REVOLUTION PARTS



5 Myths Dealers Believe About Selling Parts Online

Dealership Guide

What dealers told Automotive News about eCommerce, and what happens when you look at the dealerships actually doing it.



There are plenty of reasons not to start selling parts online.

At least, that's what dealers told Automotive News.

In July 2026, Automotive News and RevolutionParts surveyed dealers and parts executives about where they see growth, how much online volume they think is realistic, what they believe about margins, and what worries them about running an eCommerce operation.

The answers were pretty revealing.

Only 23.46% picked online parts sales as the parts channel with the most growth potential.

More than half picked the service lane. And when dealers were asked what worried them about eCommerce, returns, margins, pricing, staffing, shipping, and time all made the list.

None of those concerns are crazy.

If you're going to put time and people behind a new revenue channel, you'd better know there's money waiting on the other side.

But here's where the research gets interesting. Automotive News also talked to dealers already selling parts online.

And some of what they're seeing looks pretty different from what the industry expects.

Source: Automotive News survey of dealers and parts executives, July 2026.

Myth #1: "There Just Isn't Enough Volume"

This one's pretty easy to understand.

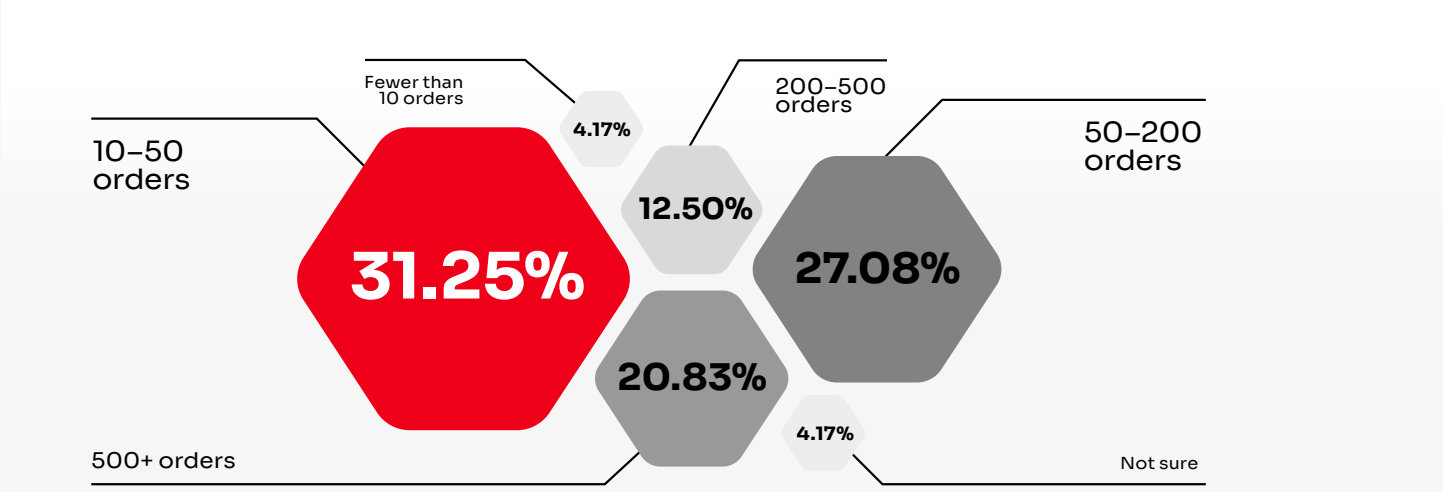
If you're going to add another sales channel to an already busy Parts Department, there better be some orders waiting on the other side.

And dealers aren't exactly convinced there are.

When Automotive News and RevolutionParts asked how many online orders a typical dealership could realistically achieve each month, the answers were all over the place.

EXPECTED VOLUME

WHAT DEALERS THINK IS REALISTIC



The biggest group landed at just **10 to 50 orders a month.**

That's somewhere between one order every three days and fewer than two a day.

And if that's all you think is out there, it's pretty easy to see why eCommerce keeps getting pushed down the priority list.

Source: Automotive News survey of dealers and parts executives, July 2026.

ACTUAL DEALER RESULTS

Then You Look at Gateway GMC.

