

## Bringing Women into the Dealership

Interesting events attract women

by Gerry Myers

One service I can provide you is to answer questions you may have about the women's market. If you have the question, others may as well. To ask or comment, go to [www.Dealer-magazine.com](http://www.Dealer-magazine.com), click on "Discussion Forums" and then click on "Women."

Q. I would like to know what ideas are out there to set up specific programs for women in our dealership like monthly meetings, sales promotions, service ideas, etc.

A. This is a difficult question to answer without more information. Like any good marketing program, it should be tailored to your specific target market. For instance:

- What type of franchise do you have?
- Is it luxury or more affordable vehicles?
- What are the demographics of your current and ideal customers?
- Is your facility designed to host large or small groups?
- What would you hope to accomplish by hosting monthly meetings for women?
- Do you have women in sales, service or F&I?

Generally speaking, to get women into the dealership on a monthly basis you would need to either:

- Have a wonderful facility that you can offer free of charge to an existing group to hold their monthly meetings, or
- Have programs that are unique and that would draw the audience you want. Speakers from local radio/TV stations, women athletes in the area, the mayor, etc., are some ideas. However, you are probably going to be competing with a lot of other organizations offering similar speakers and topics.

A better idea is to tie in with other professionals seeking the same market, rather than try to bring women into your dealership on a monthly basis. Partner with them to host quarterly functions at your dealership. In this way, your database of invitees expands and you are inviting both current and potential women customers. Consider who is targeting the same market, but isn't in competition with you. For instance, attorneys, banks, financial planners, cosmetics companies, fashion retailers, jewelry stores, cooking schools or chefs, health clubs or gyms.

In addition to new car sales, the service department is a very lucrative part of the business. You should make every effort to attract women customers even before the car is delivered. Follow these tips to generate a steady stream of women in your service department:

- Introduce her to the service adviser when the car is bought or delivered
- Have the car ready when promised
- Fix it right the first time

- Make the cost and services needed clear upfront
- Provide car-care clinics for women
- Appreciate her busy schedule
- Schedule appointments in advance
- Listen to what she is saying when she brings the car in
- Look for ways to save her money and point those out
- Send out reminders
- Run special promotions
- Provide more than you promise.

Car-care clinics can create a positive venue to build customer relationships. However, avoid the pitfall of sending pink floral invitations to promote a “Powder Puff Clinic.” Many women cringe at what may be perceived as condescending fluff to hype auto maintenance. Make it professional and have a worthwhile agenda and presentation. You can also offer seasonal clinics, such as winterizing your car or tips for the hot summer months.

Other ways to attract women are to sponsor local school athletic programs or have booths at women’s conferences or organizations. The main hazard to these programs is to have them scattered all over the board and not a well-thought-out, focused effort. Before embarking on a program:

- Develop a definitive marketing/business plan, complete with what your goals are, how much you intend to spend, who you want to attract and how you will measure success
- Layout monthly plans for an entire year.
- Have a strategy that will provide reinforcement throughout the year. Doing hit-or-miss events will only frustrate you and your sales staff and convince you that the women’s market is unobtainable. That, of course, is not the case.

Last, appoint a person to work on these programs within your organization, or hire a marketing/event planner to assist you. You might want to bring in a consultant on the women’s market to lay the groundwork and develop the strategies, but not to carry out the day-to-day operations of the plan.

Women are an extremely lucrative, loyal market that is still ignored a great deal of the time. Remember, a little effort now will pay big dividends later.

### **How to Find Out What Women Want**

A Women’s Advisory Board (WAB) is another means of ensuring success with women. [www.advisorylink-dfw.com](http://www.advisorylink-dfw.com) sets up and manages Women’s Advisory Boards which will provide your organization with continual information about how to attract women and how to sell and recruit more women into your dealership.

A WAB will provide many benefits to you, including:

- Presenting a forum for brainstorming ideas for promotions that appeal to women
- Having your key management team interact with influential movers and shakers in your community

[http://www.dealer-magazine.com/articles.asp?article\\_id=655](http://www.dealer-magazine.com/articles.asp?article_id=655)

- Having well-connected women as ambassadors for your dealership(s)
- Learning first-hand their experiences at the dealership
- Providing insights into women's interests; i.e. what will drive women to your dealership.

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