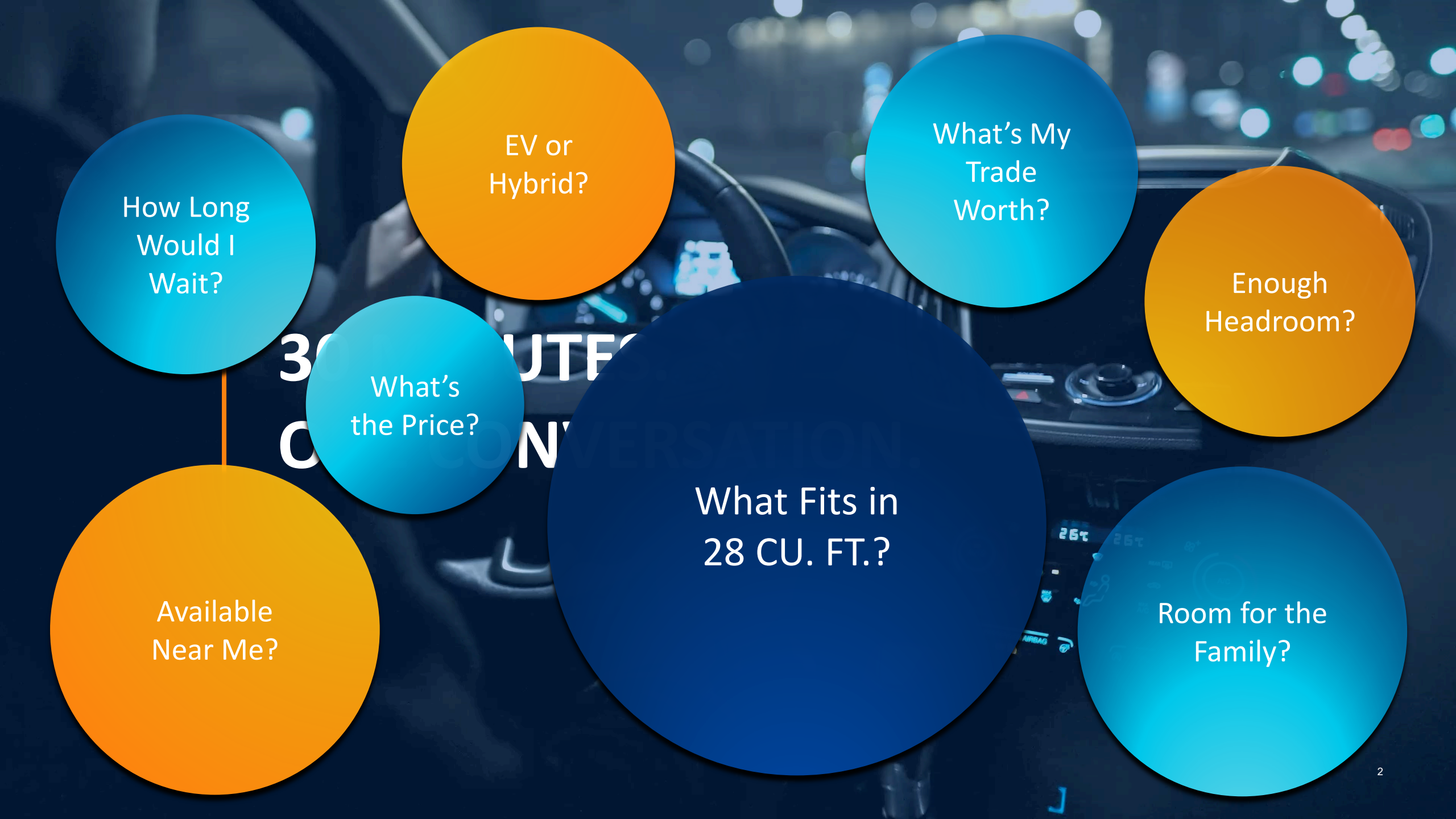
COX AUTOMOTIVE

FROM SIGNALS TO STRATEGY:

