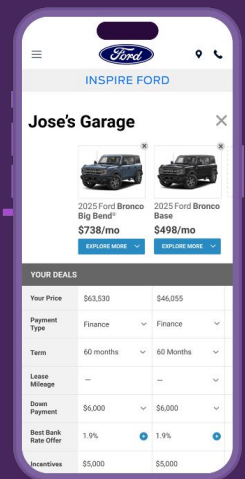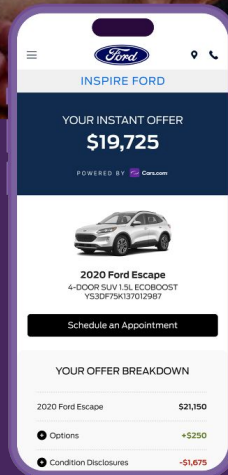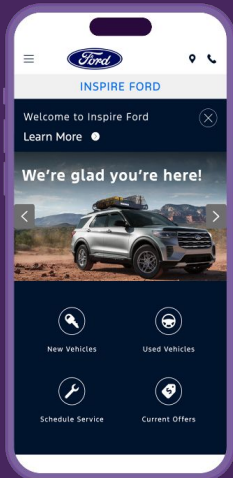# Website Playbook

CHAPTER 1
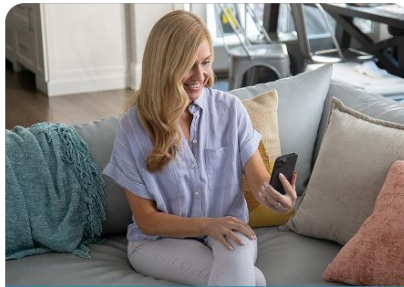
Mapping your website to
the shopper journey

Meet shoppers where they are

Every shopper lands on your website at a different stage in their journey. Understanding what they need in that moment is the key to building trust, reducing friction, and moving them toward the sale.

EARLY-STAGE
Shoppers are exploring. They're gathering information, building trust, and narrowing their options.
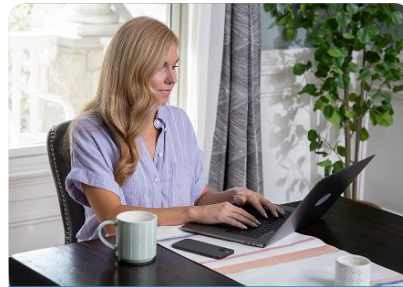
MID-STAGE
Shoppers are evaluating dealerships, calculating payments, and checking trade-in values.

LATE-STAGE
Shoppers are ready to act. They want reassurance and a simple path to purchase.

No matter where they enter, your website has to keep them moving forward. With so many digital touchpoints in the journey, speed, transparency, and a seamless experience often make the difference between losing attention and earning trust.

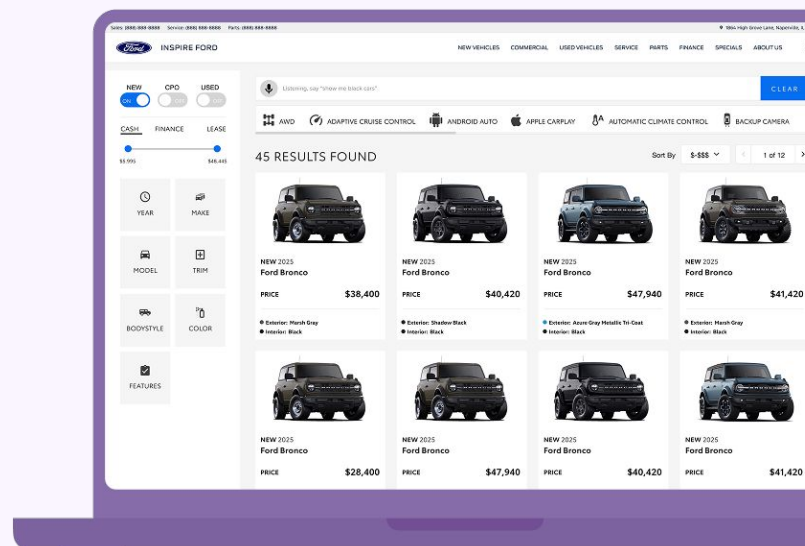## The 3 website principles that win shoppers

🚀 **Speed** ➡ Keep shoppers moving.

✅ **Transparency** ➡ Earn trust with clear pricing.

🎯 **Experience** ➡ Make every step seamless.

62+ online touchpoints during the shopper journey

Welcoming early-stage shoppers

- **Show upfront value:** Highlight reviews, real photos, and staff bios to build trust from the start.

- **Be the guide, not the gate:** Use educational content (EV fit, buy vs. lease, seasonal tips) to answer common questions.

