

Sell to Women on Purpose, not by Chance

You must build a relationship and establish rapport

by Gerry Myers

We form many relationships in our lives. A salesperson/ customer business relationship is unlike one with a friend, child, spouse or colleague. Customers aren't interested in your personal life or sharing theirs with you. They value a salesperson who is honest, knowledgeable, professional and interested in them. They want someone they can count on both today and after the sale.

To build solid and profitable relationships with women:

- Ask useful questions about their needs, type of car they are looking for, etc.
- Listen attentively to the answers and use that information to help select the right vehicle.
- Don't make the sales process sound like a canned script.
- Realize that women connect through conversation and that their answers may not always be concise and to the point.
- Don't dominate the conversation, or give unwanted advice on what she should do, or interrupt her when she is talking.
- Make the sales process interactive. Ask good questions and use the answers to steer the process into a relationship and sale, not just a transaction.
- Don't be high pressured.
- Know your product and your competitors' product.
- Tell the truth. If you don't know the answer to a question, inform her you will find out and get back to her. Then do it.

Walk around and observe how women are treated on your sales floor and in the service bays. Are your salespeople relationship-oriented or just transaction-oriented? Women want relationships with whom they do business. Are sales to women customers being made or lost more often than to men customers? If so, why? What can you do to change that?

Make sure your sales and service departments understand gender differences, from buying patterns to communication styles. By educating your staff on these differences and how to approach them, you are helping to ensure their success with women customers.

Is there mutual respect between the salesperson and the female customer? Mutual respect is the key to a healthy, profitable relationship. Without it, neither side wins. What are you doing to help your salespeople build a loyal customer base of referrals and repeat business? If your sales staff isn't building strong customer bases, they need to learn how. Women are an ideal market to help salespeople do this because they are more loyal than male customers, tend to tell more people about their buying experiences and are more nurturing. By increasing the number of satisfied female buyers, you will be teaching your

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sales force how to move from waiting for ups to having appointments with qualified buyers.

Once the sale is made, what are your salespeople doing to ensure repeat business? A few suggestions are: Ask women for referrals of friends who are in need of a new vehicle so that you can offer assistance to them. Let her know you will be there for her even after the sale. And then prove it. Introduce her to a service advisor. Send her a personal, handwritten thank you note, including a business card or two. Invite her to a new car orientation or car care clinic if your dealership offers them. Call her or drop her a note “just to check on everything” after a couple of months. And finally, thank her for any referrals she gives you by offering her a free oil change at the dealership or something similar.

In the future I would like to devote a column to answering what you want to know. What topics/questions do you have on women customers or hiring and retaining women sales and service advisors? Why don't you drop me an e-mail or go to the DEALER magazine online forum at www.DEALER-magazine.com.

If you wish to discuss this article with other dealers, or with the author, please go to the “Discussion Forums” at www.DEALER-magazine.com and enter the “Women” forum.

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