



BY CHRIS SCHULTHIES

Sales people with five or more years of experience should be selling 12 or more vehicles per month. If not, let's examine why and how you can change it for the better.

The primary reason that experienced salespeople under produce is that we permit it. Yes, it's often just that simple. Over the past 10 to 20 years, many dealer principals and

Are you getting the most out of your experienced salespeople?

sales managers have continually lowered their expectations of a salesperson's sales volume and gross profit production.

From the moment a salesperson starts on the showroom floor, they are brainwashed by other salespeople (and even managers) that sales performance is broken down into the following categories: poor sales performance equals fewer than six vehicles per month; average sales performance equals six to eight vehicles; good sales performance equals eight to 10 vehicles; and excellent equals 12 or more.

We often accept poor to mediocre sales results because good salespeople are too hard to find and keep.

Should we not be holding our sales

staff to a much higher standard?

Should we not revisit our own definitions of poor, average, good and excellent sales performance in our own dealerships and provide the training to redefine these words?

We often assume that because a salesperson has 10 years of experience they are well trained. This may not be the case.

If they were hired away from another dealership, and worked at several before that, they may not have had any formal training. A salesperson may have 10 years of experience on paper, but if they've never had any formal training they may actually only have "20 six months of experience."

In other words, they may not have any more skills and knowledge than a salesperson with only six months on the floor.

Moreover, if they were trained elsewhere, their teachings may not reflect the culture, style and approach that is suitable for their current dealership.

Hence when a dealership has a floor filled with salespeople who were trained elsewhere, the dealership suffers from "mongrel training"—numerous different and sometimes very outdated approaches to selling that create confusion and chaos for management.

Whether experienced salespeople have been trained elsewhere or not, it's still critical to continue their formal training. Learning does not stop and the customer continues to evolve.

The key to training experienced salespeople is to provide programs for their needs, ones that separate them from newer salespeople. Experienced salespeople resist training when they are mixed in with the rookies. They feel slighted and argue that the curriculum is beneath them.

Experienced salespeople also under perform if management doesn't track and hold them accountable for their results.

Again, because they are experienced, we assume that they have a good closing ratio. Sales managers are often uncomfortable in monitoring their presentation, demonstration and closing ratios for fear of offending and causing confrontation. However, it is often the most experienced salespeople who grab the most floor traffic and yield the poorest closing ratios.

Experienced salespeople need to be held accountable for their results in a positive manner just as the less experienced ones are. This will yield better presentation, demonstration, closing ratio, gross profit and volume if they know that management

tracks and rewards all aspects of performance on the showroom floor.

When we ask dealership managers if they have a well-defined, documented and trained sales procedure, most will say yes. Yet when we ask both sales managers and salespeople to outline each step of their sales procedure, many struggle.

Because of the lack of a structured and enforced sales procedure, experienced salespeople will often be guilty of not doing the "complete job" and cutting corners in the sales process.

It's often the experienced salespeople who simply stop doing enthusiastic, value-building product presentations and stop accompanying their customers on demonstration drives.

The simple solution here is for the management team and sales staff to agree upon and develop a sales procedure that fits the culture of their dealership, document it, implement it, and most importantly stick to it!

Fearing resistance from their few strong producers, dealers and sales managers often struggle with implementation.

There's no need for concern: high producing salespeople already do the "complete job" and should be allowed some leeway because they produce consistently.

There is often no structured renewal process. Experienced salespeople should be expected to draw upon their existing client base to ensure that they sell 12 or more vehicles consistently every month as well as developing new-found business for the dealership.

Is that really a lot to ask?

Unfortunately, we are satisfied with seven or eight, comprised of three from their existing client base and five from showroom "ups."

We must set a much higher standard. We must provide formal training designed for their level of experience, training that deals with some of their hidden fears such as more savvy customers.

We must track and measure experienced salespeople's performance in terms of their presentation, demonstration and closing ratios and institute accountability and coaching.

And we must develop and monitor an effective renewal procedure that ensures that sales staff recaptures their current customers.

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