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10 Pitfalls that Successful Car Salespeople Avoid



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FORGET TO ASK QUALIFYING QUESTIONS

One of the biggest mistakes a car salesperson can commit is not asking qualifying questions.

Qualifying questions are a set of simple questions you ask the customer to determine whether or not he can afford the vehicle in the first place. Many salespeople, in their haste to make the sale, forget to begin with this crucial step. Others, in an effort to avoid appearing hawkish, ignore this step entirely. Both approaches are equally disastrous.


You absolutely must ask the qualifying questions. Your goal is not simply to determine the customer's financial capability. You also need to know the kind of vehicle the customer is looking for or the features the customer wants in a vehicle. When you don't start with this step, you waste valuable time—and time is money.

2

BEGIN THE SALES PITCH RIGHT AWAY

Remember the introductory sales speech you likely memorized in front of the mirror recently? Delete it from your memory; you don't need it. Your customers definitely don't need it. No one wants to be showered with information before they've even entered the dealership.

The meet and greet phase is your first real chance to make an impression on the customer. Don't mess it up by appearing to be a sleazy, clingy salesperson. It is crucial to give the customer some time to gather his thoughts and become accustomed to his environment. There will be time for the sales pitch later.



3

OFFER TOO MUCH OR TOO LITTLE INFORMATION

When you demonstrate the vehicle, your goal is to educate the customer about some of the vehicle's features. There's a limit, however, to how much the customers like to know, and it's your job to maintain the critical balance between too much and too little information.

The customer's goal is not to earn a degree. You don't need to overburden him with excessive technical details. Save your intricate knowledge of the vehicle for the enthusiasts who may genuinely be interested in those details about the vehicle. If someone asks about a particular detail, you can certainly discuss the technical aspects. Otherwise, focus on keeping the demonstration short and relevant.

On the other hand, customers don't appreciate being given so little information that they cannot make up their minds. Some car salespeople move around the vehicle stating the obvious. If the customers already know everything you're about to tell them, what exactly is the point of the demonstration?

4

BEGIN THE SALES PITCH RIGHT AWAY

No one appreciates a salesperson who never shuts up.

It is not your obligation to fill silences by constantly droning on about offers, services and features of the vehicle. It is a common misconception in sales that selling is a one-way communication where a salesperson talks and the customer listens. Let me assure you, that's not true.

Instead, selling is a two-way conversation. Your job is not simply to blabber on and on but also to listen to the customer's questions and concerns and ask him questions as well. Salespeople often forget or dismiss the value of silence. It's important to offer the customer the crucial commodity of silence so that he can make the decision in peace.





5

Postpone price discussion until after the presentation

Perfectly presenting a vehicle is hard work, and no one knows that better than a salesperson. After all, you wouldn't enjoy spending your precious time demonstrating every feature of a vehicle, asking and answering questions, overcoming objections and satisfying all of the customer's

concerns only to find out that the vehicle was way out of the customer's budget to begin with, would you?

To avoid this, always discuss the price of the vehicle before the demonstration, during the meet and greet phase. Remember, that is the phase during which you get to know everything you need to know about the customer, and one of the

most important of those things is his price range. Never begin the demonstration before you are absolutely sure that the customer can afford the vehicle.



6

IGNORE INFLUENCERS

If a customer arrives at the dealership alone, you can ignore this step entirely, but that does not usually happen. Customers typically come in pairs or groups. Within that group, one of the customers is the decision maker (the one who carries the cash). The others are the influencers, and they are there to support or object to the decision maker's decision.


Many salespersons commit the unforgivable mistake of selling only to the decision maker and ignoring the influencers. Never do that. The influencers can be your most valuable resource and can prove to be instrumental in convincing the decision maker where you may have fallen short.

7

IGNORE WHAT THE CUSTOMER WANTS

If you're going to ignore the customer's wishes, what is the point of trying to sell to him? Customers want to buy what they want to buy, not what you want to sell them. Their wants are your most important consideration—it's all that matters.

Nevermind your sales bonuses on particular vehicles or special discount offers or promotions. Listen carefully to what the customer has to say. If any of the products that you're asked to push matches the customer's wishes, by all means suggest them. But don't ram your preferred products down his throat. He may agree to buy what you want to sell him (against his better judgment), but he won't ever come back.



8

BE TOO AGGRESSIVE

This is another of the “sales strategies” others claim produces results. People may tell you that selling 100 cars in a month is difficult and that, to achieve that, you must appear hungry and show that hunger to the customers. Actually, you don't need to do anything of the sort.

In fact, you need to avoid such behavior altogether. Avoid hounding the customers and selling too aggressively. Aggressiveness can work wonders in sports, but in sales you need to follow a rational approach. You need to be calm at all times despite how desperately you want to sell the vehicle. Let the customer know how important his is, but don't bully him into buying a product. This is one of the methods that can artificially boost sales numbers, but ultimately it destroys your reputation and scares away potential repeat clients.

9

IGNORE THE FOLLOW-UP

Your customers are your most valuable resource. Not only do they pay your salary and commissions through purchasing vehicles, they are also the foundation upon which your organization stands. Your dealership runs on the repeat business opportunities they provide. Even more significant than that is their potential to bring other customers to your dealership.

One of the steps through which you ensure that each customer returns to buy from you again and again, as well as that each customer brings other customers along, is the follow-up. The follow-up is crucial for a variety of reasons. A good follow-up leads to improved customer satisfaction ratings. It helps in maintaining and growing a steady repeat client base. It also rakes in referrals.

Each customer has the potential to bring in ten more customers, and those ten customers can bring in even more. Your goal is to enable that chain to continue and prevent it from breaking at any point along the way. If you ignore the follow-up, you not only lose the customer, you lose those ten potential future customers they might refer as well.



FORGET TO SEEK NEW CLIENTS

Once you are comfortably selling thirty cars per month, customers continue to walk in and you have managed to consistently sustain your sales numbers—maybe even years—is it the time to settle down comfortably and rake in the cash? Not quite. Your search for newer clients is a never-ending one. Remember that thirty cars per month is not your be-all-end-all. It was merely your initial goal. You can continue to grow well beyond that, but that is only possible through seeking out newer clients.

Another reason to continue to expand your customer base is to provide much-needed security to your business. In the case of an economic crisis, you must have enough customers to keep you going through the tough spots. Even if you're the most successful dealership in town, it can all quickly crumble like a house of cards. To prevent that, continue to seek new clients regularly.

