

## MARKETING & SALES INSIGHTS

Hector Bosotti



# Getting More Customers to Visit You: Part I

### Via telephone, online application or an e-mail inquiry

The question on how to deal with online, telephone or e-mail inquiries has debatable answers. Many special finance managers will simply take credit information over the phone, pull a credit bureau and quickly assess the viability of the customer. This procedure however, does not properly allow special finance managers to be as effective in selling the offer over the telephone as they could in person. It can also be said that the customers have more control when they are at a distance. Over the next two publications, we'll share with you best practices that top performing dealers have implemented.

The online inquiry can be processed relatively quickly with all appropriate authorization forms completed online. If the customers have potential, then they are called back to set an appointment. Best practices suggest not letting customers know that they are approved but rather that an approval looks favorable. A vehicle needs to be selected and the terms and conditions need to be calculated accordingly. This process works and is usually executed by highly efficient special finance departments.

Many other dealerships take shortcuts and simply deal with approved applicants. In addition to putting your dealership at risk of possible litigation, many dealerships will only process applications after a personal interview is conducted with the customer and will only pull a credit bureau with the customer present. This will:

- allow more leads to be processed.
- eliminate pre-qualifying.
- eliminate the risk of litigation.

This will increase the number of people that you get to see face to face and the amount of work that you will process. It will however, also increase the numbers of deals that you deliver. On average, you can expect to deliver one more deal out of every 10 applications if you adopt the appointment method as opposed to using the "check the bureau out first" method. To reiterate, both methods will work but getting more people into your dealership will yield better results and will satisfy many legal concerns.

Note: There are a number of successful special finance operations that operate completely contradictory to the best practice suggested. As with any sales process, some individuals prefer using their own

styles and techniques. Some special finance managers will use the following strategies or techniques:

- Attempt to sell a vehicle over the telephone and follow up with e-mail pictures and details (this procedure may likely take place with customers who live or work a great distance from the dealership.)
- Fully disclose the rate, term and payment ranges that the customer might be eligible for
- Provide an approval number at the end of the telephone interview
- Only set appointments with pre-approved customers

As odd as any of these strategies or techniques may sound, there is one common objective that every top special finance manager seeks to accomplish: gaining the customer's trust!

### Give them many unique reasons to visit you:

1. Offer to pay for and pull their personal credit bureau report. Inform the customer that together (in person) you will look for errors or omissions on their report and that you can assist in getting them corrected. This serves to obligate the customer and they are being offered something for free.
2. Suggest that there is more than one credit bureau report that can be requested (i.e. Equifax and Trans Union). Some creditors/institutions do not report to both bureaus and one bureau could look better than the other. Some lenders use Trans Union as their primary source so you'll submit their application to a lender who uses their most favourable bureau.
3. Offer your unique approval system: one that does not necessarily weigh heavily on a customer's previous credit history but rather on the value of the newer vehicle and credit moving forward.
4. Suggest that continuing to shop for credit will damage their beacon score and their chance for an approval.
5. Suggest that you will show them how to increase their credit score by offering to provide them with a 19-page Credit Recovery Workbook (available through Wye Management's special finance workshops). This is part of your credit counseling that you offer at no charge.
6. Ask them what kind of a vehicle they would like to be driving or what features they would like to have on a newer vehicle. At this early stage of the relationship, you will need to let them believe that they can get the vehicle they want. Suggest that you have a great selection of vehicles to choose from and leverage

your CPO program (if you have one) to instill confidence about your products and your dealership. This builds more trust!

7. Sell your credit recovery program. Describe to them the process that needs to take place and the benefits. Customers will want to be in a position to look after their children's education, purchase a home, future dreams, retirement, etc.
8. Direct the customer to testimonials on your web site. Reading or hearing other people describe their successful experiences will greatly enhance your success rate, as this will again build more trust.
9. Suggest that together you will both work to seek an approval that matches their down payment and payment capacity.
10. Suggest that your lenders will need to match up a vehicle based on their capacity and while they are there at your store, the lenders will determine which vehicles will be eligible.
11. Suggest that you have interest rates that start at 'x' percent (your lowest manufacturer's sub-vented rate) if you are a new vehicle dealer. Suggest that all your lenders' interest rates are based on prime.