- **Let them explore without pressure:** Offer save-for-later tools, smart filters, and curated landing pages that make research easy and pressure-free.
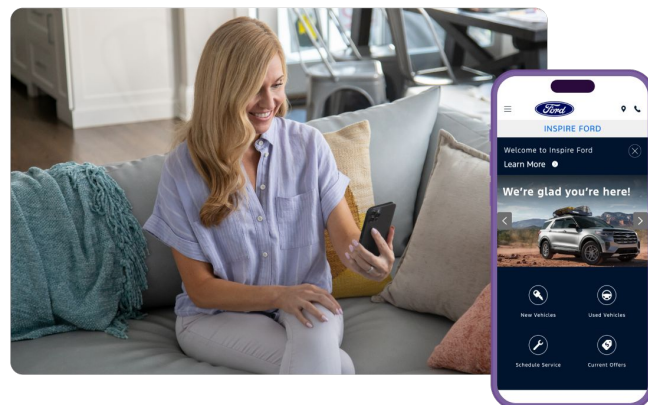
73% of car shoppers are undecided on make and model[1]
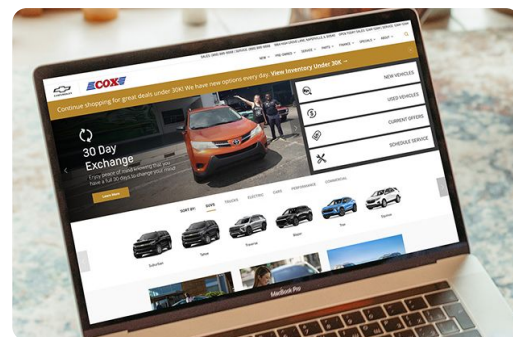
Engage mid-stage shoppers

- **Stand out beyond the specs:** Use "Why Buy Here" messaging (maintenance perks, flexible financing, delivery, loyalty programs, community ties) — and keep it visible on SRPs and VDPs.

- **Make tools sticky:** Provide real trade-in values, instant AI chat answers, and transparent pricing so shoppers stay engaged.

- **Highlight differentiators:** Show dealership-specific offers and incentives right where shoppers compare vehicles.
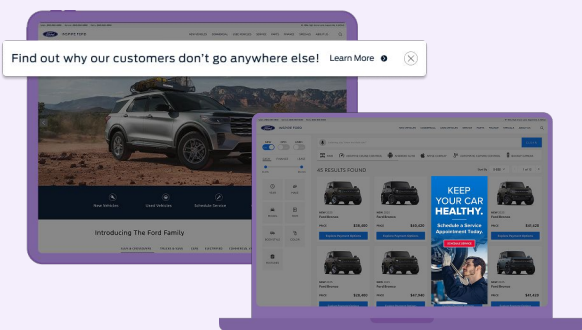
83% of buyers planning to trade in their current vehicle[2]

Convert late-stage shoppers

- **Seal the deal with personalization:** Use timely, tailored offers that reflect each shopper's vehicle, location, or saved search.

- **Keep CTAs focused:** On VRPs and VDPs, limit to 1–2 clear, high-intent actions (e.g., *Explore Payments*, *Schedule Test Drive*).

- **Remove friction:** Make follow-up fast and specific to the shopper's last interaction to keep momentum strong.

+122% conversion rate when personalized messages are shown[3]

[1] Cars Commerce Consumer Study, Q4 2024
[2] Cars.com Consumer Metrics Survey, Q3 2024
[3] CoxChevy.com Google Analytics, Mar. - Sept. 2023

Your website conversion checklist

🧭 Early-stage checklist

Is your website giving early-stage shoppers what they need?

- ✅ Provide educational content on the brand and specific models
- ✅ Feature helpful tools: calculators, FAQs, finance information
- ✅ Inspire confidence with curated pages like "Best Family SUVs" or "Used Vehicles Under $30k"
- ✅ Let shoppers browse on their own terms with smart filters and save-for-later tools
- ✅ Keep the experience helpful, not pushy, across every page

🔍 Mid-stage checklist

Is your website helping mid-stage shoppers move forward with confidence?

- ✅ Display transparent, easy-to-find pricing on all inventory pages
- ✅ Offer instant trade-in values that shoppers can trust
- ✅ Highlight dealership differentiators (Why Buy, reviews, local incentives) on SRPs and VDPs
- ✅ Make it easy to compare vehicles and financing options side-by-side
- ✅ Provide fast, clear answers through always-on chat or virtual assistants

🚗 Late-stage checklist

Is your website built to convert late-stage shoppers?

- ✅ Make conversion opportunities fast, simple, and friction-free
- ✅ Personalize pages and offers to match each shopper's needs and intent
- ✅ Keep CTAs clear, visible, and limited to high-intent actions

Want to go deeper?

Explore the full playbook online for more examples and advanced strategies to align your website to each stage of the shopper journey

Read Chapter 1