BRIDGE THE GAP

Be a Consumer Advocate
In this era of the hyper-connected consumer, customer experience trumps all. If you don’t have your customer’s back, he or she will know it and won’t hesitate to take his or her business elsewhere. Consumers simply have too much information at their fingertips and too many options at their disposal to be given the runaround by dealers who don’t meet them at their touch-points of choice.

It is imperative that you separate yourself from the pack by being a consumer advocate. Funnel the data your customers want to all of their devices. Speed up the sales process to get your customers back on their merry way. Continue to deliver timely, relevant service information well after the ink has dried on the bill of sale.

Technology solutions that deliver both an engaging user experience for your staff and full platform integration keep all of your processes moving in unison. When the technology at your dealership sings, your customers feel it. It’s the stuff that lifelong, lucrative partnerships are made of.

The assembly line, telecommunications, and the light bulb are all innovations that disrupted traditional ways of doing things. Without Ford, Bell, and Edison, we’d all still be shoeing horses, sending smoke signals, and playing Pokémon Go by candlelight. There’s nothing wrong with tradition, but time doesn’t stand still in favor of sentiment.

The traditional car buying experience is evolving. Car buyers no longer visit several dealerships to collect brochures and tediously whittle down their choices over the course of several weekends. Car shopping now begins five to seven months before a foot is ever set on a lot. The average consumer only visits 1.4 dealerships during this process. When he or she finally does pay a visit, he or she will be on a smartphone during your pitch researching other dealerships to find the best price possible. Not only must you prepare to be that one dealership they visit, you have to create an experience that keeps them from seeking those other 0.4 dealerships. Customer experience is the key.

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CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

Millennials value customer experience. According to a recent JD Power study, millennials account for 27 percent of total new-car sales, so their opinion matters. Millennial car research takes place over several sources — their desktop at work, their smartphone on the go, their tablet at home — that lead to as many as 26 touch-points.

Social media and online reviews are two of the most important of these touch-points. One out of four car buyers use social media to discuss or communicate a recent purchase experience. If you aren’t prioritizing your dealership’s customer satisfaction index (CSI), you are missing the boat. The voices of your previous customers ring loud in shaping millennials’ opinion of your brand.

The technology exists to integrate e-surveys into your CSI follow-up processes for service, sold, and unsold customers. Survey scores can drive different processes to invite happy customers to post online reviews. Unhappy customers are taken through a different path designed to resolve concerns or complaints. Reporting helps you pinpoint successes and areas of opportunity within your dealership.

KEEP IT MOVING

Edmunds.com estimates that the average car sale takes about four hours. It absolutely behooves you to speed up this process to create a pleasurable car buying experience rather than the torture test most consumers view it as.

To this end, you must optimize every process possible. Do you have the technology to create a first pencil during a test drive? Not only does this accelerate the sales process, but it capitalizes on your prospect’s excitement fresh off his or her test drive. Mobile desking technology enables your salespeople to stick by your customer’s side and get him or her back to the desk finalizing numbers. Once a deal is agreed upon, your technology should be able to push it to your DMS so it can be handed off to F&I seamlessly.
THE REVOLUTION WILL BE MOBILIZED

Remember those 26 customer research touch-points? A recent Google case study tracked 900-plus digital interactions for one auto purchase alone. Seventy-one percent of those digital interactions occurred over mobile. If you don’t think people shop for cars via mobile, you’re dead wrong.

In addition to the aforementioned mobile desking technology, mobile apps can keep you connected to your customer when your message will be most potent. For instance, after vehicle delivery, you can text a link to schedule a first service appointment and include a coupon code as incentive. You can equip your sales team with mobile apps so they can send follow-up emails directly from their smartphones. Mobile technology can notify your sales staff when a customer is on the service drive, allowing them to stop by and add a personal interaction and strengthen their relationship. Your staff will become more efficient by the very nature of mobile technology, opening communication anytime, from anywhere.

THE BOTTOM LINE

All information — brochures, pricing, options, etc. — is available online and can be accessed at the convenience of today’s consumer. Advanced technologies can entice consumers to choose your dealership and cultivate positive customer experience to keep them there. It is more important than ever to embrace the role of consumer advocate because, all things being equal, a bad experience will motivate prospects to simply move on to the next dealership.

The next-gen technology exists to maximize personal connection, amplify CSI, and attract consumers to your brand. Dealerships that seize the opportunity this evolving market presents will find themselves head and shoulders above the competition once the dust settles.

To learn more about the opportunities this market presents or to schedule a demo of DealerSocket’s next-generation technology platform, call one of our friendly experts at 877.226.8179 or visit dealersocket.com.