Craig Shield didn't get interested in eCommerce because somebody gave him a presentation about the future of digital retail.

Somebody delivered the wrong parts order.

The order was meant for another GM dealership, and Craig noticed it was about **four times bigger** than Gateway's.

Then he saw two words in the comments.

Amazon. eBay.

Craig took a picture and sent it to his dealer principal.

“Look at what they're doing in online parts sales; maybe this is something we should look at.”

That was six years ago.

Today, Gateway averages roughly:

GATEWAY GMC

$200,000 A MONTH

in online parts sales.

According to Craig, online sales now represent somewhere between **one-third and one-half of Gateway's total Parts Department sales.**

And then there's Paragon Honda.

Paragon wasn't starting from scratch. They already had an eCommerce business doing roughly **$35,000 to $40,000 a month.**

They just weren't paying much attention to it.

Then Brian Benstock and his team started treating online parts like an actual revenue channel.

They worked on search.

Source: Automotive News survey of dealers and parts executives, July 2026.

Improved product photography.

Put more effort into SEO.

Expanded onto Amazon and eBay.

Four months later:

PARAGON HONDA

~$35–40K → $500K/MONTH

That's quite a jump for a channel plenty of dealers still aren't sure can produce 50 orders a month.

You Don't Need Gateway's Volume to Make the Math Interesting

This might be the more important point.

Nobody's saying you need to wake up tomorrow doing $200,000 or $500,000 a month.

Amanda Poe from RevolutionParts put the starting point somewhere much more approachable.

Just **five to seven additional orders a day** can translate into roughly:

5–7 ORDERS / DAY

$50,000 A MONTH

in online parts sales.

Five orders a day feels a lot different than “build a massive eCommerce business.”

The volume doesn't have to be massive before it starts becoming meaningful.

Source: Automotive News survey of dealers and parts executives, July 2026.

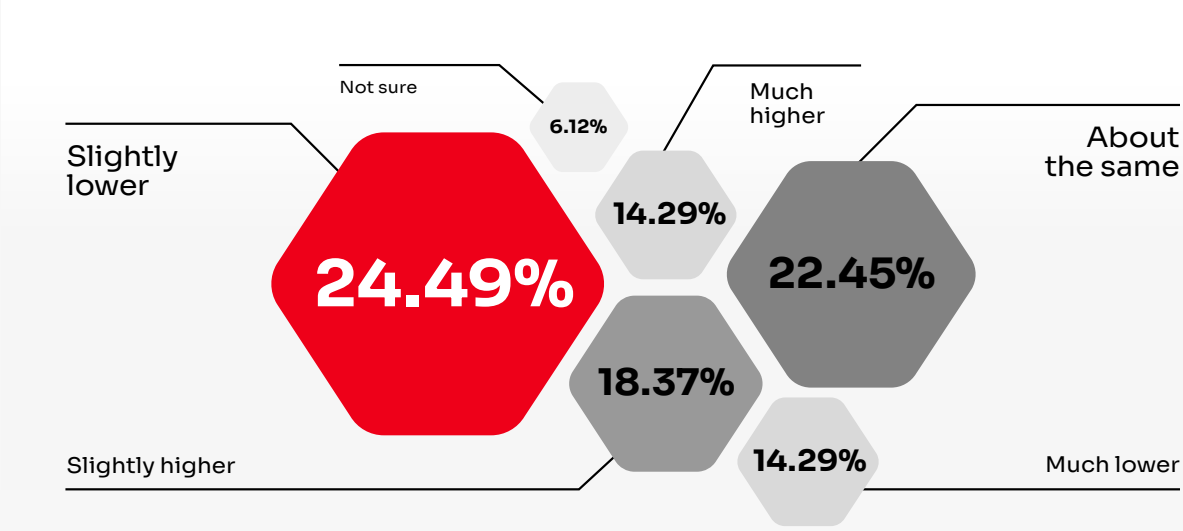
Myth #2: "The Margins Aren't Worth It"

Parts people love percentages. We get it.

Margin is drilled into you from the minute you start working the counter. So when dealers think about eCommerce, this is naturally one of the first questions that comes up.

