

Howie's Car Corral – Case Study



Howie's opening words on his website say it all: "The Workin Folks Car and Truck Store".

Specializing in used vehicles in the under \$30k market, with a reputation built on respectful customer service and tell-it-like-it-is honesty, Howie's is rated #1 among used car dealerships in Victoria, British Columbia. Howie's has a policy of taking care of their clients, starting with candid

discussions with the client on their needs and the best vehicle to meet those needs, continuing with on-the-spot financing if needed, and extending after the sale with expert maintenance. Howie's truly is "the lot on the strip that deals on the square!"

Opening in 1996, Howie's has understandably won or been nominated for multiple Better Business Awards over the years. The local community loves Howie's, as the rave reviews on their testimonial page demonstrates.



The Challenge

Howie's approached Sticky Media in early 2020 to rebuild their website. Although unique with a fun Wild West branding, the site looked like it was straight out of the 90s. It was built on an old version of Drupal, it was near impossible to search through the vehicle inventory, and the site didn't display well on mobile.

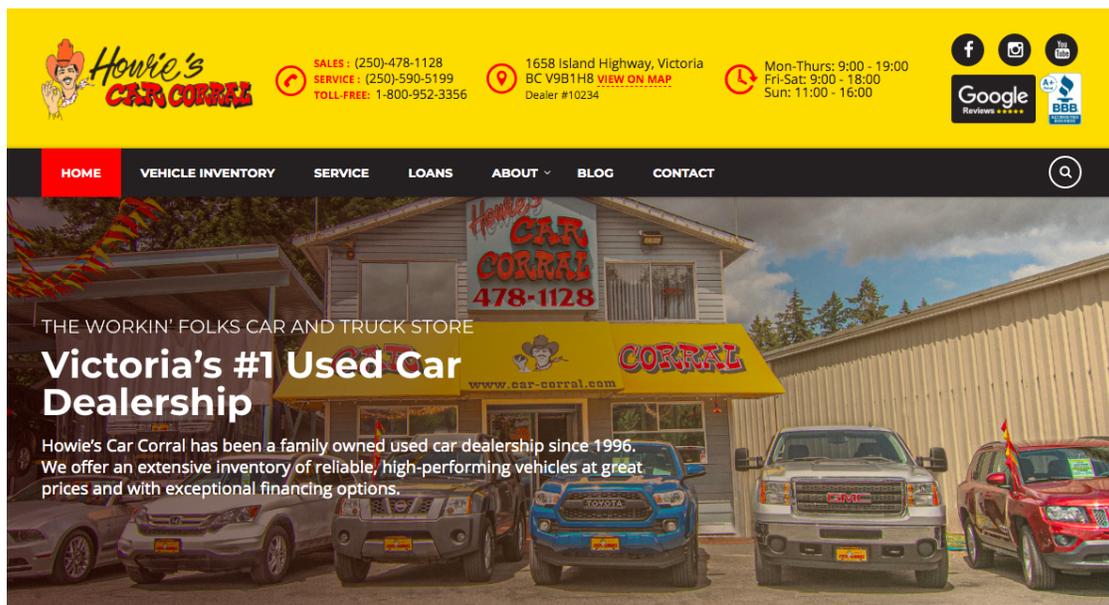
On the plus side, with years of exceptional customer service and quality products, the traffic to Howie's site was substantial and the Domain Authority, which is a prediction of how well the site performed in search results, was excellent.

Case Study: Howie's Car Corral – Website Rebuild

The challenge, then, was three-fold:

- to update the branding while still keeping the fun, home-grown, Western vibe that Howie's was known for
- to modernize the functionality of the site, making it user friendly for Howie's customers and efficient on the back-end for Howie's staff
- to not lose any of the traffic or Domain Authority that Howie had built up over the years

We tackled all these challenges, coming up with novel solutions that made the lives of Howie's customers and staff much easier.



The Outcome

The Look and Feel of the Site

Finding the balance between the western-styled branding and more modern web design best practices was certainly demanding, but Sticky's web designers spectacularly rose to the challenge. The new site features a crisp, clean look that uses Howie's colours and original logo, speaking to Howie's high standards of quality while maintaining the friendly vibe they are known for. Much of the content from the old site was transferred over (after an edit), helping to set the tone and solidify their iconic branding.

