

Why Would a Woman Want to be in Car Sales?

Hiring and retaining tips for female employees

by Gerry Myers

While a career in car sales is not for everyone, it does offer some wonderful opportunities to women if the dealership realizes the value women bring to the table, develops a plan to recruit and retain them, and creates a female/family-friendly culture.

Dealers need to realize that recruiting quality saleswomen isn't about just running an ad in the newspaper. First you need to think outside-the-box. You need to be cognizant of and recruit experienced saleswomen from other industries. Good recruiting involves watching out for women who would make good salespeople in all walks of your life – when you are in a restaurant eating or at a PTA meeting.

For best results when recruiting women make sure you:

- Select a career-oriented, goal-oriented, go getter.
- Allow them flexibility in their schedule as long as they get the work done and provide tangible results.
- Provide a culture based on integrity, trust and extraordinary customer service.

Once you have recruited women for sales positions, the next step is to provide adequate training in the automotive industry and the various products, processes and procedures you subscribe to in your dealership. The time you spend upfront will enable them to succeed and become profitable, long-term employees.

Lastly, continue to look for and hire qualified women. Don't hire a token female sales associate and think you have done the job.

Here are some stories and advice from women in automotive sales from across the country:

- Alison Squiers has sold cars at Van Bortel Ford in upstate New York for about a year. Realizing her current livelihood in high tech software sales was going downhill due to the economy, but that people were still buying cars, she decided on a career change. "A friend bought a car from Van Bortel and raved about her fabulous buying experience. I applied for a sales job and have been happy here ever since," says Squiers. She likes selling with integrity. "It's fun talking with people and seeing how surprised they are when you are straightforward with them. They see how simple the buying process really is. I like that the work is fast-paced. I believe if you can sell, you can sell cars."
- Shenetha Lee, a 20-year veteran of retail sales and management, decided to make a change. She applied for a greeter position in a new dealership and worked her way up to Internet sales and then to floor sales. "Customers, especially the men, love female salespeople. They feel women don't play games and are more honest," Lee states. Today she works at Rick Case Automotive Group in Florida as the business

development manager. She enjoys the business because she likes meeting a lot of different people from all walks of life and helping get them into a new vehicle. "Great service works," Lee emphasizes. "They don't forget you and they send their friends."

- When Teresa Blackburn, an award-winning retail business owner for a number of years, had her second child, she decided owning her own business was too demanding. She returned to college and got a degree in education. While she loved teaching at a Christian school, the money wasn't very good. Her husband, who is also in car sales, suggested she give the business a try. In her nine years in the business, Blackburn, who now has three children, is consistently named one of the top salespeople at Moore Chrysler in West Virginia, oftentimes winning the title of top salesperson.

"I'm very competitive and I figure if the others (guys) can do it, so can I," says Blackburn.

The key to her success is understanding that prospecting is a continual part of the job and does it wherever she is whether it is at a child's baseball game, school event or grocery store. "Chatting about cars and what I do outside the office is comfortable and relaxing to the people I talk with, but when they are ready to buy, they come in and ask for me," states Blackburn. "I build my clientele from people I know and from referrals and by providing good service and follow up."

Blackburn believes that career opportunities for women are good as long as they look at it as being self-employed. They can determine to some extent how hard they want to work and thus how much they want to make. Blackburn realizes she is lucky that her husband is in the business and understands the hours and demands of her job. They work together to do what needs to be done at home.

- Debra Gannon sold homes prior to working at Moore Chrysler. The general manager called her when he was looking for a home. He was impressed with her follow through and told her she could sell a lot more cars than homes.

Admittedly, she knew nothing about cars or the industry when she decided to take the challenge. He agreed to teach her everything she needed to know and did. "Selling is basically the same whether it is cars or homes," explains Gannon. "You have to find out what people want, what they can afford and any other situations that affect the purchase." Although she still sells houses, in 2002 Debra made twice as much selling cars.