# THE ART of AI

Introduction:
Why Some Dealers See Success with AI and Others Don't

Most dealerships hear from their 20 groups that they *should* be using AI. But when they hear the horror stories of deploying clunky chatbots or voice systems that frustrate customers, it stokes their worst fears.

The problem isn't *AI itself* — it's how it's deployed.

When AI is rushed into production without understanding the dealership environment, it can hurt more than it helps: robotic voices, wrong answers, and more follow-ups for your team. That's why Toma encourages dealers to see this transition in a certain lens, called the **ART of AI**.

According to the **Cox Automotive AI Readiness Report (2025)**, **81%** of dealers believe AI is here to stay and **74%** say the benefits outweigh the risks, yet only **13%** have reached full integration today. Most dealers are still in early exploration or testing phases, validating that gradual deployment is the smartest path forward *(Cox Automotive 2025)*.

AI Adoption in Automotive

- Believe AI is here to stay
- Say the benefits outweigh the risks
- Have reached full integration today

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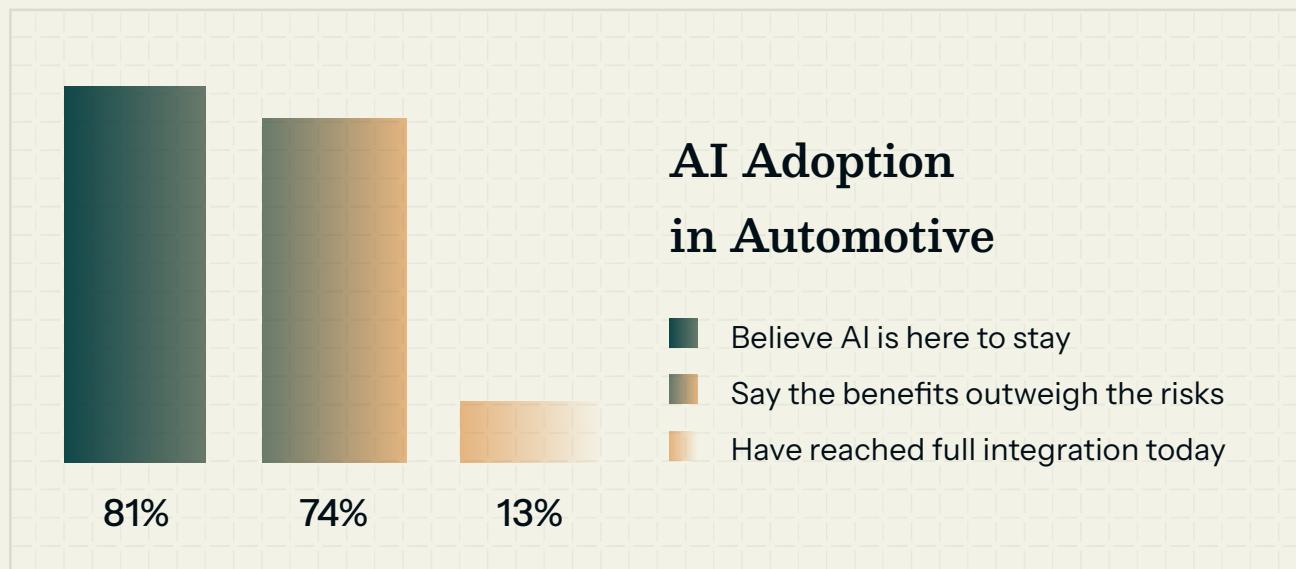
This guide explains how dealerships can deploy AI with confidence, transforming it from a buzzword into a measurable driver of efficiency, consistency, and customer satisfaction.

Adoption: Customers Want to Ease into New Experiences

Too often, dealerships adopt AI that customers hang up on after one sentence. Why? The voice feels robotic, the timing is off, or it doesn't sound like your dealership.

The key isn't flipping a switch, it's a controlled rollout that lets both customers and staff experience early wins.

And the opportunity for AI to help is clear:

The **CDK Global Service Shopper 4.0 study (2024)** found that **64%** of customers still book service appointments by phone, including **65%** of Gen Z, and that customers who are placed on hold have Net Promoter Scores roughly **20 points** lower than those who aren't. With average hold times exceeding eight minutes, automation isn't about replacing people — it's about protecting satisfaction.

Select voice persona

Sam Professional, light   Listen

Select tone and personality

Casual   Energetic   Polite   Helpful

Sophisticated   Quirky

Customize your greeting

Hey this is Sam with Happy Valley Motors, California's #1 dealership! How can I help you?

How leading dealerships successfully deploy AI:

- **After-Hours or Overflow First:** Many stores start by letting AI handle calls they'd normally miss such as after-hours, or overflow. Instead of voicemail, the AI answers naturally and attempts to help the caller.

- **Gradual Volume Ramp-Up:** Some stores begin with a small sample, like 10–20% of inbound calls, and then gradually increase that percentage as the AI becomes smarter over time.

- **Team Buy-In Through Transparency:** Advisors and BDC agents can listen to every AI call, see how requests are handled, and flag any edge cases for improvement.

As adoption grows, so does trust. Customers realize they can reach the dealership instantly, no long hold times, no voicemails, and staff see fewer interruptions from inbound phone calls.

> ☑ **Key Takeaway:** If customers and staff don't trust the AI, adoption will stall. Start small and use early wins to build confidence across your team and customer base.

Resolution: True ROI Comes from AI That Gets Work Done

AI that speaks well is great for adoption, but if it cannot actually *resolve* customer requests it ultimately just wastes everyone's time. Beware of "AI" systems that can only answer basic questions. They still rely on your staff to finish the job, which means you've automated *nothing*.

