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STRATEGIES FOR HELPING YOUR SALESPEOPLE WORK AS A TEAM

As seen in AutoSuccess

If you ever want to motivate someone, give them someone to compete with and a reward to work toward. Think about it: which would motivate you more: “Go sell 10 cars” or “Sell more cars than everyone else and get a spiff”?

Competition gets results, because humans are wired to prevail over their competitors. When we win a competition, our brains reward us with a rush of the feel-good chemical dopamine.

By nature, selling cars is competitive — incentives or not. That environment is helpful for improving motivation. However, it's important to make sure that a little bit of friendly competition doesn't become an “every man for himself” mentality or even sabotage.

Remind your salespeople that they're all representatives of the dealership. Helping each other win helps the business, which in turn helps salespeople in the long run.

To unify your sales team, start with the guidelines below. These tips aren't new, but sometimes it helps to go back to the basics.

Give New Employees a Leg Up

When new employees start, don't make the mistake of assuming they'll sell in a way that's consistent with your dealership's mission. Even if they have years of automotive retail experience, it's important to set expectations to ensure they're doing things the way you want them done.

Make sure you give each new hire a rundown of how your dealership performs each step of the sale, including setting an appointment, helping a prospect choose a vehicle, coordinating the test drive, getting the appropriate information for the deal write-up, asking for a purchase commitment and turning the customer over to F&I.

You could also have employees shadow people in different departments. This helps them understand the inner workings of the dealership and eliminates misunderstandings that may arise between departments.

If you're working with a salesperson with no prior sales experience, assign them a mentor to help them develop skills like:

- Active listening to figure out what the customer wants
- Asking the right types of questions
- Responding to phone calls, texts and emails promptly
- Discerning when and how often to follow up with prospects

By following a good onboarding process for each new member of your sales team, you can ensure they work well as part of the group and start producing results as soon as possible.

Develop Good Processes

Have you ever been the victim of a bad process? It leads to frustration and miscommunication — not good ingredients for creating camaraderie. Trying to build a good team when you have bad processes is like trying to paddle a kayak in a hurricane.

One of the major process issues I see in dealerships is how they manage keys, especially across departments. These are a few of the problems I've encountered:

- The car is being washed or refueled when the salesperson needs it for a test drive.
- A set of car keys was tossed in a desk drawer instead of being returned to the pegboard, preventing another salesperson from demoing the vehicle.
- Salespeople remove multiple sets of keys and hoard them.
- The key to a vehicle that's supposed to be done with make-ready is nowhere to be found.
- The key inventory doesn't match the inventory in the dealership management system (DMS).

Simply implementing helpful tools — such as a system to automatically track key activity and sync with your DMS — and developing good processes can help salespeople function well as a team.

Continually check to see if employees are actually using the tools and processes you have

in place to make your dealership efficient. That includes your DMS, customer relationship management system, key control solution, call tracking software and more.

Lead by Example

Good leaders speak with their actions more than their words. If you want your team to have certain characteristics (e.g., enthusiasm, integrity), you better be sure you emulate those qualities yourself.

I'm a strong believer in servant leadership. The concept was coined by Robert K. Greenleaf, a management consultant, in an essay he wrote in the 1970s. This method of leading places the focus on helping employees reach their full potential. You serve them rather than having them serve you.

Servant leadership builds strong relationships, encourages loyalty and yields exceptional performance. According to Greenleaf, you're a servant leader when you demonstrate the following characteristics:

- **Listening**
- **Empathy**
- **Healing Relationships**
- **Awareness**
- **Persuasion**
- **Conceptualization**
- **Foresight**
- **Stewardship**
- **Commitment to People's Growth**
- **Building Community**

Servant leadership doesn't mean being a pushover. It means you set clear standards and hold your staff accountable for meeting those standards.

Along the way, you provide coaching and training to help your salespeople work together to meet their goals individually and as a team.

To get results from your salespeople, there's nothing wrong with friendly competition to jump-start motivation. Just be sure that the team takes priority, because in a toxic environment, nobody wins. ○

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