And the Automotive News research shows there's not exactly a consensus on the answer.

HOW DEALERS THINK ONLINE MARGINS COMPARE WITH WHOLESALE



Dealers are basically spread across the board.

Some expect better margins.

Some expect worse.

Some expect no difference at all.

Source: Automotive News survey of dealers and parts executives, July 2026.

But there's another number in the Automotive News research that's much more interesting.

When dealers were asked about their **concerns before selling online, 36.73%** selected margin pressure.

When respondents managing online parts sales were asked what was actually most challenging:

JUST 6.12%
selected maintaining profitability.

That's a pretty big gap between what dealers worry about and what online sellers report dealing with.

Maybe We're Asking the Wrong Question.

The question doesn't have to be: **"Is the margin percentage lower?"**

You've already solved this exact math somewhere else in your Parts Department. **It's called wholesale.**

Wholesale can work because you're not judging the entire business on the percentage attached to one transaction. You're looking at volume, gross dollars, and what it costs to generate the business.

Online parts deserves the same math.

If somebody in California buys a part they never would've bought from your counter in the first place, that's incremental business.

The better question is:

BEFORE SELLING ONLINE
36.73%
Margin pressure

ACTUALLY MANAGING ONLINE
6.12%
Maintaining profitability

How Much Gross Did the Sale Add?

A fat margin on a sale you never make doesn't put anything in the bank.

Put Another Way:
YOU CAN'T DEPOSIT A PERCENTAGE.

Source: Automotive News survey of dealers and parts executives, July 2026.

Myth #3: "I'm Going to Need a Bunch of People"

Nobody in a busy Parts Department hears "new sales channel" and thinks:

Perfect. Exactly what my team needed. More work.

So this concern makes sense too.

In the Automotive News research:

30.61%

of respondents identified **staffing requirements** as one of their biggest concerns about selling parts online.

Another **22.45%** were concerned about the time required to manage orders.

That's before we even get into shipping, returns, pricing, and everything else already happening behind the counter.

But then Automotive News asked people actually managing online parts sales what was most challenging.

Staffing or time required: 24.49%.

Still real.

Just not the disaster dealerships might imagine before starting.

And there's another number worth looking at:

Keeping up with order volume: 4.08%.

BEFORE SELLING ONLINE

30.61%
Staffing

22.45%
Time

ACTUALLY MANAGING ONLINE

24.49%
Staffing Time

4.08%
Order Volume

Source: Automotive News survey of dealers and parts executives, July 2026.

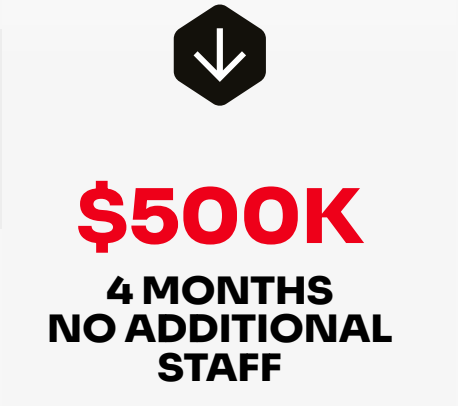
Paragon Honda Didn't Hire Anyone.

When Paragon Honda took online parts sales from roughly 35,000–40,000 a month to $500,000 a month, it didn't build a new department around it.

It didn't add warehouse space.

And according to the Automotive News report:

PARAGON DID NOT ADD STAFF.



GM and VP Brian Benstock described the operation as having "a lot of in-and-out business, lots of throughput."

The dealership used the people and infrastructure it already had, with RevolutionParts handling pieces of the eCommerce operation including marketplace connectivity, fraud protection, shipping, and returns.

That doesn't mean you'll never hire someone.

If you grow enough, hopefully staffing becomes a problem you get to have.

But there's a pretty big difference between:

"We may eventually need another person because the business grew."

and:

"We need to staff an eCommerce department before we even start."

You don't need ten people waiting around for orders that haven't shown up yet.

Start with the business. Let the staffing follow the volume.

Source: Automotive News survey of dealers and parts executives, July 2026.

Myth #4:
"Shipping, Returns, and Customer Service Will Be a Nightmare"

Here's the one dealers worry about most.

