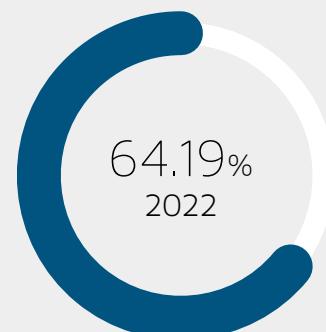
- VOICEMAIL NO MESSAGE
- LEFT VOICEMAIL MESSAGE
- HUNG UP WHILE ON HOLD
- NO MESSAGE LEFT WITH EMPLOYEE
- LEFT MESSAGE WITH A PERSON
- OTHER

TREND 4

SLIGHT IMPROVEMENT IN OVERALL CALL CONNECTION

In 2020, the average call connection rate was 61.06%. Fast forward to this year, and the average call connection rate is 64.19%. While there has been a 3.13% increase over the past 2 years, there is still room for improvement. 2020 was a unique time with the COVID-19 outbreak and many dealerships experienced intermittent closures which impacted call connection scores. **Car Wars recommends aiming for an 80% call connection rate.**

What could your dealership be doing to increase the average by 15.81% to reach the 80% goal? Two recommended solutions to increase your call connection are to prioritize answering the phone and to ensure proper phone processes are in place. Don't let the phone ring more than 3 times. If the receptionist is busy, make sure one of the agents is picking up the phone if they hear it ring. 52% of customers won't call back if you don't answer! Consider hiring a part-time employee or assigning one agent to the phone each day. Proper phone processes include things like routing calls to the appropriate department and utilizing phone bridges to reduce wait times.



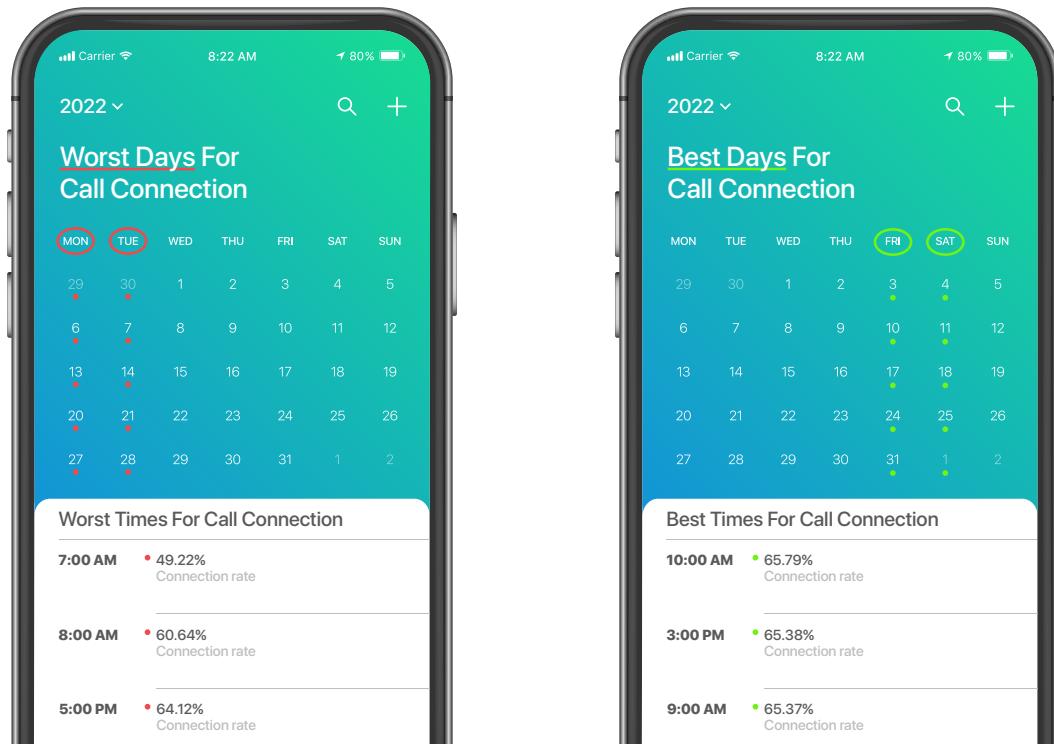
TREND 5

DECREASE IN CALL CONNECTION AT THE BEGINNING OF THE WEEK

In 2022 to date (January through August), the most successful days of the week for call connection are Saturday, with an average connection rate of 67.08%, and Friday, with an average connection rate of 64.43%. Hours of the day with top call connection scores are 10 AM, with an average call connection rate of 65.79%, 3 PM at 65.38%, and 9 AM at 65.37%. Whether it's because dealerships are fully staffed on weekends or more focused with fewer walk-ins in the mornings, dealerships have a trend of connecting the most calls at these times.

In 2022, the worst days of the week for call connection are Tuesday, with an average connection rate of 63.73%, and Monday, with an average connection rate of 63.77%.

The hours of the day for the poorest call connection performance are 7 AM, with a connection rate of 49.22%, 8 AM at 60.64%, and 5 PM at 64.12%. Keep these hours and days in mind to make sure the phones are staffed to reduce the number of calls that are going to voicemail and left on hold. Using this information is vital when looking for ways to hone in on improving call connection rates. If you notice a large trend in low connection rates when your dealership is closed, try utilizing automated greetings to inform customers why their call was left unanswered to improve the likelihood of them giving you a call back!



ACTIONABLE TIPS AND TRICKS TO IMPROVE CALL CONNECTION



Don't let the phone ring more than 3 times. 52% of customers won't call back if their call wasn't answered!



Utilize a phone bridge so each customer gets connected to the right department without getting transferred and left stranded on hold. The average hold time is 3 minutes! A bridge is the greeting customers hear when calling such as, "Press 1 for Sales, Press 2 for Service, Press 3 for Parts, or Press 4 for Finance." You can even take it a step further by adding in another layer. Once they press 1, follow up with, "Press 1 for New Car Sales or 2 for Used Car Sales."



Keep your phones fully staffed, especially during your largest call volume days and hours. Consider hiring a part-time staff member or creating a BDC to help man the phones during these times.



Implement intelligent call routing, such as a multi-ring, to ensure every customer is getting helped. This way, if a customer calls the receptionist's line and they are unavailable after 3 rings, the call can be directed to the BDC, sales agents, or a manager to ensure they are helped immediately.



Try adding automated responses during holiday, after hours, and weather/early closure days so the customer is informed why they were not connected and when they should try again.

WHY CALL CONNECTION MATTERS

Connecting a customer's call is the foundation to providing exemplary customer experience — it's the first step in getting a customer into your dealership. However, with 409 callers not reaching someone who can help each month, dealers are letting valuable opportunities slip through the cracks. Not only does connecting customers' calls boost customer experience, but it also decreases the need for follow-up, improves your dealership's bottom line, and increases conversion rates from phone calls to appointments booked.

As inventory shortages continue to be a concern and the importance of customer retention continues to rise, the power of simply prioritizing the ringing phone and connecting every opportunity cannot be overlooked. As 2022 comes to an end and the new year begins, call connection should be a priority at your dealership by implementing immediate solutions to ensure every customer receives the help they need.



Boosts Customer Experience



Decrease Need For Follow Up



Improves Bottom Line



Increase Call Conversion Rates



Car Wars
by Call Box

LEARN MORE:

To learn more about Car Wars and how we're helping top dealerships improve call connection, capture more leads, and optimize customer experience, visit www.carwars.com.