

What Color is the “Up Bus?”

By Dwayne Wiggins



It is the beginning of a sales training workshop, the class is filled with new recruits, “90-day wonders”, multiple year veterans, and very few top producers. The instructor asks the question, “What can the dealership do to sell more cars?” The number one answer to this question is, “Spend more on advertising.” Later in

the class, the instructor asks the same salespeople to list their responsibilities. Everyone in attendance writes down “prospecting” as one of their main responsibilities. Are they doing it? Sadly, prospecting is something that we TALK ABOUT being extremely important to success but something we rarely do anything about. Is the sales team prospecting or waiting for the “Up Bus?” In far too many dealerships, the answer is waiting. Who or what enables a salesperson to choose not to prospect? It comes down to the culture of the dealership and accountability. A dealership’s culture is a reflection of the management team’s sales philosophy and style. Most managers receive promotions because they were successful salespeople. However, if they have had that success within the last five years, something to consider is the fact that floor traffic as well as willing lenders were plentiful (with the exception of last year). Therefore, current managers may not have needed to generate their own traffic. This previous experience could lead to an indifferent attitude towards prospecting.

Managers need to recognize the importance of prospecting and design an effective game plan. This plan should contain an effective way to find new customers but also to market to the existing customer base. We spend thousands of dollars chasing the new customer but invest little time and money on current customers. One

idea for prospecting current customers is to have every salesperson visit the service department and choose a car that he/she would like to have on the used car lot. He/she can then find the appropriate service advisor and obtain the customer information. Next, have the salesperson contact the customer and offer him/her a complimentary equity analysis. If the customer shows any interest, this is a “win-win” for the dealership. You might pick up a few extra deals, but if not, this may be a good source for quality used vehicles for the lot.

Once the game plan is decided upon, the next step is to train the sales staff. Each member needs to know exactly what is expected of him/her. If you are going to change the “Waiting for the Up Bus” culture, it must be done effectively. Keep in mind that all sales managers are not good trainers. You may need to seek out the assistance of automotive professionals to help with training. It is critical that accountability be a major component of the process. Any process implemented in a store without accountability is nothing more than a suggestion. If it is a suggestion, then it gives salespeople a choice. Quite frankly, it is not their choice to make. The time of waiting for success to walk through the door has passed us by. Now is the time to make it happen.

Most stores invest thousands of dollars per month on a variety of CRM systems that are specifically designed to assist with this task. Is your system being utilized to its fullest? Is it a knowing problem or a doing problem? As leaders in the store, it is your job to lay out a path to success for our staff. Once the guidelines are established, you must also inspect what you expect.

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