Not margin.

Not staffing.

Not whether they'll get enough orders.

44.90%

of respondents named **handling returns or customer issues** as one of their biggest concerns about selling parts online.

Shipping and fulfillment complexity came in at:

26.53%

And unlike some of the other myths, we're not going to tell you this one disappears.

It doesn't.

Customers return things. Parts get ordered incorrectly from time to time. Boxes have to get out the door. Somebody has to answer the email.

So yes.

This part is real.

But Shipping Looks a Little Different Once You're Doing It.

Source: Automotive News survey of dealers and parts executives, July 2026.

Before selling online:

26.53% worried about shipping and fulfillment complexity.

Among people actually managing online sales:

14.29%

identified shipping speed and cost as the biggest challenge.

That's not zero.

But it's a long way from “this is going to be a nightmare.”

The Difference Is Having a Process.

Paragon Honda didn't decide to become a shipping company.

It used RevolutionParts to facilitate shipping and returns while also helping protect the dealership against credit-card fraud and connect its operation with Amazon and eBay. That's really the larger lesson here.

Returns aren't an eCommerce strategy. Shipping isn't an eCommerce strategy. They're operating problems.

Parts Departments solve operating problems every day.

The trick is putting the right process behind them so every new order doesn't become a new fire to put out.

PERCEPTION VS. EXPERIENCE

FEAR	REALITY
Before Selling Online	**Managing Online Sales**
RETURNS	
44.90%	**44.90%**
PRICING	
32.65%	**34.69%**
STAFFING	
30.61%	**24.49%**
SHIPPING	
26.53%	**14.29%**
MARGIN / PROFITABILITY	
36.73%	**6.12%**

What Dealers Worry About vs. What Sellers Actually Report

BEFORE SELLING ONLINE	AMONG THOSE MANAGING ONLINE SALES
Margin pressure: **36.73%**	Maintaining profitability: **6.12%**
Staffing requirements: **30.61%**	Staffing/time: **24.49%**
Shipping/fulfillment complexity: **26.53%**	Shipping speed/cost: **14.29%**

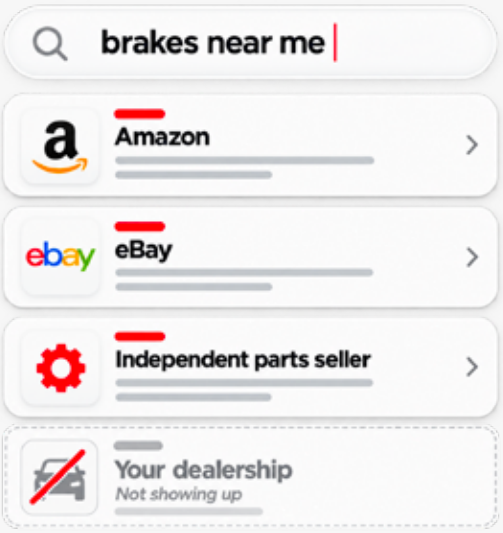
Source: Automotive News survey of dealers and parts executives, July 2026.

Myth #5: "We Can Always Do It Later"

Sure. You can. **The problem is the customer doesn't care that you're waiting.**

Somebody sitting on their couch tonight looking for a Honda alternator isn't waiting for your dealership to put eCommerce on next year's plan.

They're searching. They're comparing. **And then they're buying from whoever shows up.**



Paragon learned this firsthand.

Brian Benstock found that when shoppers searched terms like **"tires near me" or "brakes near me,"** dealerships often weren't what they saw.

Amazon was. eBay was. Independent parts sellers were.

So Paragon started putting its own inventory in front of those shoppers through search advertising, SEO, Amazon, and eBay.

Parkway Chevrolet's Robert St. Romain put the problem much more simply:

> **"There are a lot of customers out there, and our competitors were taking the business."**

That's really the whole myth. Waiting doesn't preserve the opportunity for later.

The Sale Still Happens.

It just happens somewhere else.

And this is where one more Automotive News survey finding matters.

Source: Automotive News survey of dealers and parts executives, July 2026.

