Automotive aftermarket eCommerce guide

Essentials for industry success

inchoo

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Trends impacting the eCommerce automotive industry

General trends

The total size of the automotive aftermarket/auto care industry is about $418 billion in 2020; that breaks down into $315 billion for automotive and $103 billion for medium and heavy-duty trucks[1].

> eCommerce Automotive Aftermarket size exceeded USD 8.69 billion in 2019 and will grow at a CAGR of 18.5% between 2020 and 2026[1].

Have in mind, the full effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on eCommerce remain to be seen, projecting eCommerce to grow at a higher than forecasted rate due to the coronavirus shutdown.

Consumers are avoiding crowds, they are not leaving their home as much, which is not suitable for brick & mortar auto parts stores, but good news for eCommerce[2].

[1] *hedgescompany.com*

[2] *gminsights.com*

Why is aftermarket eCommerce growing?

The automotive aftermaket eCommerce growth automotive is driven by increasing DIY consumers. Why Do-It-Yourself? These customers can buy these products without paying for the installation costs (saving a significant amount of expenses), making them a perfect match for eCommerce businesses.

As one of the anticipated effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the purchasing power of many small businesses and residential customers will be lower, thus shifting their focus more on the replacement parts and prolonging the life of their existing vehicles.

- The average age of the U.S. vehicle fleet has increased 17% in the last ten years[1].
- The average length of vehicle ownership for new and used vehicles has increased 60% over the previous ten years[1].

[1] news.ihsmarkit.com

What do these mean for your business?

If your focus is already on the online business, you know what these trends mean - double down on your efforts around catching future opportunities on the market - **it is the right time!**

If you have an online store, but you haven't worked on it much and your main focus is still on the offline channels, **it is the right time to shift focus.**

And if you don't even have an eCommerce website set up, guess what? **The time is now!**
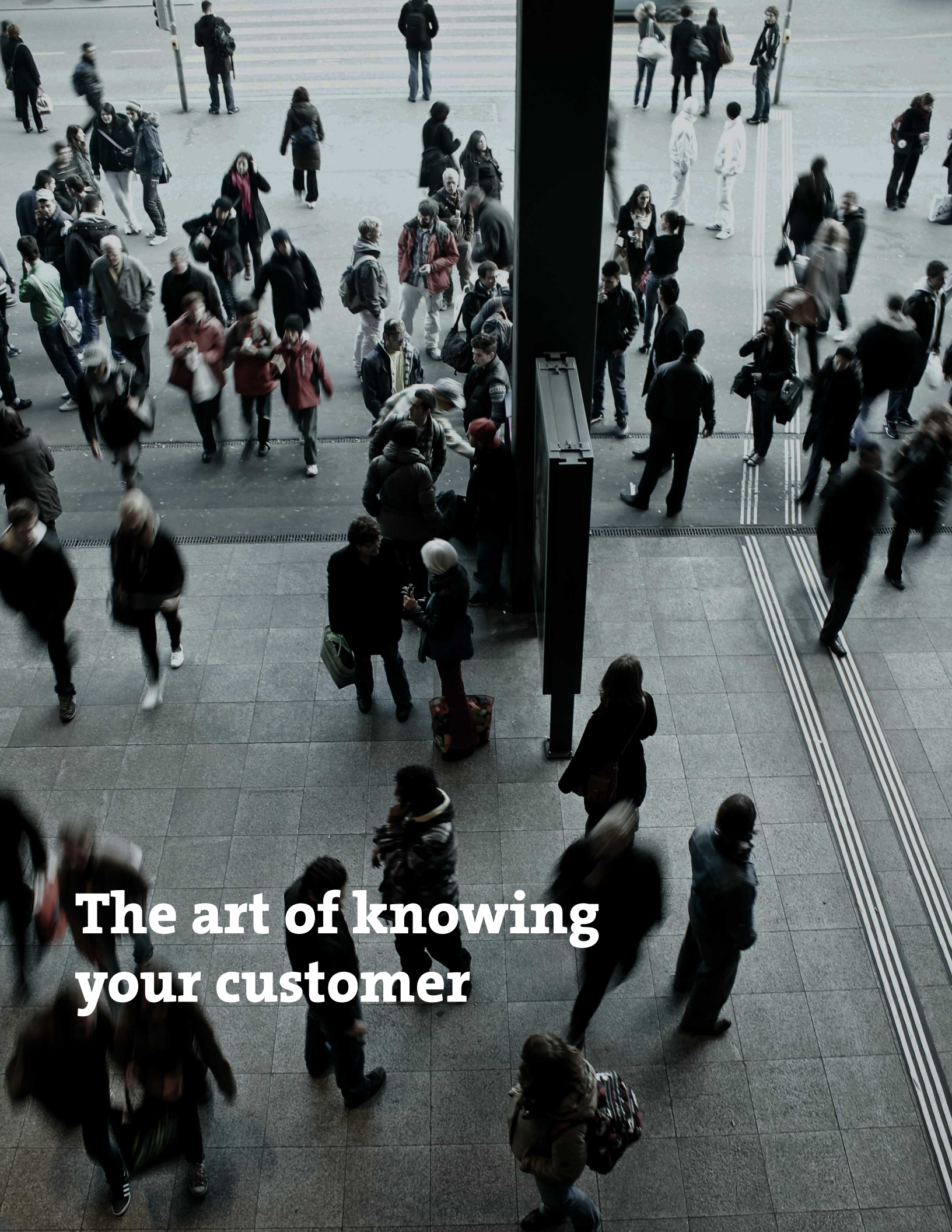
The art of knowing your customer

