

THE STATE OF DEALERSHIP PHONE PERFORMANCE 2025 BENCHMARKS SHAPING PHONE STRATEGY FOR 2026



AGENDA

01 CRISP BENCHMARKS

How dealership phone performance evolved in 2025 and how to compare

02 THE REALITY OF CONNECTION

Where calls break down and why nearly one-third never reach a live conversation

03 TIME ON THE PHONE & HOLD TIMES

How wait times and call length directly impact connection and conversion

04 WHEN DEALERS GET CALLS

The days and hours that drive the most inbound volume and firm appointments

05 INBOUND & OUTBOUND CALLING PERFORMANCE

Why timing and structure matter more than call volume

06 WHAT THIS MEANS FOR 2026

Turning 2025 phone patterns into smarter decisions and stronger performance

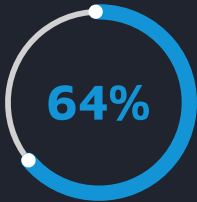
INTRODUCTION

As teams set benchmarks and KPIs for the new year, it's critical to evaluate the past year's dealership phone performance. In 2025, dealerships managed higher call volumes, booked more appointments, and navigated growing customer expectations while competing for faster, more seamless experiences. Every call that failed to connect represented missed revenue and a missed opportunity to build long-term customer trust.

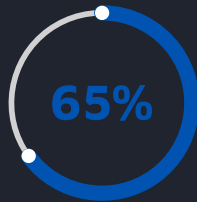
Car Wars analyzed data across thousands of dealerships to uncover the patterns behind real results. These insights show when customers call, how long they wait, and whether conversations reach the right person. Together, they reveal where dealerships are performing well and where opportunities and bottom-line revenue are slipping away. This report explains how those insights can drive smarter decisions in 2026. When dealerships understand what the data is telling them, they are better equipped to protect appointments, improve performance, and Own the Phone.



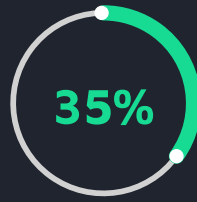
2025 CRISP Averages



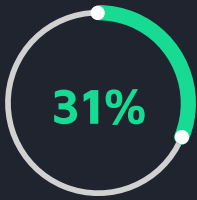
Connect



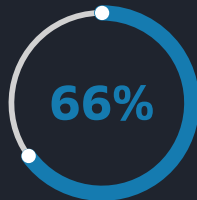
Request/Invite



Set
(firm)



Set
(soft)



Pursue

Knowing what works is only useful when it can be measured. CRISP is a simple but effective framework developed by Car Wars that captures the essential elements of successful dealership phone performance. These benchmarks show how results improve when visibility and accountability are applied consistently.

CRISP benchmarks offer a clear view into how performance evolves with the right tools and coaching in place.

- ▶ **Connect:** Ensure callers are connected with a qualified agent who can help
- ▶ **Request/Invite:** Request the appointment on every call and invite the customer into the dealership
- ▶ **Set:** Agree to a specific date and time and confirm with a reminder
- ▶ **Pursue:** Follow up with new leads and existing customers, recover stranded calls, and rescue missed opportunities

When analyzed across new Car Wars users in 2025, the impact of the CRISP methodology is clear.

New Car Wars accounts began their first month in 2025 with an average **61.3% Connect rate**, **59.6% Request or Invite rate**, and **31.2% Set rate**. By December, those same dealerships improved where it mattered most: Connect rates increased to **65.0%**, while Set rates climbed significantly to **43.2%**.

CRISP BENCHMARKS

01

HOW DOES YOUR DEALERSHIP COMPARE?

CRISP BENCHMARKS FOR SALES AND SERVICE PERFORMANCE

Car Wars' CRISP methodology—Connect, Request & Invite, Set, and Pursue—provides a framework to help dealerships optimize their phone performance. By comparing your metrics with the latest CRISP benchmarks, you can identify opportunities for growth and refine your strategies to achieve better results in 2026 in both Sales and Service operations.

Tips to Improve CRISP Metrics



Connect

The percentage of calls where customers are connected ear to ear with a qualified agent who resolves their inquiry, rather than being transferred to voicemail or left stranded.

Utilize phone bridges (or [Cari Phone Assist!](#)) so each customer gets connected to the right department without getting transferred and left stranded on hold. The average hold time is over 3 minutes!