HOW AI IS RESHAPING THE AUTOMOTIVE CUSTOMER JOURNEY

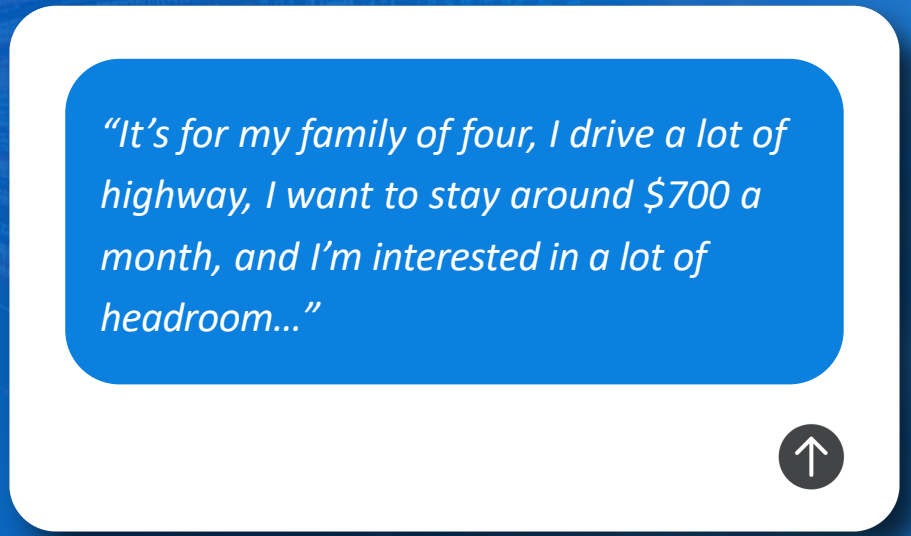
Jessica Stafford
SVP Consumer Solutions

Jeff Jones
SVP Product & Engineering,
Retail Solutions


How Long Would I Wait?
EV or Hybrid?
What's My Trade Worth?
Enough Headroom?
What's the Price?
What Fits in 28 CU. FT.?
Available Near Me?
Room for the Family?

AI GIVES SHOPPERS
ANOTHER WAY IN





ABOUT 1 IN 3

IN-MARKET VEHICLE SHOPPERS HAVE USED AI TO RESEARCH VEHICLES

Cox Automotive AI in Auto Retail Tracker, Q3 2026

EARN YOUR WAY INTO THE ANSWER

- Answer real questions
- Be specific
- Keep it current
- Make it useful



“

IS **AI** GETTING **ITS** **ANSWER** FROM YOU?

CONTENT IS KING
BUT SO IS CONTEXT

ISSUES

62%

of AI-assisted vehicle shoppers encountered an issue

(source: Cox Automotive AI in Auto Retail Tracker, Q3 2026)

- Mismatched recommendations
- Outdated pricing or incentives
- Details shoppers couldn't verify
- Wrong specs or trims
- Sold cars still listed

ACCURATE

28 CU. FT



USEFUL

“Will a catcher’s bag fit?”



