

How to make your dealership a destination for female vehicle shoppers

By Daniel Osborne

The automotive industry has long been dominated by men, but not anymore. According to industry statistics, women buy more than half of all vehicles and influence more than 85 percent of all vehicle purchases. This market is too big to ignore, but many dealerships are doing just that by treating female shoppers the same as they do male shoppers. Women shop and buy differently, so to grab more of the female demographic you have to adjust your marketing and sales efforts. Following are examples of how women approach vehicle shopping and buying, along with ideas for making your dealership a destination for female vehicle shoppers.

Women prefer to research vehicles using the Internet because this medium offers relative anonymity and a wealth of information.

More women are going online to search for vehicles from the comfort and privacy of their own homes. To grab and keep their attention you need to have detailed listings of all your vehicles on your website, complete with color images, vehicle spins, and even full-motion videos. Your website is a virtual salesperson – able to answer vehicle questions, expound on inventory, and talk about dealership benefits and offerings, so it must be comprehensive, easy to navigate, and welcoming.

Women often conduct thorough price comparisons, seek advice from friends and family, and read vehicle reviews.

Most female vehicle shoppers do thorough research and survey those around them before making a purchase. Make it easy for them to learn what your customers are saying about your dealership. When you have a very satisfied customer, ask them to contribute a testimonial about their experience. Post it on your website and use it in sales brochures. You may even ask the customer if you can record them speaking then post the video to your website. In addition, make sure you post outside vehicle reviews. Many companies in the space, such as Chrome Systems, offer expert reviews that focus on a vehicle's strengths, and function as a helpful tool when explaining vehicle value to a customer.

Seventy percent of women feel they are at a disadvantage compared to men when shopping for a vehicle because they feel intimidated by the financial aspect of the purchase process, specifically – the pricing.

To earn more women buyers, your dealership has to throw off the old-boys network and prove to women that you truly want their business. One way of doing this is to get involved with organizations that certify dealerships as female-friendly, or with companies that act as a conduit between you and female buyers. In this last scenario, you list your inventory much as you would on other online shopping site, women peruse vehicles in relative anonymity, then notify one or more dealers when they're ready to make a deal. As you're negotiating to win the deal, you can see what other dealers are offering and even up the ante by throwing in service specials, or other special offers. This type of

scenario puts the female shopper in the driver's seat, ready and waiting to accept the best offer, right in the privacy of her home.

Marketing your dealership to the way women shop can significantly increase your bottom line. Put time into making your website an extension of your sales team, make it easy for shoppers to read reviews of your vehicles and services, and research portals where you can open an honest dialogue with women shoppers. Put the effort into marketing to this influential group of shoppers and watch your customer base, vehicle leads, and sales grow.