



BMW Embraces Microsite Marketing

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BMW Changes Its Policy on Dealer Microsites

BMW has a written policy for dealers outlining their rules and regulations for SEO, PPC and microsites. In fact, their policies regarding website design and digital marketing engagement are some of the most restrictive in the business.

Recently, BMW veered out of the restrictive lane of digital marketing and has embraced a “controlled” roll-out of **service microsites** for their dealers. BMW, through a joint venture with Dealer Product Services, will offer their dealers co-op money to build a single landing page on a domain that follows a specific pattern. This pattern could very well be the same for all BMW dealers in the county.

I use the word “microsite” to reflect what some people would call this design but it is only a landing page with links back to the dealer’s primary website. You can check out a sample of the design by visiting: <http://bmwservicebuenapark.com>. The URL pattern looks like it will be the term “BMW service” and the city of their dealership or the reverse.

The landing page has very little text and the coding suggests a quick and dirty single page design. From this pre-launch site, it looks like no one is thinking about how to maintain these landing pages over time because there are no centralized CSS files and everything is hard coded in a single page.

Using Pay Per Click To Drive Service Leads

The BMW service marketing program includes a pay-per-click management campaign which BMW will co-op to drive traffic to this landing page for service related terms. The creation of this landing page will enable BMW dealers to run two pay-per-click campaigns at the same time for their PMA. This will increase the visibility of their brand through paid advertising and is a positive step in using digital advertising to drive fixed operations business. They just may be paying a lot more than they should to increase service revenue by ignoring SEO and relying only on PPC.

In the program, the PPC campaigns will be targeted using zip codes to ensure that the ads don’t cross PMA lines. This is an imperfect design because depending on where a consumer’s ISP hub is located, the IP address of a consumer’s PC at home could very well appear in a town a few miles away. In California, New York, New Jersey, Chicago, and other metro areas where PMA maps are not large, the BMW service marketing program will be showing ads in densely populated areas that violate their own PMA marketing restrictions.

Since the SEO architecture of the landing page is weak on text and the website is only one page, some additional issues will come into play. The Google PPC quality score for these landing pages will be low because the words they will be buying will not be backed up with enough on-page text. For example, if a dealer is buying “BMW Brakes”, “BMW Transmission”, etc. there is no text on the page to match those terms they want to buy.

This will make their Pay-Per-Click spending increase compared to if they actually created a microsite with text pages on brakes, transmissions, tires, etc. Yes, I just gave away how to fix that problem and I would hope that the architects of this program add more value and insight for BMW marketing dollars.

SEO Scorecard For BMW Service Microsites

In regards to the SEO power of this design, it violates my guidelines for creating effective microsites because it has no real quality content but it seems that BMW has some other goals. From the architecture, it seems that BMW wants to try to limit or “geo-target” only the town that the dealer is located in so that their landing pages don’t start showing up in organic searches in other dealer’s PMA. So they limit the text on this one page to include only the city where the service center is located.



There is no way to geo-target a website organically to match a PMA map; regardless of any claims someone would make to satisfy BMW marketing executives. My guess is that by putting up a single, low text landing page, they are hoping that it doesn’t show up organically for search except for the town name in the URL. Of course, this to me is a silly concept so if they only want a pay-per-click landing page they should add a “robots.txt” file in the root directory and tell Google not to index the site organically at all.

Microsites Roles in Google Page One Management

This toe in the microsite waters by BMW sparked a number of related thoughts regarding microsites and [Google Page One Management](#) (GPOM). The top organic search phrase that drives traffic to a car dealer’s website is their own name. I have stated my opinion in previous articles that enhancing what is displayed on Google Page One for a search on a dealer’s name is very important.

BMW misses the mark for this microsite naming model because they are using the town name for the microsite and not the actual business name. Instead of using “bmwservicebuenapark.com” it would benefit the dealer more if they used “shellybmwservice.com”, especially if you have negative press showing up on page one when you search a dealer’s name.

Google keyword traffic estimator tools also supports a microsite model that includes the dealer’s name would be much stronger than the town that they are located in.

Keywords	Advertiser Competition ?	Local Search Volume: December ?	Global Monthly Search Volume ?
Keywords related to term(s) entered - sorted by relevance ?			
shelly bmw	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	3,600	3,600
shelly bmw service	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not enough data	22
bmw service buena park	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not enough data	Not enough data
buena park bmw service	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not enough data	Not enough data

What Shows Up On Google Page One

If a dealer engages in social media and is able to secure a matching name in Twitter and Facebook for their business, there is a good chance that when they type in their dealership name, they will own four out of the 10 organic listings. This is normally achieved because a dealer's primary website will show two listings, which leaves six organic listings to control. Regardless of the website platform that you use, any single website will not show more than two pages for a search on a dealer's name.

If a dealership was able to control 80%, 90% or 100% of the organic listings for a search on their business name, first party leads will increase. The leads would increase because they would push off Google Page One the third party lead collectors that are using their multi-million dollar brand to collect free leads.

