



Susan **Givens** sales & training solution

DIFFERENTIATING YOUR DEALERSHIP IN CHANGING TIMES

The car buying landscape is evolving rapidly, making it more difficult for consumers to distinguish one dealership from another in the shopping process. There are a number of factors contributing to this trend:

- The proliferation of lead-generation syndicators is giving consumers more direct access to inventory listings, creating a commodity effect. It is easier than ever for a customer to locate and price the same vehicle at any number of dealerships.
- Mobile technology has exploded, exponentially increasing the availability of vehicle information to shoppers. Not only are these customers well-informed, sometimes even more so than the sales consultant, but now they can (and do) access reviews, OEM sites and other sources while shopping in the dealership.
- While Apple and other companies have re-shaped customer shopping expectations, the in-store experience at many dealerships is stagnant, utilizing the same presentation techniques that have been in play for decades.

As inventory and vehicle information become more commoditized, the dealership *experience* becomes the real differentiator. An examination of your position and reputation in both your local and extended markets can show you how you need to evolve. There are three key factors that can help you stand out more effectively:

1. **Branding** – How do you want customers to think about your store? When you define your brand based on the dealership experience you provide, you are offering your customers more than just a vehicle that they could purchase anywhere. Give them a *reason* to come to your dealership, and make sure it is consistently communicated on your Website and throughout the store; it should be embodied by everyone on your sales team. Consumers respond strongly to multimedia, so create and post a video about what makes your store special.
2. **Mobile Technology** – iPads are increasingly being used in the sales process. Customers expect it, some OEMs require it and it speaks volumes about how progressive your dealership is. So the question is not *if* you are using iPads, but *how* you are using iPads in your store. Customer engagement is the goal. Use features such as “how-to” videos to make complex technology easier to understand.
3. **Value** – Where do you fall on the price/value continuum? The more you focus on price, the harder it becomes to differentiate your store. Make sure you are delivering value by establishing yourself as a professional, trustworthy expert within your local market. Take a consultative approach and tailor your presentations according to customer needs, rather than one-size-fits-all. Vehicle comparisons (to other models or trims under consideration) filtered from the customer perspective can help to reinforce value.

Mark Barton, general manager of Daniels Long Chevrolet, said, “As the Internet puts every dealership across the street from us, it is critically important to differentiate ourselves. Using iPads in our sales process helps us to stand out, and gets a hugely positive response from our customers. Some of the things we have put in place are showing DealerRater to the customer during the meet and greet, going over the customer benefits of our dealership and incorporating videos of each sales consultant their customers will watch before going into F&I.”

Jim Hughes, co-founder of IntellaCar, the iPad selling system used by Daniels Long Chevrolet, said, “We continue to see that dealers who provide a more credible, enjoyable, efficient process by leveraging iPads are reaping the rewards. They create an experience that is worth telling friends and online reviews about. Now that creates a powerful brand, regardless of the syndicated inventory.”

As seen in...

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