

DEALER POINT

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Using Technology To Sell Technology

By Steve Schlough

Some dealers love it, some won't use it, but video players, computers and interactive video systems in dealerships are here to stay. The differences of opinion often stem from a dealer's attitude, understanding and application of electronic media. However, using technology effectively to train employees and sell customers can make a difference in your future.

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It is going to take more knowledge to sell high tech automobiles in the 1990s. Anti-lock brakes, adjustable suspension, four-wheel steering and turbocharge systems are more complex options than two tone paint, dual mirrors and white wall tires. Video can bring excitement to a sales presentation of high performance or four wheel drive features that isn't possible in a normal test drive. A video can also better show the utilitarian side of a vehicle such as loading luggage or hauling a four by eight sheet of plywood.

Many dealers don't take the time to incorporate video into the dealership properly. Giving your salespeople a stack of video tapes is not a good training program. All video programs should be reviewed by management. Make notes and tell the employees what you feel is important in the tape.



Previewing the information can eliminate complaints that the video is unrealistic or doesn't represent the dealership's policies. You can point out the differences in opinion and allow the viewer to concentrate on what you feel will benefit the dealership and the salesperson.

Salespeople should also know where to find specific product information segments on the video so customers don't have to endure 15 minutes of video to see the one minute segment that interests them.

The benefits of electronic media for the small dealer may be greater than the large dealer. The small dealer may not have the

staff to cover the floor so others can attend training schools. He or she may not have the number of employees to implement a formal in-house training program. Videos can solve these problems. And satellite television, such as ASTN, can bring up to date information to the dealership on a daily basis. If the manufacturers continue the trend toward niche marketing, it will be harder for the smaller dealer to stock all the newest models. Video equipment can help in making sure the sale is at your dealership instead of your competitor who happens to have the car in stock.

The tools of the salesperson must progress also. The salesperson of the past got out a pad and a pencil to show the

customer the price figured. The pads and pencils are now calculators, and today computer software allows the salesperson and the customer to custom "build" a car together, price it, and finance it.

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Combine the computer and video and you have an extremely powerful sales tool. Interactive video allows the customer to become involved and control the video. People gravitate to the new car displays that allow them to become involved with interactive video. The system may be used as a tool by the salesperson to close the sale. Or it can be used as a stand alone unit to hold a customer's interest when a salesperson is unavailable. It can provide data quickly and efficiently for customers who are seeking specific information and speed up an undecided person on the type of vehicle they want.

Electronic media in the service waiting area is another place to stimulate sales. Present customers are future customers. They can influence people in the market for a new car. Your customer's talk to each other about their cars and past customers do influence present customers.

There is a growing percentage of people that like to conduct business with interactive video kiosks, or stand-alone terminals you might see at a shopping mall display. It is anticipated that this

trend will increase as the new computer generation enters the marketplace. The technology needed to complete an automobile sales transaction without a salesperson is already in place.

But let's be practical. Not every customer that walks through the door should be lead to a video player or a computer but the proper use of these tools can add up profits. If you own a video player, why not use it? The cost of not using it may be much greater. Video technology can add credibility and consistency to a presentation, stimulate a buyers desire to buy, and give accurate answers about new automotive developments. To make it work in a dealership environment, one has to remember that video technology is more complex than bringing a video tape home at night, sticking it in the VCR, and watching it until it's over. The best use of video technology comes from dealers who understand the full capabilities of the hardware and use it effectively.

Editors Note: Steve Schlough is a media specialist at the University of Wisconsin-Stout.