In the case of **John Marazzi Nissan**, shown to the right, they have done a great job of controlling 9 out of the 10 organic listings when you search for their business name.

Optimizing pages for a dealer's name, called "brand leakage", is a multi-million dollar business. Dealers are just realizing they need to fight back against this practice. For many dealers, Edmunds.com appears on page one for searches on their dealership name. The website collects consumer leads and will resell them to multiple dealers in their state.

For example, if you search "**BMW Macon**" in Google you will see that Edmunds has an optimized page on this URL: <http://www.edmunds.com/dealerships/BMW/Georgia/Macon.html>. At the top of this page, a message gives consumers the option to find other dealers in the state and to get a price quote. This is a perfect example of how a dealers name and their brand can be used by lead collectors.

A dealer cannot control the organic listings for all related search terms in their PMA but they should work on their #1 digital asset; searches on **their business name**. You can read a previous article on this topic called; "[Is Your Brand Leaking](#)" that goes into greater detail on this issue.

BMW was on the right track, but did not understand the benefits of GPOM. If a dealer wanted to increase the consumer awareness and ease by which they could engage with their business, they could purchase a domain for service, parts and even tires and build real microsites that Google will respect.

These sites could be done in WordPress and have real content pages on parts, service, tires and other fixed operations phrases that could drive additional revenue to their dealership. An additional advantage of using WordPress is that dealers could add their own local sales, specials and testimonials to further increase the local search relevance of these sites.

The screenshot displays a Google search for "John Marazzi Nissan". The results are dominated by organic listings from the dealership's own digital assets, which are highlighted with red labels on the right side of the image:

- Main Website**: The top result is the dealership's main website, showing a map, address (3643 Pine Ridge Road, Naples, FL 34109), phone number (239) 643-3833, and hours of operation.
- Main Website**: A second listing from the main website, titled "John Marazzi Nissan | New & Used Cars | Naples | Fort Myers | Port...", includes a link to the "Used Car Inventory" and "Certified Pre-Owned Sale".
- Video**: A YouTube video titled "Another Happy Customer At John Marazzi Nissan" is listed.
- Microsite**: A "Sign Up" page for John Marazzi Nissan is shown.
- Microsite**: A "Why Buy at John Marazzi Nissan" page is listed.
- Facebook**: The dealership's Facebook profile is listed.
- Video**: A Vimeo video titled "John Marazzi Nissan IMA Naples Fort Myers - How To..." is listed.
- Twitter**: The dealership's Twitter profile is listed.
- Press Release**: A press release titled "John Marazzi Nissan Becomes Signature Sponsor for Southwest..." is listed.
- Edmunds.com**: The Edmunds.com listing for the dealership is the final result on the page.

Enterprise Microsite Management

The Pasch Consulting Group has developed WordPress management tools that can update hundreds or thousands of WordPress microsites simultaneously with customized, locally optimized content from a central control panel.



These tools eliminate the problem of maintaining content for hundreds or thousands of dealer microsites which would change throughout the year. It would allow local WordPress sites to maintain their local keyword targets and links while being updated centrally. It would also leverage OEM marketing dollars since WordPress is open-source software and costly CMS licensing fees for their dealership microsites would be avoided.

Any OEM who wants to increase first party leads to their dealerships should strongly consider a GPOM microsite model that can be centrally managed and create unique localized content for each dealership. If car manufacturers implement a microsite framework like discussed in this article to enhance the GPOM concerns of their dealers, then they can implement a similar model using the dealership's primary city. The point is that they could implement both strategies and provide their dealers with a significant bump in first party leads.

If the BMW Service program is successful, what would stop a third landing page to be created called "bmwpartsbuenapark". The answer is nothing. I just hope that BMW is not fearful about creating too many microsites, which would be a shame for the dealers. They are heading in the right direction but just have not to worry about marketing costs and first party organic lead generation.

I applaud BMW for breaking out of their outdated thinking on microsites and I hope that it evolves into great strategic assets for their dealers. When done properly, a microsite model implemented at the OEM level could be a game changing strategy for OEM's in 2010. Some aggressive local dealers have already found this model to work but imagine the impact if it was done for all dealers in a brand franchise.

Did you hear that sound? I think I heard third party lead collectors choking on that concept.

If any OEM wants a winning microsite strategy that will both dominate organic search results and provide a platform for pay-per-click marketing and branding, that solution has been delivered on a silver platter.

I have always wondered why OEM's would allow third party lead collectors to poach consumer leads off a search on their dealer's name. I have recently learned that it is not because they are in bed with these companies, but rather they needed a cost effective strategy to fight back. Now they have one.

About The Author



Brian Pasch is the CEO of the Pasch Consulting Group and an active writer for the automotive community.

You can also reach Brian in his New Jersey offices at 732-450-8200 or by visiting <http://www.dealer-seo.com> . If you are attending the 2010 NADA Convention in Orlando, make sure you meet up with Brian if you have questions on using microsites to enhance your online visibility.

Other Articles by Brian Pasch

- [Google Page One Management](#)
- [Is Your Brand Leaking](#)
- [Has Your Brand Been Vandalized](#)