

# 10 Ways to Make It Happen

*Here's a check list for getting dealerships' acts together*

*By Adam Armbruster*

**H**ere are 10 check-box items for dealers to get the most out of their business. Make sure to check them all off.

— ONE —

**Do you know what you are paying to reach each potential consumer?** Notice I did not say per-vehicle retailed. The question centers on expense per potential customer. Using only PVR numbers to track your advertising returns isn't enough. Focus not just only on sales, but on prospects, too.

— TWO —

**Are you advertising at the right time?** Vehicle buyers have migrated away from traditional patterns over the past two years. They are using mobile devices for their next car purchase. Dealers should align advertising to the peak times when customers are coming to the store, calling and visiting their websites. I call this advertiming.

— THREE —

**Is your live online chat function working well?** If not, expect some consumers to pass you buy. These people prefer chat channels to email and in-person shopping. Handled properly, they often represent higher gross profits and customer-satisfaction scores. Chat leads are low volume, but high in dollar value. Treat them right.

— FOUR —

**What's showing on your digital dealership?** In other words, what are consumers seeing on your main Web page when they arrive? Is it an exciting car model with an even more exciting price and special offer? Or is it a plain factory-formatted webpage? Of the two possibilities, guess which one customers spend more time on.



**Are staffers greeting consumers or scaring them away?**

— FIVE —

**Are your prices on your inventory Web pages?** "Call for Price" may have worked at one time. Today, most consumers who see that just shrug and move on, thinking you are hiding pricing or trying to force them to call. Work with the consumer behavior rather than against it. Why play hide-and-seek on price? Most consumers already know general pricing anyway.

— SIX —

**Are you responding in real-time or are consumers waiting for salespeople to get back to them?** Imagine going to BestBuy.com and being told someone will get back to you in a day or two. Are you kidding? Speed up your team to respond to emails and phone calls in minutes, not hours, and certainly not days.

— SEVEN —

**What's on your front porch?** When a consumer drives up to your dealership, do they immediately see advertised vehicles with the attractive payments in the windows, or are these units invisible? Why hide the goods? Customers may not really want the promo unit anyway, but they need to see that car if you want them to find you credible. Take it from successful retailers: Get your lead merchandise out front.

— EIGHT —

**What is the customer's first impression?** All of the above covers this, but phone customers on hold should be hearing about promotions, specials and sales and what a great dealer you are. People who call dealerships don't want to hear Michael Bolton songs; they want information.

— NINE —

**Are staffers greeting consumers or scaring them away?** A "wolf pack" of salespeople sitting on a bench and smoking by the front door does not make a customer feel welcome. It makes people feel like they are the next meal. I once actually saw a salesman flossing his teeth by the front door. Consider banning staff congregating. Instead, ask your greeter or salespeople to walk up alone, smiling, and help customers feel the excitement of buying a new car. Enthusiastic salespeople can make it a fun day.

— TEN —

**Bring it all home.** In meetings, show salespeople all of the improvements achieved from the list above, and tell them why in the end it helps you all make more money and have more fun. ■

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