The next generation of car owners - millennials

In the next 10 years, 40% of all new vehicles will be sold to Millennials, and they'll be buying cars and owning them for the rest of the 21st century[1].

This being said, they are the future largest group of aftermarket parts online buyers. Also, they will be the future mechanics, as well as the owners of vehicle repair shops and part dealerships.

Millennials are the most diverse, most educated, most socially conscious, and most tech-savvy group the world has ever known. These are the customers who have been brought up on smartphones, social media, and purchasing on their terms.

[1] *The next generation car buyers - millennials*

Keep in mind - individualism

- 32% - Like to impress people with their lifestyle[1]
- 40% - Show off their taste & style[1]

Millennials are making up a large portion of current (and will be the main generation) car owners for many years in the future. So, it is essential to focus on ways that will draw their interest.

They like to express themselves in every possible way, and they spend less time researching and getting information. Meaning you should understand their needs and serve them what they are interested in.

[1] *The next generation car buyers - millennials*

Get personal

If you want to **achieve the best results**, you need to implement a personalized, engaging and seamless experience for your customers. And your eCommerce store can do wonders for your business.

A customer walks into your brick and mortar store. Your salesperson immediately recognizes them and knows what car they're driving, and what problems they had the last time they visited. They proceed with presenting the customer with parts and accessories tailored to their exact vehicle, and offering useful advice on how best to install them on their own. Your customer also gets a recommendation for a nearby mechanic that does a great job, if they need it.

And this is exactly the kind of personalization that online shoppers expect every time they visit your website. Knowing this, use it to your advantage!

91% of customers are more likely to buy from companies who remember[1].

[1] accenture.com

Make it easier for them to choose

Today, customers have an overwhelming number of choices in everything they do. When presented with too many options, many customers will not make a decision. And even worse, they will abandon your eCommerce website.

The way consumers shop car parts has changed over the years. The internet is now the primary point of research to compare features and seek out the best offers from aftermarket dealers.

25% of aftermarket parts buyers spend less than 4hrs on research before they decide to buy[1]. That's the time you have - use it!

Guess what, with your online store, **you have full control of every step** of the customer purchasing journey. You decide how can your customers discover, interact and purchase.

[1] *2019 Deloitte Global Automotive Consumer Study Advanced vehicle technologies and multimodal transportation*

How to create and manage a successful eCommerce website?

Essential eCommerce features - general

What are the key ingredients for **running a successful eCommerce website?**

We bring you an overview of some of the essential features and workflows you'll need to give your customers what they expect, and to manage the store with less hassle!

Site search

Quality search engine on your website will help customers find what they are looking for, and give them ideas on what else they could buy. The best search solutions today include an element of machine learning, which means they learn from your customers' searches and adapt the search results appropriately.

User reviews and testimonials

Customers increasingly rely on peer reviews when considering a purchase of a product. If they don't get a direct personal recommendation from a friend or family member, well then - dozens of reviews of others who have purchased a product will do. Don't forget that Google also loves user-generated content and it can help you rank higher in search results.

