

SALES STRATEGIES

Winning Over Women

She may be your best customer yet.

Michael Depeazer, Finance Manager at Winnipeg Honda, enjoys selling F&I products to women because they listen to him. “When someone listens, they’re more likely to make a purchase,” he says. “They take it more seriously.”

Depeazer makes a point of watching his body language and focuses on making eye contact when he’s selling to women. “Women communicate in other ways than just words,” he observes.

And that’s one of the keys to selling F&I to women. According to Jody DeVere, CEO of AskPatty.com Inc., women pick up on non-verbal clues, like body language and eye contact. DeVere is a U.S.-based automotive consultant and trainer, who specializes in the female market.

“Some men are just uncomfortable making eye contact with other people,” says DeVere. “They need training to develop body language skills.” She also notes that most dealerships are testosterone laden environments, and not always comfortable for women.

Cultural lag

Jessie Thatcher, a retired F&I consultant who has worked with AskPatty.com, agrees that women tend to be listeners. “They absorb information,” she says. “Women think about what you’re saying, take it in and make their decisions. Whereas men will often come in to a dealership with their decisions already made.”

She thinks the key to dealing with women is to treat them honestly, respectfully and answer all their questions. “Unfortunately, some men in the car business will ignore the woman if there’s a couple, and talk to the man,” Thatcher says. “They don’t realize that often, the woman is the one making the decision. You’d better be including her in any discussion.”

Women are making their own decisions about buying cars and car-related products, and DeVere doesn’t think dealerships are always aware of the rapidly changing influence and purchase power of women.

“They don’t understand that women are making the decisions, even if they’re married,” she says. “In 30 percent of homes, both in the U.S. and Canada, women are making

more money than men. There’s a lag in the culture, understanding who is making the purchasing decision.”

Key F&I products

There are certain F&I products that resonate with women, depending on the stage of their life and career. Thatcher found that if women are married with a family, and the husband’s name is going on the car, they’re more likely to be interested in life insurance. “They want to know what to do if something happens to their husband,” she says.

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Jessie Thatcher, Retired F&I Consultant

On the other hand, if a woman is single and self-supporting, they’ll be more interested in extended warranties or service contracts. “They’re concerned in how they’re going to maintain the vehicle, especially if it’s their first car,” Thatcher notes.

However, Sarah Budd, F&I manager at Budds Kia in Oakville, finds that women gravitate towards the appearance products as opposed to the mechanical items. “Women are inclined towards products that are dent and ding repair,” she says. “They’re more interested in tangible products, as opposed to rustproofing and extended service contracts.”

Budd notes that women ask more questions than men. “Women are well informed, they’ve done their research,” she says. “I get very specific, focused questions about products. Some women even bring checklists and clipboards!”

Her advice is to be open and give as much information as possible. “It’s easier to sell something to a woman when they understand the benefit that the product is going to give them, and why yours is better,” Budd says. “Women are really informed consumers, they know what options are out there – the more information you can offer, the better.”

And like Depeazer, Budd says it’s an advantage to deal with someone

who knows what they want. “It’s something we notice with car sales in general, women who come in to buy a car have been online, they’ve researched the models and narrowed it down to three or four cars, and know exactly what they’re looking for,” she says. “I don’t think that hurts us, it’s better to deal with an informed consumer.”

Gradual shift

Thatcher believes that despite being traditionally a man’s world, the dealership is slowly evolving. “When you have more women on your sales force, in the finance office and the executive office, you tend to get more female business, because female customers are more comfortable,” she

notes. “Their approach tends to be more nurturing.”

DeVere believes the dealerships are trying very hard to hire more women and bring them up through the ranks. The difficulty is that women aren’t applying for the jobs because the environment isn’t always accommodating for women. “It’s difficult for women to stay long hours, especially if they have families,” says DeVere. “Child care issues become a big challenge.”

“Promoting to women is great, but dealerships need to develop HR policies around flexible schedules and benefits to help with child care,” she continues. “Right now, it takes a special kind of woman to work at a dealership, and that shouldn’t be the case.”

Scotiabank Celebrates Grand Opening of New Atlantic Facilities

Scotiabank’s Atlantic Dealer Finance Centre has a new home: 5251 Duke Street, Suite 900 in Halifax, NS. Having outgrown their old facilities, Scotiabank moved the Centre to a brand new 7,000 sq ft space.

“We outgrew our previous location,” says Stephen Tynski, Director and Centre Manager, Scotiabank’s Atlantic Dealer Finance Centre. “It served us well since 1994, but our staff has more than doubled to over 50 employees and we simply needed to find a location where we could continue to grow.”

The move to a new location also allowed Scotiabank an opportunity to upgrade systems, work stations and technologies. “As an example,” Tynski says, “when someone phones in now, we know that we will have that phone call answered within 10 seconds, and that the caller will be immediately directed to the person they’re looking for.”

More than 120 guests were in attendance for the official ribbon cutting ceremony, which took place earlier this year. “We invited dealers, manufacturer partners, suppliers to the industry, and our bank partners,” Tynski says. “We had a great turnout.” JK



(L-R) Darrell Meery, Director Sales, Atlantic Dealer Finance Centre (ADFC); Tom Miller, Operations Manager, ADFC; Islay McGlynn, Senior Vice President, Atlantic Region; Stephen Tynski, Director & Centre Manager, ADFC; Suzannah Spence, Director Credit, ADFC; Ron Porter, Senior Vice President, Automotive Finance; Crystal Garnett, Manager Retail Lending, ADFC