LET IT KEEP LOOKING



HOW MUCH WOULD YOU ACTUALLY LET IT DO

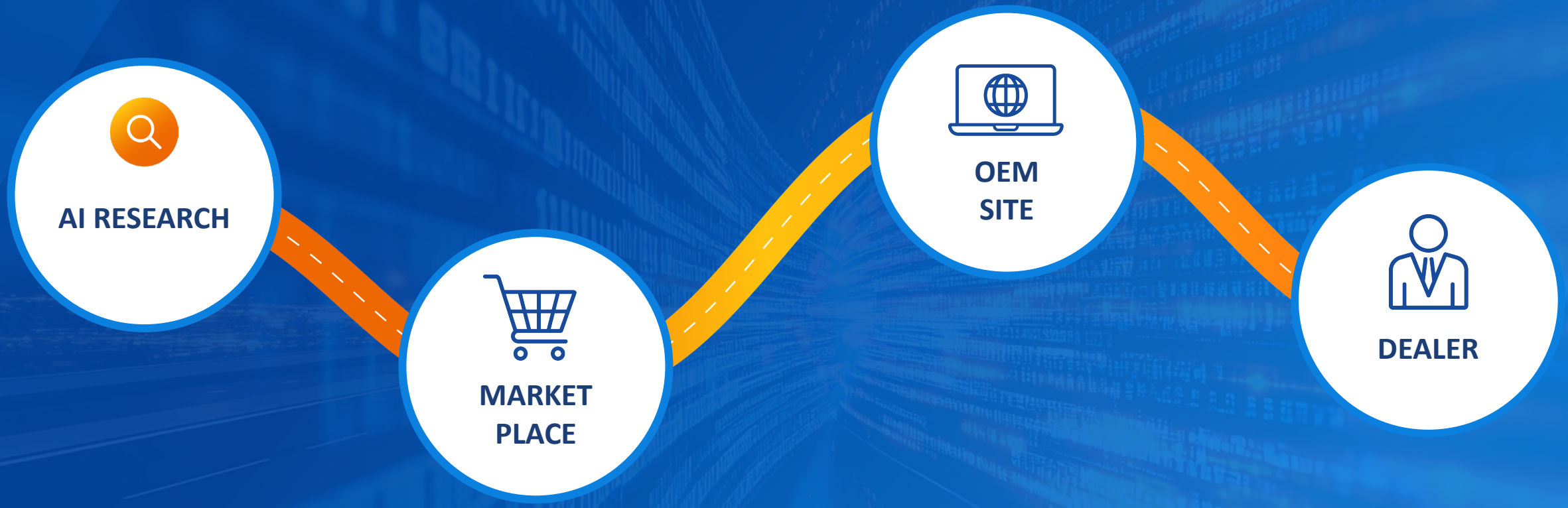
Watch for Me
Keep an eye on the market

Recommend to Me
Tell me what I should do

Ask Me First
Get the next step ready—I approve it

Act Inside My Rules
Take action within limits I set

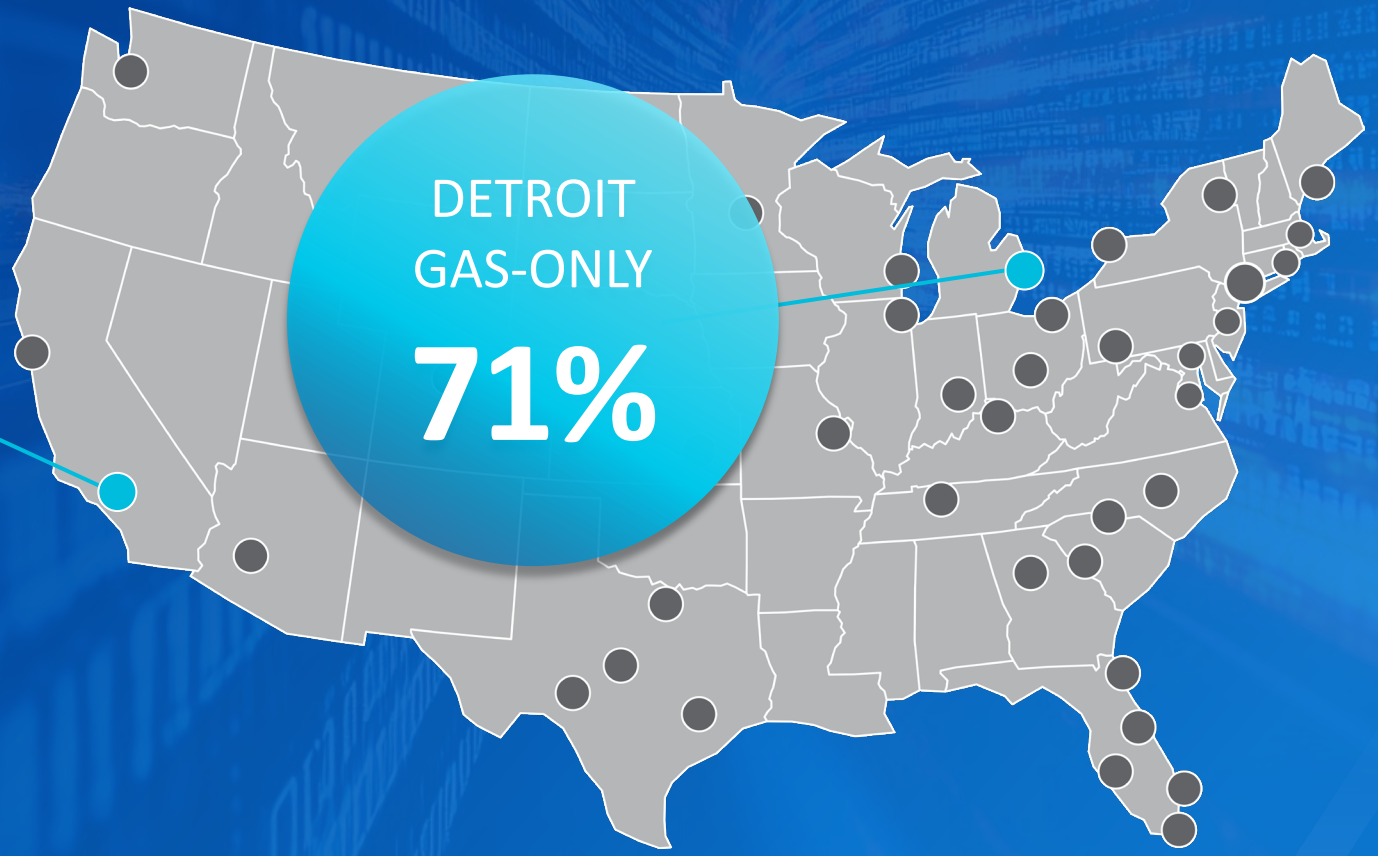
Just Handle It
Take care of it for me



THE BUYING JOURNEY

FROM SIGNALS
TO DECISIONS

LOS ANGELES
GAS-ONLY
39%



DETROIT
GAS-ONLY
71%

NATIONAL
60%
GAS-ONLY

Source: Live Market, powered by Cox Automotive, Oct 2026

THE LAST
18 MONTHS

- Tariffs announced, delayed and revised
- Gas prices spiked, now falling
- Borrowing costs kept affordability under pressure
- Federal EV incentives changed



GAS SPIKES → *SHIFT THE MESSAGE*

INVENTORY TIGHTENS → *PULL BACK SPEND*

COMPETITOR OFFER → *ADJUST QUICKLY*



EARN YOUR WAY INTO THE ANSWER

CLOSE THE ANSWER GAP

DON'T MAKE THEM START OVER

30 MINUTES. ONE CONVERSATION.

KEEP WATCHING THE SIGNALS