Business systems integrations

How are you handling various aspects of the business outside of the website? Do you use outside solutions for warehousing, CRM, ERP? All of those should be, ideally, integrated in your eCommerce solution. Anything you can automate and minimize the possibility of human error, the easier it will be for you to manage your store. Done correctly, this will also give you more time to focus on your customers, rather than on technology.

Professional product photography

No matter what business you are in, product photos are a very important part of the user experience and they make up an important part of the decision making process. If you are not using manufacturer-provided photos, make sure to find the best way to get quality photos on your website.

Product details - less is never more

Make sure to add as much information about the products you are selling on product details pages. There are various and elegant options on how to present this information, even if there is a lot of it to process, but the more, the better.

Secure and trustworthy

Many buyers will look for recognizable, industry-standard trust symbols on your website. Simply because they are used to seeing them on other websites (so play along), or because they truly look for that added confidence boost. So, make sure to clarify how you are handling security and customer data, what payment processors you use etc. This is the bare minimum, but you should try to go above and beyond in this area.
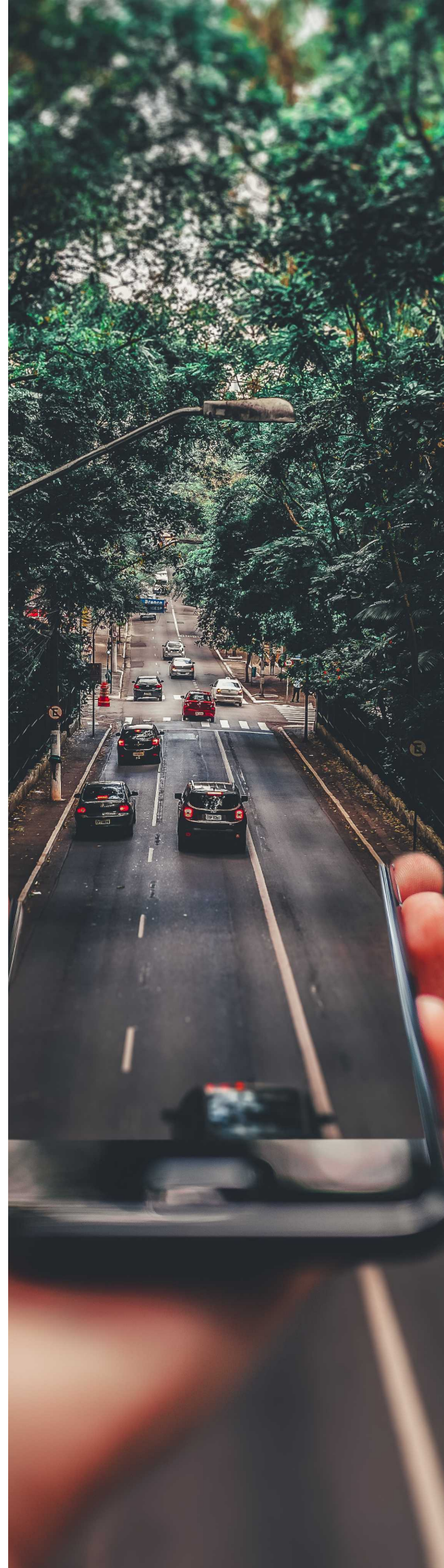
Essential eCommerce features - automotive aftermarket

We went through some of the features every eCommerce merchant needs to have on their websites, which will make it easier for you to manage the store, and for your customers to make a purchase. And these are very common to every single eCommerce website in the world.

However, each industry has its own challenges and customers are behaving differently, depending on what they are looking to buy.

In this section, we bring you an overview of some of the specific features **essential for creating a successful eCommerce website** in the automotive aftermarket industry.