51.85%
said **the service lane.**

Only: **23.46%**
said **online parts sales.**

When dealers were asked which parts revenue channel had the most growth potential: There's nothing wrong with growing the service lane.

You should.

But the customer outside your local market isn't choosing between your service lane and your online store. **They don't know your service lane exists.**

eCommerce doesn't replace what already works. **It gives your Parts Department another market to sell into.**

Craig Shield sees the difference every night.

> "If the dealership is closed at 2 a.m. or if there's bad weather in Dallas, I'm still selling."

That's a customer your counter couldn't have reached anyway.

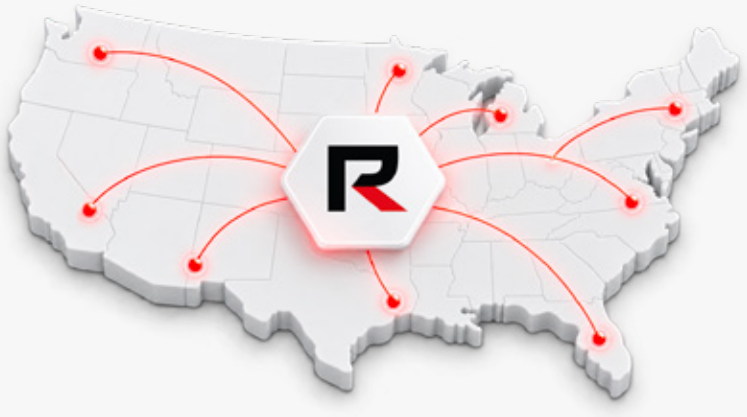
And This Isn't a Small Market.

The Automotive News report notes that total service and parts sales at U.S. dealerships rose **41% between 2018 and 2025.**

Parts represented **57% of dealerships' $164.6 billion in total service and parts sales in 2025.**

There is already a lot of money moving through dealership Parts Departments.

The question is how much of the demand beyond your local market you're set up to capture.



DEALERSHIP

LOCAL MARKET

NATIONWIDE DEMAND

Source: Automotive News survey of dealers and parts executives, July 2026.

So What Would Actually Change Dealers' Minds?

Here's the best part of the research.

Automotive News and RevolutionParts didn't just ask what dealers were worried about.

They asked what would have to change for online parts to become a bigger priority.

Dealers Said They Need:

- Clear proof of profitability
- Confidence in consistent order volume
- Minimal impact on current staff
- Easier shipping and fulfillment
- A better understanding of how it works
- Proven success from similar dealerships

Fair enough.

Now go back through the stories.

Worried about order volume?
Gateway is doing roughly **$200,000 a month.**

Need proof there's room to grow?
Paragon went from roughly **35,000–40,000 to $500,000 a month.**

Worried about headcount?
Paragon made that jump **without adding staff.**

Worried about profitability?

Only **6.12%** of respondents managing online sales identified maintaining profitability as their biggest challenge.

Worried about shipping?
Only **14.29%** of respondents managing online sales identified shipping speed and cost as the biggest challenge.

Want proof from another dealer?
That's what Craig, Brian, and Robert just gave you.

Source: Automotive News survey of dealers and parts executives, July 2026.

Maybe the Biggest Myth Is That Doing Nothing Is Free.

You don't have to sell parts online. Nobody's forcing you.

You can keep focusing on the service lane, wholesale, and the customers who already know where your dealership is.

But doing nothing doesn't mean nothing happens...

The person searching for the part still searches.

The order still gets placed.

The money still changes hands.

It just may not happen at your dealership.

That's what Craig Shield figured out when somebody else's parts order accidentally landed in front of him.

It's what Brian Benstock figured out when Paragon stopped treating eCommerce like something it could set and forget.

And it's what Robert St. Romain figured out when he looked at who was getting the business his dealership wasn't.

The opportunity wasn't something they had to invent.

The Customers Were Already There.

They just had to start selling to them.

There Could Be More Business Sitting Inside Your Parts Department Than You Think.

See the full Automotive News research, hear from the dealers already doing it, and take a closer look at what online parts sales could mean for your store

SEE THE RESEARCH BEHIND THE NUMBERS

SEE WHAT ONLINE PARTS COULD LOOK LIKE FOR MY DEALERSHIP