



Sonic Automotive

Driving growth with iPhone and iPad.

Using iPhone, iPad, iPad mini, and custom apps, Sonic Automotive takes the lead in automotive retail sales and service.



Company Snapshot

Founded 1997 in Charlotte, North Carolina
108 dealerships across 15 states in the U.S.A.
9,200 associates
Total revenues of \$10 billion per year
www.sonicautomotive.com

Apps in Use

-  **Virtual Lot** IN-HOUSE APP
Allows Sonic to search inventory across multiple dealerships.
-  **Sonic Inventory Management System (SIMS)** IN-HOUSE APP
Captures information to quickly calculate the trade-in vehicle value.
-  **Service Pad** IN-HOUSE APP
Makes it easy to write up service customers at the dealership.
-  **Mobile BI** IN-HOUSE APP
Gives dealership leaders daily updates on business intelligence.
-  **Sonic Auto Search**
Enables customers to see cars at Sonic's dealerships.

Sonic Automotive is one of the largest automotive retailers in the United States. Each year, this fast-moving company sells 250,000 new and used cars, in addition to auto parts, maintenance, warranty, collision, and vehicle financing services. Using iPhone, iPad, and custom apps for dealer associates and managers nationwide, Sonic has brought new speed and efficiency to customer service and sales.

Sonic was founded in 1997 by Bruton Smith, who also helms racetrack giant Speedway Motorsports, and his son Scott Smith, now Sonic's President and Chief Strategic Officer. "At Sonic Automotive, we're using iPhone, iPad, iPad mini, and internal apps to enhance our customer experience," Scott Smith says. "And a greater customer experience translates into greater profitability for the company."

iOS devices and in-house apps have helped drive the company's rapid expansion by streamlining everyday processes, connecting dealerships across the U.S., and delivering a premium-grade customer experience.

"As customers go through the car-buying process, some of their biggest concerns are trust and time," says Heath Byrd, Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer. "We're using iPad and iPhone to break down both those barriers. At most dealerships, it takes four to five hours to buy a vehicle. Our goal is to get it down to an hour."

Speedy Sales and Service

Sonic has developed several custom apps to fast-track car sales and service. With these apps on iPhone and iPad, dealers can complete complex pricing and inventory processes in a fraction of the time it once took.

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Sonic's dealer inventory app, Virtual Lot, lets associates quickly search for vehicles not just at their own location, but across all Sonic dealerships. With just a tap, Sonic can find the best possible match for each customer's needs—and offer far more choices than the competition. "A year and a half ago, all our dealerships operated with their own inventory," Scott Smith says. "But today it's Sonic's inventory, and we can move it anywhere."

Another internal app, Sonic Inventory Management System (SIMS), has transformed trade-in appraisals and pricing. "We take photos on our iPad or iPhone, collect the VIN and mileage, and note any issues," says Sanjay Prakash, General Manager of Town and Country Toyota Scion, one of Sonic Automotive's top dealerships. "The data is sent to corporate headquarters, where they can quickly appraise the car."

For repairs and warranty work, Sonic built the Service Pad app. "Before, customers had to come inside and sit at a desk to do the write-up," Byrd explains. "With Service Pad our advisors walk out, greet the customers, and do the entire repair order on an iPad right there at the vehicle."

"With iPad, salespeople are no longer in the dark. They have access to vehicle information, pricing, trade-in values, interest rates, specials, and financing—and of course what our competitors are charging for identical vehicles."

*Sanjay Prakash, General Manager,
Town and Country Toyota Scion*



These powerful in-house apps help Sonic sales staff quickly identify the right products and services for each customer's needs. "With iPad, salespeople are no longer in the dark," says Prakash. "They have access to vehicle information, pricing, trade-in values, interest rates, specials, and financing—and of course what our competitors are charging for identical vehicles."

Sonic also has an app for customers: Sonic Auto Search, available for free in the App Store, lets shoppers see inventory, calculate prices and payments, and learn more about specific models before going to the dealership.

Outmaneuvering the Competition

At Sonic Automotive, iPhone, iPad, and apps do more than make it easier for customers to find the perfect car. "When customers see us with iPad and iPhone, it sets us apart from the competition," Prakash says. "It helps them make faster decisions and not spend all day at a car dealership. And it allows us to move much quicker than a normal car dealership would."

"The future at Sonic is very bright," agrees Byrd. "We have a vision about how we're going to improve the experience of buying cars in America using iPad and iPhone. We're going to change the way it's done."