Request & Invite

The percentage of calls where customers are invited into the dealership for a test drive or service appointment.

Provide staff with word tracks for common objections like price concerns. Request the customer come in for an appointment and you can discuss pricing once you get them into your dealership.



Set

The percentage of firm appointments successfully scheduled from calls. Firm appointments involve specific dates and times, unlike soft appointments, which remain vague.

Try the Whittle and Shepard technique. Start by asking the customer if the beginning or end of the week works best for their schedule. Next you can ask if mornings or evenings are usually better for them. Then offer two firm appointment times for the customer to choose from.



Pursue

The percentage of follow-ups made to stranded leads, such as customers who hung up, left voicemails, or failed to show up for appointments.

Follow up within the hour if a customer's call isn't connected. These are the customers who left a message, hung up on hold, or did not receive the help they needed on their initial call to your dealership.

Call Connection is where phone performance begins — and where many dealerships still leave opportunities on the table. In 2025, unconnected calls were driven by a few consistent patterns across Sales and Service:

Reasons Calls Failed to Connect

Reason	Sales	Service
Hung up while on hold	29.9%	28.5%
Left a voicemail message	31.3%	29.8%
Left message with a person	21.6%	23%
Other	17.2%	18.7%

Looking at performance over time, connection rates have remained largely unchanged. Average connect rates were **65.5% in 2023**, **65.2% in 2024**, and declined to **63.5% in 2025**. Meanwhile, top-performing dealerships consistently operate at a much higher level, targeting **80% connection in Sales** and **85% in Service**.

02

THE REALITY OF CONNECTION



Need a quick reminder of how Car Wars defines Connection?
Flip to page 4!

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Almost

30%

of callers give up while waiting, making hold time one of the largest drivers of missed revenue.

Another

30%

leave voicemail, creating follow-up risk and delayed responses.

Average dealerships operate

15-20%

below what top performers achieve.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR DEALERS

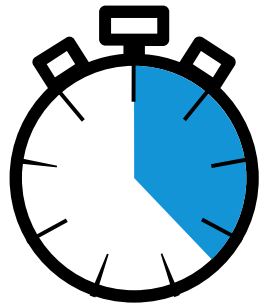
- ▶ Customers are dialing in with intent to purchase or to book a Service appointment. Each missed connection represents a tangible lost opportunity.
- ▶ Small improvements in connection rates can drive meaningful results. Reducing hang-ups by just 5% could significantly increase booked appointments and revenue over the course of the year.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOUR DEALERSHIP

- ▶ Improving connection starts with removing friction. Faster routing through phone bridges or IVRs, proper staffing during peak call times, multiring strategies to reach available agents, and focused call handling training all play a role in connecting customers faster and reducing drop-offs.

When dealerships understand where calls break down and why, they can apply the right strategies to turn more inbound demand into appointments, revenue, and long-term customer trust.

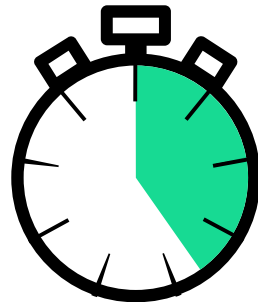
Call Connection challenges don't end once a call is answered. How long customers are willing to wait – and how efficient conversations are handled once they connect – plays a major role in overall phone performance.



In 2025, **connected calls** across Sales and Service averaged **4 minutes and 23 seconds**.

Service calls that resulted in **firm appointments** averaged **4 minutes and 38 seconds**.

*A **firm appointment** is set when the customer commits to a specific date and time, such as 2:00 PM on Thursday, rather than a general window like "sometime Saturday afternoon".*



Once calls are connected, conversation length indicates customers are willing to stay on the line to complete their request.

The majority of inbound Service calls in 2025 were appointment driven. Securing a firm date and time led the way with more than 4.2 million calls, followed by general Service inquiries at 1.9 million and status updates at 1.7 million.

The largest breakdown happens before the conversation begins. Sales callers waited an average of **2 minutes and 56 seconds on hold**, while Service callers waited **3 minutes and 37 seconds**. That added wait time is costly, especially when nearly **30 percent of unconnected calls end because customers hang up while waiting**. Hold time causes frustration to rise, and connection rates fall across both departments.