Year, make, model filters

Customers looking for parts and accessories for their vehicles want to be shown only those products that are made for or fit their ride. Allowing them to select their particular car is essential to their user experience on your store. These filters can be further customized and expanded on.
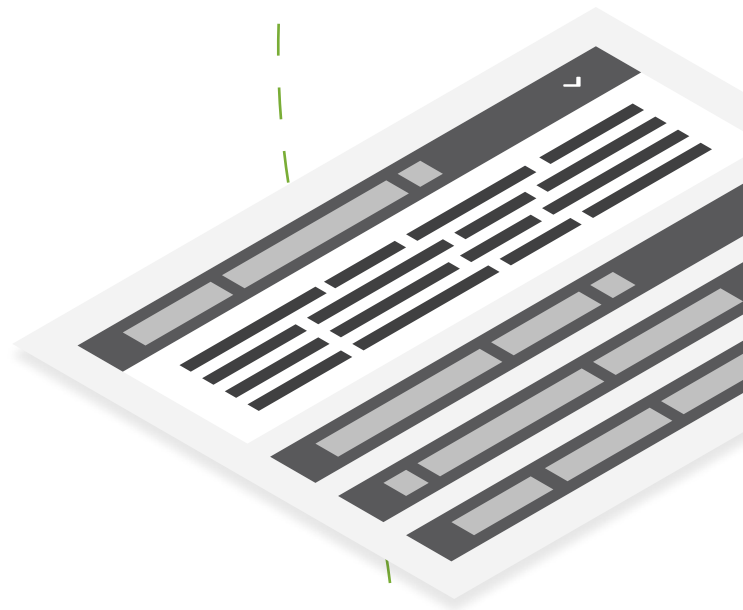
Why this feature:
- Slick user experience
- Faster path to purchase
- Easier cross-selling

Parts fitment

Some parts can fit a number of different cars. Having proper information on the compatibility of auto parts in your database is essential for you and your customers.

Why this feature:
- Clarity and ease of use
- Minimizing returns
- Fewer customer service phone calls

Parts diagrams

We're all visual creatures, so are your customers. No matter if a person is a professional or just a car enthusiast, there is no way they can memorize all the parts names and numbers. So, allowing them to see different parts in interactive diagrams will help them find the exact part they need. And they may find other parts they could purchase, just in case.

Why this feature:
- Engaging and easy to use
- Fewer product returns
- Customers love it

My Garage

Once selected, customers can store their vehicle in their account on your website, without having to select everything again. Furthermore, you can give them the ability to store and manage multiple vehicles in their virtual garage.

Why this feature:
- Improves customer confidence
- Easier to find products
- Facilitates repeat purchases
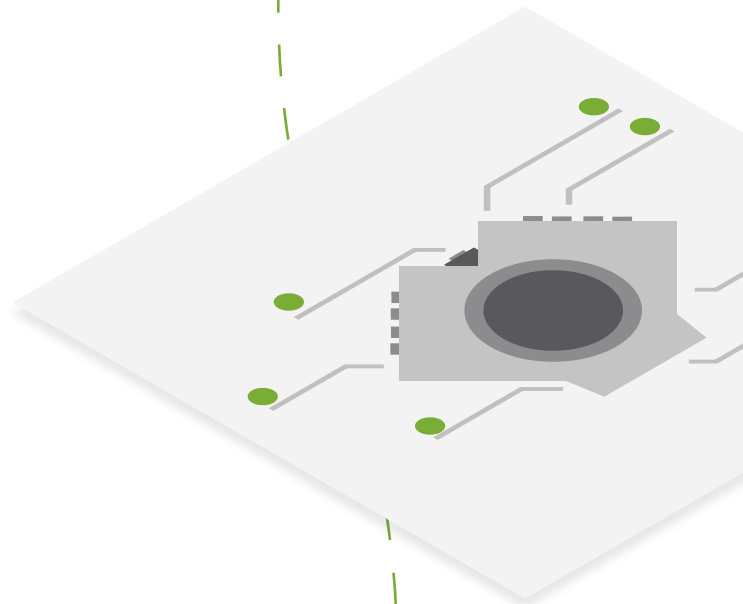
We can help you grow!

Over the years we've helped dozens of businesses in the vehicle and machinery aftermarket industry (with emphasis on automotive) improve their sales. We're doing this by combining **eCommerce expertise with industry know-how.**

