



Effective Communication to Drive More Appointments, More Dealership Visits and Sales

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At this point I'd like to tie it all together and examine what I consider to be very important information for one simple reason. Without becoming more proficient at effective customer communication the only other option to sell more cars is to invest more money or time to drive more leads. More opportunities mean a chance to sell more cars at the same closing percentage. But it also means more expense in either time or money. On the other hand, this is about getting better at what you do, with what you already have and is the most cost efficient way to sell more cars while investing less in marketing efforts. You can do everything else right. You can have a thorough understanding of what is important to the Internet car shopper, you can be a marketing wizard and drive tons of leads by establishing a highly visible Internet dealership presence, you can have your inventory posted in all the right places with all the right information to drive lead numbers, and you can have a great Web site instilling confidence in the customer encouraging them to take action to contact your dealership in one form or another. But, once they do, if you are not on top of your game and know how to effectively manage the interaction, you run the risk of having all of the effort invested in the previously listed activities be for naught....because **"nothing happens till the car gets sold"**.

No matter what happens along the way all is for naught if the customer doesn't buy.....because no one gets paid. Regardless of all the wonders of technology now used to drive and maximize business, it all comes down to the end result, the car being sold. If not, there is no front or back end profit, there is no warranty work, certainly no service dollars over the life of the vehicle and most likely no chance for referral business. And if dollars aren't being turned there's not a whole lot that can be recycled back to marketing if it's still tied up in inventory.

Before moving forward let's first review what we learned earlier as these points will allow you to use key words and phrases to make a quicker, better connection with the customers. Lets' go back to understanding the buying motivations of the online shopper. To summarize, we know that the Internet shopper has 5 main reasons for using the Internet in their search for the next vehicle:

1. **Save time**- efficient use of time in gaining necessary decision making information
2. **Level the playing field**-having enough information to make a comfortable, educated decision.
3. **Solve a specific problem or satisfy a desire**- solve personal or financial issue for purchase
4. **Reduce stress**- staying in the comfort zone and proceeding on their own terms
5. **The "Desire to Win"**- the hope of coming out with an even greater than expected result

Understanding this you should "speak their language" meaning you want to speak with customers in terms of "benefit to the customer". What this means to you is the best chance to make a connection will be to allude to things such as:

1. Simple easy buying process with most completed through email and phone



2. Consultative approachworking together.....identifying sources of information used by customer

Example:

_____, I really appreciate you taking the time to acquire this information. I find it much easier to work with educated buyers like you who have a point of reference. Working together I'm sure we'll figure this out and you'll get your car at a great price while knowing you made a great decision for yourself. Can I ask you to show me how you arrived at this point so I have a better understanding and can help?

3. Identifying and responding specifically in terms of what the buyer is hoping to accomplish (information gained through "Discovery" explained below).
4. Allowing the customer to remain in their comfort zone for as long as necessary and coaxing them out by using the consultative approach so they understand that you are there to help things happen "for them " as opposed to "to them".
5. You have helped others in a similar situation who were amazed at the result given your experience in these situations

Included in the package of information available for you to download at the end of this document is an extensive 31 page document titled "Sales Practices, Lead Follow Up for Maximizing Contact and Setting Dealership Appointments" that will provide you information on an effective sales follow up process, effective emails to open doors quicker and more often than before and detailed information on "Managing the Phone Conversation to Set More Appointments". For the purpose of this short article let's introduce the "Managing the Conversation" section since this is the part I believe can be of most benefit. Most of your appointments will come as a result of a phone conversation with your prospect.

After listening to many actual calls, mostly inbound, it was apparent that along the way, while working through the maze of internet sales, this important part of the sales process had taken a back seat and was definitely costing sales. The inbound call in my opinion is easier to handle than the outbound since most customers call after becoming familiar with your Web site, seeing inventory and are now summoning up the courage to unveil themselves by initiating personal interaction. This customer is generally very close to the point of purchase and calling to gain assurance that your dealership is worthy of a visit and possibly their business. With outbound calls you usually find yourself speaking with customers in varying stages of the buying process.

Proper handling of the phone call and securing the appointment for a dealership visit gets you much closer to the sale. And yes, there is a big difference between "managing the conversation" to the desired result, an appointment, and just being part of one. It's widely agreed that your greatest chance of success comes in a face to face meeting with your prospect.



Having and practicing a plan makes it easier to quickly gain confidence and do a better job on the phone. The path I'll summarize shares a logical, deductive flow to the call and with practice will very quickly allow you to turn outbound calls into just normal conversation...the sign of a good call.

Now I'm certainly aware that no two call are alike and never always go as planned but , having a game plan and being able to think on your feet will allow you to "manage the conversation " rather than simply follow the lead of the customer, answer their questions and have them thank you for your time before hanging up. Sadly, that was what was heard on many of the calls we monitored.

