

Using a Robust Accessories Selling System

Cut Costs and Boost Sales!

Despite the current economic downturn, accessories continue to represent an important profit center for your dealership. According to SEMA, accessories sales are over \$38 billion annually. How much of that revenue is your dealership grabbing? If it's not much, you're not alone. The challenges for a dealership in selling accessories are well known: tying up money in parts inventory, spending time and money to train staff, tasking the Parts Department with a complicated ordering and selection process. But today, there's a range of next-generation online accessories systems that can help your dealership sell accessories easily, increasing profits without tying up capital. Consider the following:

No accessories inventory. Remember three-ring binders with pages of accessories? As you know, these binders don't do justice to the products you sell. More important, they do nothing to grab your customers' attention. What can get your customer interested is 3D virtual fitment! The newest online systems allow you to "show" customers in real-time what their vehicle could look like dressed up in the accessories of their choosing. (If you tried one of the early online catalogs, rest assured that today's systems blow them out of the water!) With online visualization, you can say 'goodbye' to an extensive parts inventory. With a few mouse clicks, you can accessorize a customer's vehicle right in front of their eyes. Doug Kessler, Parts Director at Medved Chevrolet, says, "The ability to show customers how accessories will appear on their vehicles as they make their purchasing decisions is a great selling feature." 3D visualization can help you sell more, more efficiently. Instead of having accessories get dusty on the shelf, you can order them on an on-demand basis.

Dynamic visualization can also save your dealership money on dressing vehicles on the lot. If your dealership typically loads up a few choice models with accessories, you are locking up money in inventory that may be better used elsewhere in your operations. With online visualization, you can spend less on your lot vehicles and still close deals with accessories, gaining incremental profit.

Simplification of ordering and parts selection. Consider how dealerships have historically sold accessories. A Salesperson approaches the Parts Department with a customer request. The Parts Department dives into the DMS, microfiche files or a manufacturer's brochure. They pull up a screen or look through pages and slides to find a part on a vehicle, check for exclusions, write down the order number and, finally, hand it to the salesperson. With an electronic system, the Salesperson can work directly with the customer to view accessories, determine exactly what fits on their vehicle and order the part immediately. Says Paul Rini, General Manager at Jeff Wyler Auto Group: "Everyone is on the same page. There are no mistakes because you don't have to go back and forth between departments."

This simplification also has a big advantage when it comes to hiring and training staff. With high turnover a problem for many dealerships, it's a blow to the bottom line to spend time and money for training on the parts process only to have someone leave a few months later. Today's online systems are simple to use and require very little training. Matt Shultz of Fox Buick GMC has seen the benefits of a system that delivers all the information his sales team needs to seal a deal: "The sales department has had good success with the price being right there and the pictures being available for the customer to see."

One system for sales, ordering and fulfillment tracking. With an online accessories system you can do everything using one program, saving a significant amount of overhead cost and time. While sitting with a customer, your Sales, Service or Parts staff can pull up a vehicle, outfit it with accessories, check pricing and exclusions and place an order. Chad Loy, Parts Director at George Kell Motors, appreciates how easy these systems are to use: “96% of our truck sales include accessories and an online solution makes it a lot easier.” The system may also track every order for complete oversight of fulfillment and provide a snapshot of dealership-wide activity. Any member of the team can quickly check the status of an order, relieving Parts staff of the hassle of fielding multiple requests to track down order details.

Reduction in marketing and printing overhead. Your dealership may rely heavily on flyers and manufacturer brochures to showcase accessories to consumers. These one-dimensional marketing pieces don't do justice to most accessories and are expensive to produce and purchase. With an online system, your dealership staff can pinpoint a vehicle, load it up with accessories and print a unique personalized sales piece for every customer. Customers are able to see the accessories that they crave on their vehicle, along with pricing and installation costs. The ability to customize and create individualized flyers creates a larger sales window and gives the potential buyer something to take away for their vehicle.

Accessories software may also allow you to create customized presentations for your dealership's promotions or specials. Imagine that in October your dealership is targeting sales of all-weather protection along with aftermarket products such as scotch-guarding. Dealership staff can put together a presentation that includes these products, which is always available on your system, allowing any team member to give on-the-spot presentations. The presentations are also printable for easy take-away. Not only have you reduced the cost of marketing materials, you've also leveraged your system's functionality to deliver customer-specific presentations.

Increased passive sales with accessories web presence. A recent survey by Chrome Systems found that 86 percent of respondents researched their vehicle online before purchasing or leasing. With more of your potential buyers moving to the Internet, vehicle personalization beyond basic configuration is emerging as an important website function. Adding accessories visualization to your dealership website is a low-cost and easy way to attract more traffic, keep potential buyers on your site longer and increase the opportunity of accessories sales.

Wish List functionality is also an effective way to increase sales. With a Wish List, consumers can create an online account using basic contact information such as their name and email address. They can then save their desired accessories to their Wish List. The dealership has access to lists created on the website and you can mine this data for sales opportunities. You can view a consumer's activity, identify the accessories that caught their eye and follow up with a sales call, or perhaps provide a coupon. These customers have pre-qualified themselves, so you know your follow-up isn't wasted effort.

Your dealership can earn more accessories sales. The right system will help your dealership successfully sell accessories cost-efficiently and easily. The right mindset will get you over the hurdle of viewing accessories as a hassle and instead see them as a viable profit center.