

Blue Knob Auto

Blue Knob Auto Delivers 500+
Vehicles During COVID-19
Pandemic with Auto/Mate's
Remote eDEAL™



Blue Knob Auto in Duncansville, PA, is a large independent dealership in a small mountain town. The dealership does no advertising, yet averages 1,000 sold vehicles per month, attracting car buyers from as far away as Pittsburgh, 90 miles to the West, and State College, nearly 50 miles to the North.

Senior Manager Aaron Hobaugh credits the dealership's success to reputation and word of mouth. "We have a no-frills, no-haggle sales process, meaning we don't negotiate price. The price we post is the price you pay, and people love it because they know exactly what they're going to pay when they come in."

The Need: The COVID-19 pandemic was devastating to auto dealerships nationwide, and Blue Knob Auto was no exception. When Pennsylvania's stay-at-home orders took effect in mid-March, Blue Knob Auto shuttered its doors completely and remained closed for over a month. Toward the end of April, the governor of Pennsylvania allowed auto dealerships to start selling cars again, but only online.

In-person sales were still forbidden.

Fortunately for Blue Knob Auto, Hobaugh had just switched to Auto/Mate's dealership management system (DMS) in early March, after having used CDK's DMS for a decade.

"One reason we chose Auto/Mate was because it had an electronic signing feature, so we could get away from scanning papers," Hobaugh says. "Before the pandemic hit, we were already having our customers electronically sign all their documents on an iPad."

When the green light was given for auto dealerships to sell cars online, Hobaugh called Auto/Mate's customer support team to inquire about a way for customers to sign documents remotely.



The Solution: As it turns out, Auto/Mate's software development team had just added a remote signing feature to its eDEAL Signature Capture digital contracting tool. When a car buyer agrees to purchase a vehicle over the phone, the dealer simply sends the F&I documents to the customer via email.

Similar to how home buyers use DocuSign for real estate documents, the customer signs once, then taps to apply a signature and/or initials where indicated. The dealer rep stays on the phone to guide the customer through the process.

Blue Knob Auto was one of the first dealerships to implement the remote signing feature. Hobaugh scheduled an online training session for his F&I team. "They honestly trained us in about 20 minutes. It was remarkably quick, very easy to understand and adapt to. There were no hiccups or issues at all. It just worked."

Once the customer finishes signing the documents remotely, the F&I manager mails the title paperwork to the customer, as Pennsylvania still requires wet-ink signatures. When Blue Knob Auto receives the title paperwork back, the customer is free to pick up their vehicle with nothing exchanged but the key.

The Results: During the month of May, Blue Knob Auto sold a total of 456 vehicles using Remote eDEAL. "If Auto/Mate didn't offer this option, we would have remained shut down, dead in the water," Hobaugh notes. "This tool literally kept our business afloat once the governor gave the OK to sell cars online."

Because Blue Knob Auto has a no-haggle, one-price policy, the gross margins of its remote deals were the same as in-person sales. Service contract sales also remained the same.

"We rely heavily on selling warranties, with a rate of about 70 percent, which is pretty high," Hobaugh said. "We like our F&I managers to pitch products to customers over the phone. I think the person-to-person communications is one reason we're so successful."





Going forward, Hobaugh anticipates that the Blue Knob Auto team will continue using Remote eDEAL. “Our customers love it. It’s not for the older generation, people in their 70s and 80s, but for the younger generation especially, it’s so convenient. We’ll leave it up to the customer if they want to come in or not.”

Once Pennsylvania’s stay-at-home restrictions began to ease in May, in-person sales at Blue Knob Auto began to pick up again as well. For the month, Blue Knob Auto sold over 960 vehicles, nearly on par with its normal monthly sales average.

Overall, Hobaugh is thrilled that Blue Knob Auto made the switch to Auto/Mate. In addition to the electronic signature and remote signing capabilities, the DMS is highly customizable, which was an important feature he wanted. Another top priority was the ability to create custom reports. “The reporting system was one of the main reasons I chose Auto/Mate. We utilize this system a lot. You can easily build any report you want.”

Hobaugh also appreciates Auto/Mate’s customer support team. “Anything we want, they’re willing to accommodate us. In general, it’s been awesome. I’m very happy with the change.”

Although the COVID-19 pandemic was a tragic event, Hobaugh has seen a silver lining for Blue Knob Auto. “It was a way for us to hit the reset button and put old habits behind us. We had to change a few processes to adapt, and now we like the new ways better.”

About Auto/Mate

Auto/Mate by DealerSocket is a leading dealership management system provider. Our innovative software delivers the functionality, flexibility and value dealers need to maximize profits, optimize processes and enhance the customer experience while saving thousands on their monthly DMS bill.

The addition of Auto/Mate to DealerSocket’s suite of products creates a new choice for dealers seeking a connected platform that’s driven by innovation and backed by award-winning customer service. Together, we serve more than 9,000 dealerships and 300,000 users. For more information, visit www.automate.com or follow us on Facebook, Twitter or LinkedIn.