Take a look at some examples of the projects we've worked on and challenges we solved for these clients.
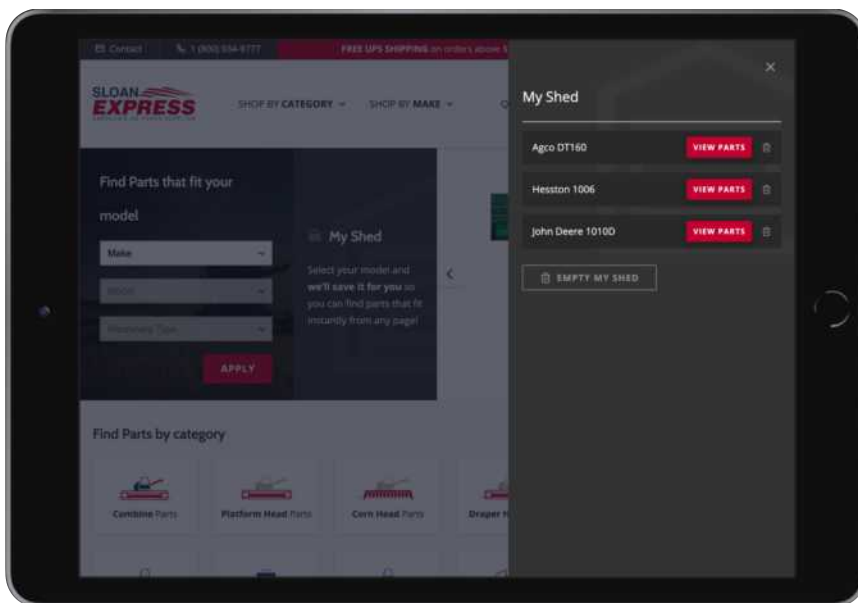
Sloanex

Located in Central Illinois, Sloan Express is the area leader offering new agricultural parts that are equal to or better than the original equipment part. They sell directly to farmers, implement dealers and repair shops.

Sloan Express has been able to address some of the problems that today's farmers face: parts not stocked locally; shortage of local sources for parts; and most important – TIME.

Our work

• UX and feature customizations (My Garage / My Shed)

• ERP integration

• Digital marketing strategy and PPC management

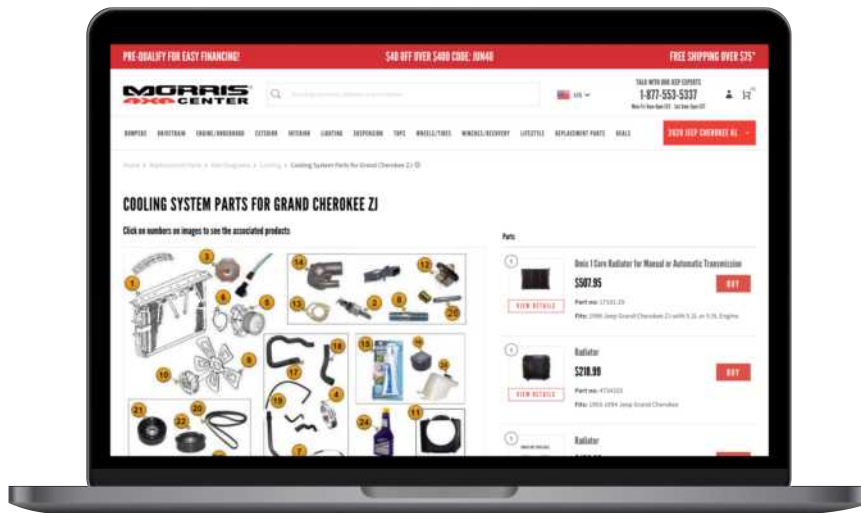Learn more at inchoo.net/work/sloan-express/

Morris4x4Center

morris4x4center.com

Morris 4×4 Center is a leading eCommerce destination for Jeep and 4×4 enthusiasts looking to outfit and enhance their vehicles.

It provides more than 40,000 products across top brands, with passionate experts and a commitment to great customer experience.

Having fulfilled over a million orders in just over 25 years, Morris 4×4 Center's passionate experts, superior customer service team, and new customer-centric initiatives are poised to better serve and help Jeep and off-road outdoor enthusiast fulfil their dream of a great driving experience.