Toma's AI resolves up to **80% of inbound calls** without human intervention because it doesn't just "respond", it *acts*. It connects directly with your dealership software to complete real tasks from start to finish, the same way your best-trained employee would.

What advanced AI resolution looks like:

- **Book or update service appointments** directly into your scheduler or DMS, not just texting customers a link.

- **Check open recalls** in real time using NHTSA and OEM data, then offer to book the repair.

- **Provide service pricing and repair times** pulled from your website, uploaded documents or service scheduler.

- **Handle sales and trade-in inquiries**, from scheduling test drives to providing vehicle valuations via Black Book.

- **Trigger outbound notifications** like appointment reminders or open recall alert messages through text or call.
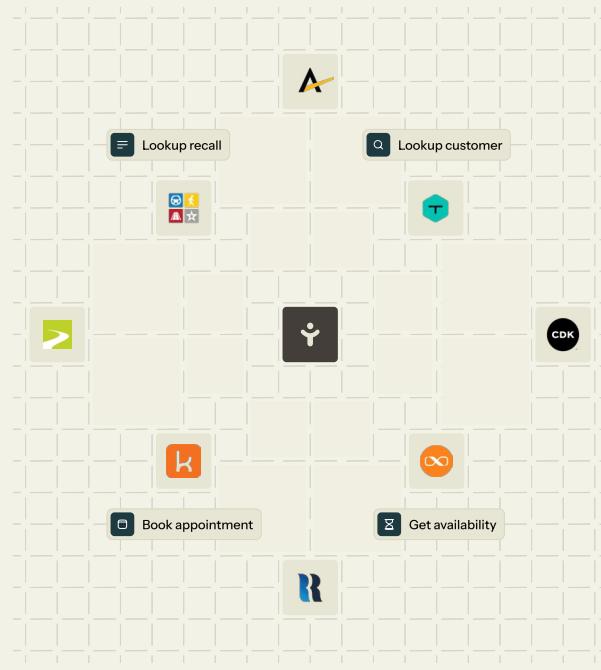
Consider the math on just resolving inbound service scheduling calls:

Each missed or mishandled service call risks losing an average **$470 RO** and **$179/hour labor** opportunity **(NADA 2025)**. With **20–30%** of service calls going unanswered industry-wide, the financial upside of complete resolution is immediate.

> ☑ **Key Takeaway:** Ask every AI vendor one question, *"Does it actually complete the task?"* If not, it's not resolution… it's redirection.

Tailor: The Best AI Isn't Generic — It's Custom Fit

Every dealership runs differently. The service op codes, loaner car policies, and workflows vary by brand, market, and store culture. Yet most AI vendors offer cookie-cutter scripts that ignore your nuances.

That's why Toma lets dealers truly tailor their own AI agent. We help customize it to your operations, from how your advisors phrase diagnostic fees to where your after-hours key drop box is located.

According to **Cox Automotive (2025)**, only **35% of dealers** today have a formal AI strategy — but those that do are **27% more likely to report efficiency gains** and **77% more likely to rate their overall performance as strong**.

This underscores what Toma hears from our users: when AI is tailored to fit a store's operations, tone, and workflows, adoption sticks and calls are autonomously resolved at a higher rate.

What tailoring really means for a dealership AI:

TOYOTA
California Toyota

Recalls	Book 7 days out
Loaners	Available to all
Pricing	Do not quote

GMC
Oklahoma GMC

Recalls	Do not book
Loaners	Not available
Pricing	Transfer to advisor

HYUNDAI
Florida Hyundai

Recalls	Transfer to advisor
Loaners	Returning customers only
Pricing	Provide quote
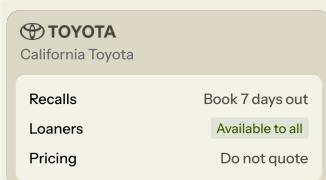
- **Service pricing nuances:** Knowing how much diagnostic or alignment services cost at your store — and which prices differ by vehicle type or engine size.
- **Drop-off and after-hours instructions:** Directing callers to the correct entry, key drop box, or pickup process unique to your service drive layout.
- **Regional and brand-specific terminology:** Recognizing local slang ("smog check," "safety inspection") and manufacturer-specific service plans or maintenance schedules.
- **Warranty and recall policies:** Explaining coverage differences between OEMs and handling recall coordination appropriately.
- **EV or hybrid workflows:** Knowing how your store handles charging, towing, or battery service, which varies widely between brands.
- **Policies:** Understanding when to route a call to a live advisor versus resolve it autonomously, based on your store's comfort level.
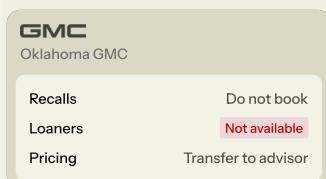
Because Toma trains each AI agent using real calls, your DMS and scheduler data, and your team's feedback, it continuously adapts to how your store actually operates, not how a vendor *thinks* it should.

> ☑ **Key Takeaway:** Tailored AI drives trust, accuracy, and customer satisfaction. You shouldn't have to adapt to your AI; your AI should adapt to you.

Conclusion: The Future of Automotive AI Is Human-Centered

The right AI doesn't replace your people — it protects them. It protects your revenue by never missing a call, your retention by delivering consistent experiences, and your team's time by resolving routine tasks automatically.

Dealerships that master the **ART of AI** are building the foundation for the next decade of customer experience, one where AI amplifies your brand's voice, not replaces it.

AI Your Customers and Team Will Love

Let's explore how Toma can help your dealership deploy AI that delights customers, empowers your staff, and drives measurable results from day one.

Talk to Toma | sales@toma.com