Most dealers will not offer or suggest this type of service and it will demonstrate your knowledge, professionalism and further obligate

the customer for the expense that your dealership is incurring with no commitment or obligation on the their part. This builds trust.

**Here are some great questions that you can also ask to customers that allows you to build more trust and secure an appointment:**

- Are you tired of being tired?
- Are you stressed out?
- Would you like to own a house one day?
- Would you like to look after your children's education?
- Would you like to start to look after your retirement needs?
- Do you need a safe and dependable vehicle?
- Do you want to feel confident again?

Patience is a virtue that a special finance manager must develop. Act as a sounding board for your customer. "And then what happened? and then?" Some special finance managers claim that they feel like a psychiatrist or a priest taking confessions at times. By probing gingerly into their credit history, the customer will start to confide in you and that is precisely what builds their trust in you. The way that you communicate and present your credit recovery solution paints a picture in the customer's mind. If you want to get more customers in to see you, you've got to be a better painter. To

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**Dans** (continued from page 14)

- We have an easy to buy atmosphere that makes selling cars fun.
- Our quality hand selected vehicles are backed with superior service.

Get your salespeople to bring your customers into the dealership from your lot quickly. If you don't teach your salespeople how to bypass price questions, then most likely the scenario you will see over and over is this one. "Hey boss, I have a guy out on the lot. All he wants is our best price on three cars today." Or this one, "This guy is different, if we don't give him a price right now he will leave," – or this one, "Boss, he only wants to know what his trade is worth, can't we tell him?"

**Example – staying off price**

Customer – "How much is that vehicle?"

Salesperson – "It really depends on the model and options that you choose. By the way are you here to rebuild your credit, your life and get the car you deserve? If so, let us prove to you how we can do that, is that fair enough?"

If you teach and train your team to stay off price, then your team buys time to follow the basics and be able to build value in your dealership, the salesperson, and your program. That is called the selling triangle. Build the three together and you will increase your sales and profits.

As you go marching toward the end of the year, focus on your selling and management processes to help you reach your goals. The dog and pony shows are nice, along with balloons, Kinko the clown and free popcorn, however, when it comes to selling more cars, if you improve your people, policies, processes and procedures, you will hit the jackpot called profits. See you at the top.

*George Dans is also known as "The Human Torch." He is an international speaker, trainer and motivator who empowers the best to "get fired up." Dans consults with key decision makers on how to fulfill their companies' vision of sales success and profitability.*

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get better, you need to practice. Most sales consultants in dealerships unfortunately only practice "in the game" with customers but when we look at professional athletes, we realize that they go to practices and actors or musicians go to rehearsals. The four "Bs" you should remember when speaking with someone on the phone are:

- Be patient
- Build rapport
- Build trust
- Book an appointment

**Tip of the day**

Write out your credit recovery program presentation. Edit and then rehearse it until you have mastered it!

**Book an appointment**

This is really closing the call. You should consider closing with an either/or strategy, which will invite a positive response. "Mr. Jackson, would you like to continue on your current program or would you like to take advantage of our unique credit recovery program that we provide and put your trust and faith in me and our lenders to assist you towards getting on a better plan?"

- Offer a choice of dates or times when booking an appointment.
- Get them to write down your name, address, phone number, conditional approval number and whatever documents will be required to process the application or for funding.
- Direct them to bring all pertinent documents like identification, social insurance card, pay stubs etc.
- Get them to read the information back to you so that you know they are committed.
- Inform the customer that you or someone else will be contacting them to confirm the appointment (when it's the next day or later).

In Part II, we'll look at increasing your conversion rate, confirming appointments, customer concerns and dealing with the "what ifs" that you will be faced with on a daily basis.

*Hector Bosotti is a consultant and trainer with Wye Management and has over 25 years of retail automotive experience whose success has been founded on three key elements: people, process and training.*

*Please direct comments and questions regarding this article to [hbosotti@wosfmagazine.ca](mailto:hbosotti@wosfmagazine.ca) or use the reader response listing on page 30.*