1. Warm , Enthusiastic, Professional Greeting:

This sounds elementary but evidence proves it's worth repeating. Tone of voice and confirmation of dealership and your name warms up the conversation. Enthusiasm and personality go a long way in drawing customers into a conversation as opposed to a Q and A session with customer leading and you fighting to gain control. A key here on outbound calls is to **"take the curse off the call"**. Surveys have proven that customers believe the first attempt at interaction should be the same way same way customer initiated it. If they emailed, return their email, if they called return their call. (the 31 page document will walk you through effective email set up and content). If after receiving an email lead and responding via email you then want to call within a 5-10 minute period. A good way to **"take the curse off the call"** is to introduce yourself, acknowledge receipt of their "request for information" (calling it a "lead" immediately implies you will now attempt to sell them something and could cause them to become defensive) and confirm the fact that you responded to their email. Complete word tracks (I believe word tracks to be more valuable than scripts since we all have different ways to present the same information) are in the 31 page document. Regardless of whether they have seen your email response prior to you calling it confirms that you followed what they have told us is their preferred method of establishing the relationship. Your next comment should be to tell them you are simply following up to make sure they received your email including the information they requested and wanted to just be available to answer questions (this takes the curse off because most will expect you to begin "selling").

Here's the key...you must follow up at this point with this open ended question:

"Some of my customers prefer to tell me what they hope to accomplish, others prefer to have me share how we can be of great benefit to them...where would you prefer to start?"

What you will find is that by giving them a choice and allowing them to control this early conversation many will openly and comfortably engage in conversation. If they answer either end of your open ended question you have engaged them in conversation and, given the choice on how they wish to move forward, most will select one or the other. Of course there are



additional responses you may be confronted with and we have even provided the word tracks allowing you to regain control in the 31 page document.

-If they respond with “**let me tell you what I hope to accomplish**” let them begin while prompting them and managing the conversation with a series of open ended questions to entice them to elaborate. You have effectively moved into “Discovery”.

-If they respond asking “**how you might be of great benefit**” begin by telling them some of the services provided by you and the dealership that offer them exceptional benefit (your “**Value Proposition**”). Once you have engaged them in conversation you can then move on to asking “Now that I’ve given you some insight as to how we can help can I ask you to share what it is that your hoping to accomplish”. This will allow them to elaborate and now you have moved into step 2, “Discovery”.

2. **Discovery**

This might be the most important part of the conversation as your learn the buying motivations of your customer. Clarify the information they have provided you on the lead or in conversation, using open ended questions (detailed list of questions you might want to ask are in 31 page document) and ‘seek to understand’ what they hope to accomplish.

Example: “I have some basic information here customer name but so I better understand could you confirm:

- Review vehicle they have requested information on: Year, make, model
- Review possible trade information: Year, make, model, mileage, equipment, condition, color
- Provide overview of dealership trade process (if applicable) and how it benefits the customer (IMPORTANT: Great information! See word tracks in 31 page document)
- Ask additional open ended questions (list provided in document)

3. **Review and Summarize the Conversation**

Here you simply pull it all together and summarize what you have learned to make sure you and the customer are “on the same channel”.

Example: “Customer name, thank you for sharing the information with me...I have a much better idea of what you’re hoping to accomplish. Based on what we discussed the way I understand it is:



(Repeat back a summary of all you learned in the “Discovery” process)

“The main goal to accomplish is _____. In addition to _____ will it be helpful if we can _____”.

“Is that what we need to accomplish in order to move forward?”

4. Provide Broad, Solution Based Information

Here’s the tricky part...this is where salespeople instinctively want to solve the problem and tend to sell the car rather than the appointment. The likelihood of sale is much higher if the customer visits...although of course there are exceptions and customers will purchase over the phone. Your best bet is to provide broad options including the car or model you discussed to satisfy their need for information, appeal to their inherent “desire to win” yet keep the focus off of the price on the one specific vehicle (again, there will always be exceptions with customers who know exactly what they want and in these cases you must deliver or risk losing the customer by withholding information).

Example:“(Customer name), if I didn’t mention why I was so anxious to speak with you let me tell you now. In addition to specializing in working with Internet customers like yourself and delivering the simplest buying process, I have a thorough understanding of how to help you enjoy your new vehicle while keeping the most money in your pocket. You’ll get the right car and should you consider making monthly payments I’ll work with you to explore options that provide the right terms for your particular situation. I recently helped others in a similar situation and they were amazed at what we were able to do for them. They had no idea there was so much flexibility in helping them get their car at their budget. I’ll be more than happy to do the same for you

5. Transition to Set Appointment for a Dealership Visit

Of course the desired result is to schedule an appointment for a dealership visit but giving choices here allows the customer to decide and either way you move closer to commitment.

Example:

“Customer name”, to begin saving you time and money we can move forward one of two ways:



1. “You can provide me with a bit of detailed information so I can begin exploring financing options for you. The benefit to you is it will save you more time and allows us to provide you with additional information”.

OR

2. “We can set aside time for you to visit. I’ll be waiting for you with specific options or a specific car and our time together will provide all the answers so you can decide how you might like to proceed”.

“Customer name, how would you prefer to proceed”?

[To download the entire document please click here.](#)