



“Tips for Hiring the Right Internet Sales Manager”

Your customers will use the Internet while shopping for their next vehicle at record levels in 2005. Your dealership needs to be prepared to greet your Internet customers with the same level of consideration you give a person who walks into your dealership. As a result, it is time to get serious in hiring the right person to manage your fastest growing department. The person you select as your Internet Sales Manager (ISM) will either bring customers to your dealership or drive customers away depending on how well they understand their role.

A few minutes spent determining what you expect from your Internet Department and what you expect from your ISM can make all the difference and provide clear directions on how to get the best return on your Internet investment.

What Results Do You Expect from Your Internet Department?

Answering the following questions upfront will allow you to select the right candidate with confidence:

1. What are your current results?
 - If you don't already know it is important for you to find out before you start recruiting. A good candidate will likely want to know this right off the bat to see if they are being offered a growth opportunity. If you are a franchised dealer your manufacturer should be able to provide this information and if you have a relationship with a lead provider they also provide monthly reports. Gather the information, determine your current status and be up front with your candidates about the challenge or opportunity ahead of them.
2. What is your dealership's Internet marketing plan and expected return on investment?
 - Identify your Internet target market (all buyers, used vehicle buyers, import buyers, specific zip codes, etc.).
 - Identify your lead sources: website, providers, aggregators, database marketing.
 - Determine your budget for this effectively tapping this market. Keep in mind you are paying for a website, a lead management tool, any lead providers, vehicle photos, etc.
 - What kind of return on investment is necessary to make the effort worthwhile?
3. What are your performance expectations for the Internet department?
 - What kind of operational standards do you require?
 - How many vehicles do you expect them to sell?
 - What kind of gross profit do you expect?
 - Be specific and communicate your expectations to your ISM.
4. What kind of Department Structure would work best at your dealership?
 - Internet department reporting to GM?
 - Internet salesperson reporting to the GM or Sales Managers?
 - Internet sales team embedded in a Business Development Center?
 - Other?

Selecting the Right Candidate



Creating a job description for the Internet manager is the best way to communicate your expectations for the department as well as the qualifications necessary to do a good job. Consider the following while writing the job description and in selecting your candidate.

1. Candidates **must be able to sell** vehicles if your process requires them to work the customer from email to delivery.
 - Too often dealerships delegate the Internet management role to mediocre salespeople that are just good guys who have not had much sales success on the floor. If they can't sell cars on the floor they likely won't fare any better online. The best results I've seen come from dealerships putting quality salespersons into this role and training them on the computer and the administrative functions. Keep in mind this role is to sell cars and trucks.
2. Candidates must be organized and able to handle multiple tasks.
 - The Internet role includes managing leads, updating the inventory on the website, managing lead providers/aggregators, measuring results and many other activities. Most dealerships require the ISM do all these activities so it is important that the candidate realize this going in.
3. Candidates must be willing to put in the time necessary to make the department successful.
 - The Internet is 24/7. Most customers shop online after traditional sales hours so responding to leads in the evening and on weekends should be part of your expectations. If a candidate is not willing to communicate with customers after normal business hours it is best to find this out beforehand.

Compensation

How you choose to pay the Internet Sales Manager depends on what you ultimately create as their job description. As with all pay plans, where you focus the pay is where your results will come from. Consider the following when determining your compensation plan:

1. What is the structure of the department? Internet Salesperson, Internet Department, BDC, etc.?
2. If your structure is an Internet Salesperson will the position be full-time or will the ISM take floor ups?
3. How much time will be spent working with administrative activities (website updates, photos, lead provider interaction, etc)?
4. Do you want to focus on volume or gross?

A variety of plans are in use by dealerships today and selecting the one that works for you should be well thought out.

Summary

Selling online is a difficult task considering your customer must be motivated to talk to you on the phone and then motivated to visit the dealership. The time spent creating your dealership Internet Department structure, expectations and goals will be a valuable foundation to your Internet sales success. From this foundation, a well thought out job description and compensation plan for the Internet Sales Manager will



give you the confidence you need to choose the best possible candidate for the job. With the right candidate in place you can expect to increase your sales and profits. Aim high and the results will follow!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Kain", is displayed on a light gray rectangular background.

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