

Outside-the-Box Recruiting

Great women sales associates are where you find them

by Gerry Myers

Hiring women sales consultants and service writers comes easily to Judy Schumacher, owner of Schumacher Chevrolet, Little Falls, NJ. With a small but powerful sales force of all women consultants, Schumacher Chevrolet provides a family atmosphere that keeps customers coming back.

“The women sales consultants make a very good income,” says Schumacher who has found these consultants previously employed in various occupations. Denise Visco joined her staff when Schumacher needed a receptionist. Visco worked as a receptionist at the hair salon Schumacher patronized. “I thought she had the best personality,” explained Schumacher. She soon realized Visco would make a wonderful sales consultant and offered to train her. By the eighth of the month when I talked to Schumacher, Visco had already sold nine vehicles. Visco started in sales around the first of the year. “When Judy made the offer to me, I found it intriguing,” Visco said. “I was looking for a job that would lead to a career, so the switch was easy for me. I’m making a lot more money and I really like cars.”

Rita Hernandez, a former dental assistant, bought a car from Schumacher and thought she would like the automotive business. She started part-time as a night receptionist following her full-time job. After four years in sales, she loves her career choice. As a sales consultant she makes twice as much as she did as a dental assistant, with better hours. While Hernandez acknowledges that selling cars is not an easy career, that it takes time to become knowledgeable about the products and services offered and to establish a repeat clientele, she thinks it is a grand experience that has opened up time for her to have a social life as well as a career.

As a mother of three kids, Ann Ulrich makes a great income for her family as well as being there for her kids. Starting at the dealership in 1984 as part of a high school work program, she went full time the Monday after graduation. Her kids, now 7, 6 and 3, keep her very busy, but by having flex-time she is able to work a 25-hour week until her youngest goes to school. “Then I’ll be back full time,” Ulrich said.

Darlene Olsen, head of the service department and a long-time veteran of the automotive business, worked at a dealership that closed prior to joining Schumacher Chevrolet. But of the four women highlighted, she is the only one with an automotive background.

Schumacher agrees that the car business is hard. Even with a lifetime of working in the business, when she took over from her dad who started it in 1932, she still had to prove herself to get the respect she needed to run the dealership. Although she has men in some management positions, such as F&I and general manager, the high percentage of women versus men employees makes for a great culture and work environment.

Some may think that recruiting women is easier for Schumacher because she is a woman, but that really isn’t the case. It’s easier for her because she thinks outside the box and

looks for women in various positions that she thinks would be good in the job. “Having the right personality and attitude is important. I can teach her the products and to sell cars,” she said. The fact that she devotes a lot of time to training her new saleswomen is another reason for her success. Most dealerships don’t take the time to train their salespeople properly.

While I think most women dealers would think of themselves professionally as a dealer first and a woman second, they do realize there are differences they have from male dealers that are shared by other women dealers. That is one reason I created the Women Automotive Dealers’ Exec-U-Link. This unique group, which meets for a day and a half three times a year in Dallas, is comprised of both large and small dealerships. They often have multi-locations and franchises. They represent a wide range of manufacturers and are non-competitive geographically. The Women Automotive Dealers’ Exec-U-Link connects female owners who are involved in the day-to-day operations of the business together to share advice, experiences, expertise and best practices in a venue they can find no where else. The agenda is tailored to the specific needs of the members and results in high energy discussions of best practices and business issues, including but not limited to:

- Recruiting, retaining, mentoring and promoting employees
- Succession planning
- Business Development Centers
- Growing revenue and profits
- Marketing products and services
- Where to find good employees
- Successful development and maintenance of systems and procedures
- Balancing business demands while having a personal life
- Being a leader in a male-dominated industry.

If you are a woman dealer who fits this profile and deals with some of the above issues, you should consider joining the Women Automotive Dealers’ Exec-U-Link. Only a couple of spaces are currently available. For more information call me at 817-379-0956 or check out our Web site at www.advisorylink-dfw.com.