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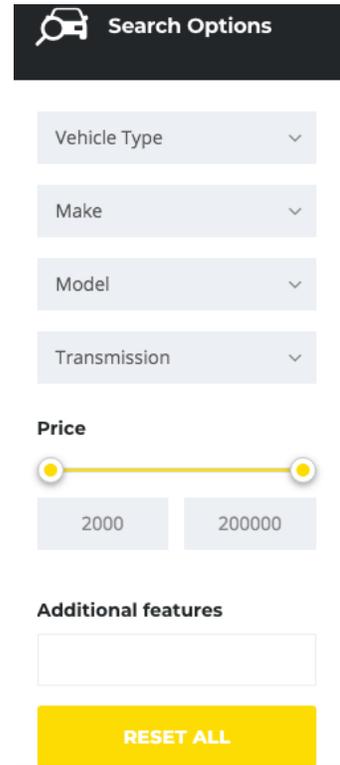
Front-end Functionality

The new site was built on the WordPress content management system (CMS) because of its ease of use and flexibility. Sticky incorporated many bells and whistles into the build, making the site so intuitive and efficient it's a joy to use. For example, we added a granular filter/search that makes it effortless for customers to search through the vehicle inventory. We also added trade-in request forms, as well as scheduling and financing forms — features that Howie's customers greatly appreciate.

One functionality we added that helps on the front and back ends is the streamlined video embed functionality. Howie usually shoots walk-around videos of new vehicles he acquires, and never had a way to upload those to his old site. The new site allows easy video uploads to the vehicle pages. The front end shows a video icon on the vehicle listing page and has a video button/popup on the vehicle page. The videos are great for users because it's almost like seeing the car in person... we just made it super easy for Howie to take advantage of his video.

Back-end Functionality

Howie's requested a number of other functional upgrades on the back-end to help manage their huge and fast-moving inventory. As well as adding multiple forms for different services, Sticky successfully solved Howie's onerous inventory management problem that relied on manually syncing their inventory with Auto Trader. Sticky wrote custom code that runs on a nightly basis to export any newly added vehicles to the site and upload those to AutoTrader's server. It also removes vehicles from AutoTrader automatically when they are removed from Howie's site. Very hands off, and it makes the process a breeze for Howie's staff!



Search Options

Vehicle Type ▾

Make ▾

Model ▾

Transmission ▾

Price

2000 200000

Additional features

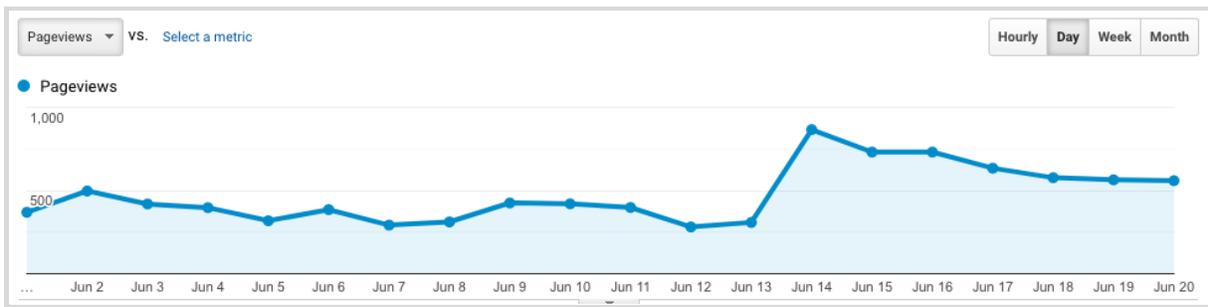
RESET ALL

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Maintaining Domain Authority and Traffic

The site launch impact on Domain Authority and traffic was the best anyone could hope for. Traffic doubled soon after the launch, and continued to grow slowly from there on. There was no loss of Domain Authority. This was accomplished through Sticky Media's careful preparatory work and mapping of URLs.

After the site was built, Sticky Media strategically updated old, popular blog posts and wrote new ones to continue to grow Howie's authority and presence online.



Taking Stock a Year Later

A year after Howie's hired Sticky Media to build their new site, the Howie's Car Corral site continues to do well and traffic is generally up; by the end of February, traffic had increased over 200%. Customers are happy and the staff is ecstatic at how much easier it is to manage the site and inventory.

