

Traffic Counts, Attitude and Basics:

The Only Constant in the Art of Selling Cars

Wherever there is a problem there has to be a solution. Relying on the basic art of selling – the one constant in our business – will enable dealerships to capture market share away from competitors who only focus on closing the deal now. Always remember: A salesperson's job is not to *sell* cars, but to help customers *buy* them.

What's Your Attitude?

Everyone knows business today is down, but are your salespeople down, too? Salespeople and sales managers can buy-in to the negativity blasting Americans from every angle, or they can actively sell cars. Unfortunately, in virtually every dealership across the country, salespeople have stopped selling, managers have stopped managing and dealerships have stopped thriving. At APB increasingly we see one of two things happening: salespeople and managers push so hard that customers are intimidated into non-action and can't make a decision, or customers aren't given the option of becoming a be-back, its buy now or nothing. In essence, they've abandoned the basics – blocking and tackling – and adopted a negative attitude that has become a self-fulfilling prophecy. Nurturing a positive attitude is essential for any dealership seeking a portion of those sales.

Most dealerships look solely at units sold to reward star performers. In addition to negative news, this is one of the fastest ways to de-motivate and create negative attitudes. Worse, it confirms management's perception that salespeople are to blame for poor results and salespeople's beliefs that people have no money to spend and don't really want to buy. Words that kill deals before they start - no, don't, won't, or can't – have crept into the team's vocabulary, helping to put the brakes on your success.

We live on a technically advanced, information super highway that has changed the way we do business. Today, the only two things customers can't do without coming to the dealership are **drive it and buy it** – regardless of how much research is done online. While it's crucial for dealerships to make use of every opportunity and tool to reach prospects and get the information they need to spark interest, the goal of all these tools should help you to bring traffic to the dealership.

What's Your Job?

What happened to the days when a sales manager dropped everything to sell cars? A sales manager's job is no different today than it was 20 years ago: to help salespeople sell and customers *buy a car*. It's not simply to *sell cars*. There is nothing in a dealership more important than taking care of customers and closing the business that is standing in front of you. A salesperson's job is to be a Selection Specialist who helps customers choose the exact car that fits their individual needs. Projections should be a salesperson's focal point, his or her daily roadmap, for helping a customer select and buy a car. When focusing this way, salespeople take a different approach:

1. Ask specific questions that are direct, but non-confrontational or pushy and that draw out specific information that builds on the salesperson's ability to move the process forward. Find out how the customer intends to use the car – work, recreation, etc.
2. Learn what the customer's true preferences are for style, comfort, color, etc., and what they like and dislike about their current car.
3. **Listen** to the customer's responses. This is the most important, and often the most neglected, step in being a Selection Specialist. The attentive salesperson knows when a customer has truly selected a final vehicle only then can they move to the next step.
4. Find the right car – the one that meshes with the customer's preferences.
5. Move to an introduction – hood, trunk, demo drive – all part of the selection process.

If you try and sell a customer something they don't like or want, you'll end up with nothing. If salespeople remember that their job is to help buyers find the right car, "*now*" becomes irrelevant. Who cares about "*now*?" If the customer doesn't have all the information needed to decide, then, how can the customer buy "*now*?" Whether a buyer completes a deal today or next week doesn't matter; what matters is that they buy, and buy from your dealership. Given that, if buyers want to consider their purchase, the salesperson must gain enough information before the buyer leaves to maintain contact, especially in the first 72-hours after the visit. Minimally, the salesperson should collect and record standard, detailed data; present the best possible deal on the car the buyer wants before they leave the store; develop and execute a follow up plan designed to bring the buyer back to close the deal. This approach enables the salesperson to get the deal, and positions him or her to generate additional revenue and referrals.

Richard F. Libin, President of [APB-Automotive Profit Builders, Inc.](http://www.apb.cc), can be reached at rlibin@apb.cc or 508-626-9200.