

Cutting Edge Strategies Used by Leading Internet Dealers

In my training and consulting business I am fortunate to learn cutting edge strategies from some of the best Internet dealers in the country. In addition, companies that provide products and services to dealerships to enhance Internet and BDC department productivity are consistently showing me cool and effective tools and technologies. For this article I am going to review some of the processes I have seen in action that can really assist your results as well as some of the newest tools and technologies to enhance your sales and profit results.

Process Strategies and Productivity Tools

Call until you Connect

Without question the most effective strategy in your quest to set an appointment with your prospects is to “call until you connect”. As simple as it sounds this strategy is the best method of all the process strategies in connecting with your prospects.

Predictive dialers

Some dealerships even employ a tool called a predictive dialer to increase the productivity in their Business Development Centers or Internet call centers. Predictive dialers utilize more telephone lines per call center staff and are used to initiate phone calls while call specialists are talking to prospects. A complex mathematical formula called "algorithms" is used to "predict" the average time it takes to get a live answer and the average length of typical phone conversations. This technology allows call specialists to go right from good-bye to hello. Predictive dialers increase the number of calls that your staff can make and the number of times you connect with a live prospect. It is common for productivity to double or triple when you switch to a predictive dialer.

Voicemail and Answering Machine Search Technologies

This unique technology allows dealerships to pre-record prospect specific messages and then enables you to deliver this “personal” phone call to 10’s of thousands of your customers instantaneously. The companies that offer this service employ Internet and advance Telephony technologies to save the costs and frustrations that can occur in making the same number of calls in person. I like this idea because the message can be more consistent and be really convincing to the prospects that are touched by the dealership.

Video Emails

A great new method to wow your showroom and Internet prospects is to communicate using video emails. This technology allows your dealership to create a video using an inexpensive web camera attached to a computer. The best utilization is to make the message very personal just like you would a personal typed email. A dealer friend of mine sends approximately 2000 video emails each month with an opening rate by their recipients of 38%. The best part is that the dealership is sent an email when the message is viewed so you can follow up by email or phone nearly immediately with an additional message. This real time communication method really differentiates a dealership from their competition.

Two Week Press

The Two Week Press process that we developed through trial and error over the last couple of years is a proven strategy that utilizes a combination of communication techniques, email and telephone messages to motivate an Internet customer to respond. This intensive process technique works and should you decide you would like to implement it you can find the outline in the November issue of this magazine.

eNewsletters

A sales pitch is not always appreciated by your prospects and customers which is why an electronic newsletter is an effective tool to communicate long-term. I have seen this tool used by a number of leading Internet dealers to build their brand in a casual and entertaining format. The eNewsletter that works best is the kind that allows you to create links to sales and service specials and then allows customers to submit requests for more information just like they submit leads on your website. In addition, some eNewsletters

provide reporting tools that capture the email addresses of the readers and tracks their clicks on the newsletter which makes it easy to follow up if they showed interest in a specific vehicle or special.

Postcards and Handwritten Notes

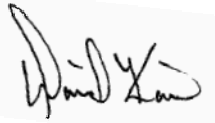
Some leading Internet dealers are utilizing some old fashioned communication approaches to connect with their customers – pen and paper. When you open your mailbox you typically read items with actual handwriting while tossing items that are computer generated or computer labeled. When I was a floor salesperson I got the best response from handwritten cards that took just a couple of minutes to compose and mail. With desktop printing capabilities some dealerships are sending out notes and postcards with pictures of the vehicle the customer requested along with a picture of themselves. Not really cutting edge but it has a very big impact for very little effort.

Two Way Pagers

Some dealerships feel that a response within 24 hours is actually a good job and if your competition is asleep at the wheel perhaps that meets your prospects expectations. However, some leading dealers use a wireless device that notifies them when a lead is submitted and they respond immediately. An eCommerce director for a leading auto group alerted me that their close rate increased by 20% if they were able to respond within 15 minutes. I would rather be inconvenienced by receiving a lead at a ball game and responding than to find out I lost a sale to my competitor because I was too slow to respond.

There are many more strategies at work that can assist you in reaching your goals and I will review them from time to time so you can stay on the cutting edge. Keep experimenting and trying new things. You'll get a few cuts but being on the edge tends to deliver the best results.

Best to you!



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