For dealers, this creates a clear opportunity. Reducing hold times by even 30 to 60 seconds can protect appointment volume and recover conversations that would otherwise be lost. Faster routing to available agents, smarter coverage during peak hours, and technology that handle routine demand all help keep high-intent callers engaged.



TIP

Car Wars' [Cari AI Service Scheduler](#) can book a routine service appointment in **under two minutes**, freeing teams to focus on higher-value conversations and in-store customers.

03

TIME ON THE PHONE & HOLD TIMES

04

WHEN DEALERS GET CALLS

DAYS AND HOURS THAT MATTER MOST

Hold times and call length tell part of the story, but timing completes it. Understanding *when* customers call reveals where staffing and focus matter most.

Inbound phone traffic in 2025 followed predictable patterns, and the dealerships that performed best were the ones that aligned staffing and strategy to these high-demand windows.

Mondays generated the highest inbound call volume, with **19.8 million calls**, followed by Tuesday at **17.9 million** and Wednesday at **17.0 million**. The week starts heavily, with customers calling early and often with clear intent.

Appointment-setting patterns shift later in the week. **Friday led the week with 218,620 firm appointments**, just in front of Monday at **217,178**, with Saturday close behind at **204,872**. While inbound volume spikes early, commitment peaks as the week progresses. Dealers who maintain phone discipline through the end of the week protect revenue others leave on the table.

Time of day matters just as much. The highest inbound call volume occurred between **10:00 AM and 12:00 PM**, with **10:00 AM alone accounting for more than 10.7 million calls**. Appointment-setting activity followed a similar rhythm, peaking at **9:00 AM, 10:00 AM, and 11:00 AM**. These are high-intent moments. When coverage or urgency slips during these hours, performance declines.

HIGHEST INBOUND CALL VOLUME

10:00 AM

12:00 PM

PEAK APPOINTMENT-SETTING TIMES

9:00 AM

10:00 AM

11:00 AM



- #1. Monday** 19.8 million calls
- #2. Tuesday** 17.9 million calls
- #3. Wednesday** 17.0 million calls

★ PRO TIP

Align staffing to peak days and hours, protect mid-morning coverage, and schedule internal meetings outside of high-volume windows. Consistent coverage during peak hours leads to more answered calls and more appointments on the books.



TURNING EFFORT INTO RESULTS

Inbound calls show when customers raise *their* hand. Outbound performance reflects how effectively dealerships respond when the opportunity requires follow-up.

In 2025, outbound calling continued to face a simple reality: **customers do not consistently answer the phone**. The average live connection rate on outbound calls was **20.16%**, meaning most outbound attempts never reached a customer. This is not a dealership problem; it's the environment dealers are operating in.

That reality makes inbound connections non-negotiable. If a dealership is investing marketing dollars to make the phone ring, the highest return comes from answering that call live. Every missed inbound call shifts the opportunity into outbound follow-up, where only one out of five attempts will reach a real conversation. Strong inbound performance protects revenue by capturing demand at its most reliable point, when the customer has already raised their hand.

When inbound traffic is handled efficiently, outbound effort becomes more effective. Dealerships that understand their call patterns are able to staff smarter, protect inbound volume, and free up time for outbound calls that actually matter. Many groups are using [Cari, Car Wars AI Service Scheduler](#) to book non-complex service work and present add-ons, while allowing staff to focus outbound time on declined repair orders and higher-value, more complex conversations.

Outbound success is not about dialing more. It is about answering the phone when it rings, using data to manage traffic, and applying consistent follow-up when outbound calls are required. When dealerships pick up the phone first, everything else performs better.

05

INBOUND & OUTBOUND CALLING PERFORMANCE


WHAT THIS MEANS FOR 2026

Across Sales and Service, the data shows that phone performance follows consistent, repeatable patterns. **Dealerships that recognize and manage those patterns are better positioned to perform in 2026.**

The gap between average and high-performing dealerships isn't effort. It's visibility and execution. Teams that understand where calls break down and why are able to protect appointments, reduce missed opportunities, and improve performance across both Sales and Service.

Car Wars helps dealerships identify patterns in real time and take action with confidence. From uncovering missed connections to coaching conversations and recovering lost opportunities, Car Wars turns phone activity into measurable results.

For dealerships aiming for big wins in 2026, **the data is already there.** Car Wars helps you see what's happening on the phone and where small changes deliver real results.

 **Schedule a demo or meet with your consultant today to turn insights into action.**

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