Our work
- Year-Make-Model
- Parts diagrams
- ERP and PIM integrations

Learn more at inchoo.net/work/morris-4x4-center/
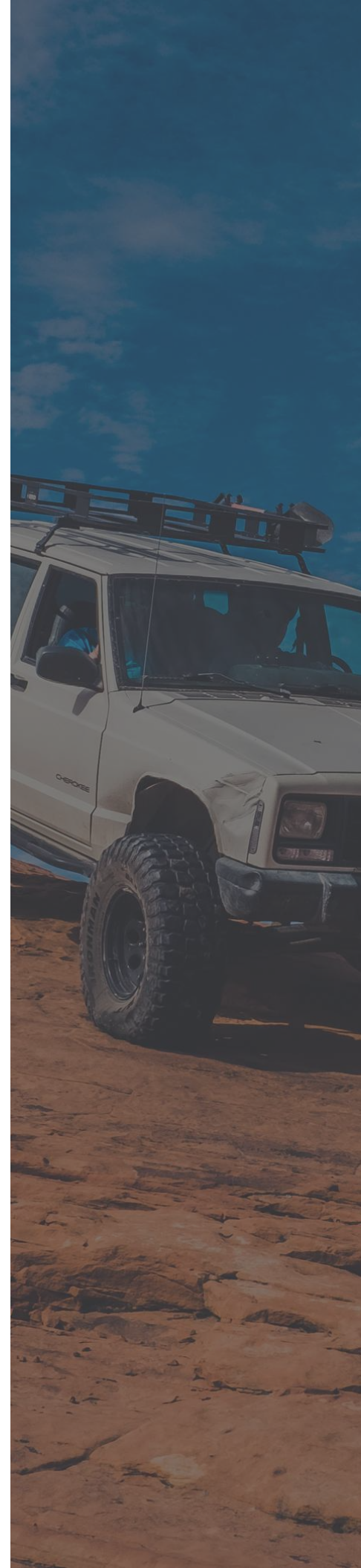
The Wheelership

wheelership.com

The WheelerShip is online source for wheels and wheel accessories based in a small place called Glen Cove, in the State of New York. We hit it right off with them, mostly due to the fact we cherish the same values – trustworthiness, quality and assisting our customers.

By working on The WheelerShip, we helped create an amazing eCommerce story: we've been building a single online destination for all the wheels you'll need. Having everything you can think of regarding wheels, from OEM aluminium wheels, to wheel cleaners, used tires, centre caps and tire pressure monitoring systems, saves both time and effort for the end user.

Our work

- Make-Model-Year-Trim filter customizations
- Multi-point integrations with business systems
- Admin and order processing customizations
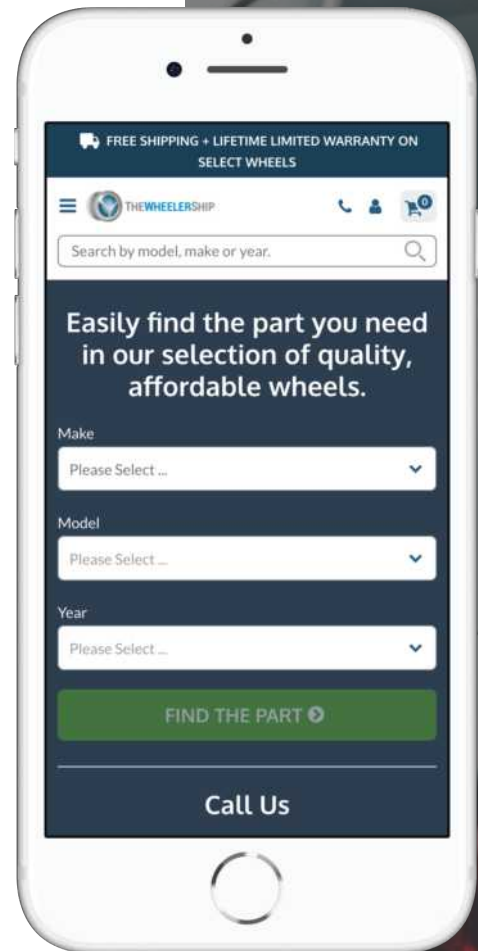
Learn more at inchoo.net/work/work/wheelership/

Get to know us

We are a full-service eCommerce agency founded in 2008 in Osijek, Croatia (the most beautiful place on the earth for summer vacation).

Our main purpose is to breathe life into our clients' webshops and we are archiving that with a team of 45+ Inchooers who are passionate about development and **bringing online businesses to the next level.**

No nonsense, simple, caring, and energetic team!

01 You will not hear unrealistic promises, because we know how important for our merchants is, to be honest, and upfront at all times.

02 Straight communication is something we are cheerleading, in other words, hit the nail right on the head, we keep everything clear, simple, and transparent.

03 We are never looking to just be "done" with our tasks and say goodbye. And all of it because we believe that when you grow, we grow.

04 You will never be left on your own when it comes to fresh ideas for growth - we are always finding new ways to improve your business.

Start a long-lasting partnership with someone who knows your business!

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inchoo
Life's too short to buy offline.