

Dispelling common sales myths

The new customer and the new way of shopping have created opportunities, not roadblocks

Traffic is down.

"Nonsense!" counters sales trainer Duane Marino. "There's more traffic than ever if you add up all your website activity (tire-clicking, he calls it) walk-ins and emails. There's more activity than ever before."

Customers are harder to close than they used to be.

"Nonsense!" he says. "They are easier to close because they don't do as much physical shopping. They think they can go online and get all the information."

"They may hit you from other angles, but they are easier to close. Why? Because they don't do as much physical shopping. They are ready, willing, able – and lazy – because of the Internet."

Marino calls the Internet the biggest boon to the auto retail industry in over 30 years.

"There is so much choice online that today, the hardest part of the sale is over when they walk on your lot."

By way of proof, he points to two seemingly contradictory sales trends: retail sales are better than ever, yet walk-



in traffic is the lowest it has ever been.

And finally, he goes after another notion: loyalty is a thing of the past.

"There are still plenty of sales people who do nothing but sell to loyal customers. Most dealerships have at least one. When you say there is no such thing as loyalty, what you are really saying is 'I have no idea how to be valuable after

delivery.'

"People are loyal to people who show some interest in them after delivery."

And to prove his point, he asks his audience of over 100 Toronto-area sales people and sales managers who packed the hall at the Crowne Plaza Hotel whether they knew sales people who sell mostly, if not exclusively, to customers they've cultivated over the years, or referrals from those customers. Nearly 100 hands shot up.

He then urged his audience not to lean on these excuses.

"These ideas say a lot about the people who say them. And what they say is 'you're a ... salesperson.'"

Marino held two, fast-paced, five-hour sessions at the hotel near Pearson International Airport in Toronto on Aug. 21 and 22. Here are some tips gleaned from the Aug. 22 session.

- Because of the Internet, customers come in ready to do business on the first visit. Be ready and willing to accommodate them.

- The only valid sales statistic is your store's traffic count you get from your team as you know the actual numbers. As for the rest of the industry stats, ignore them. They're drawn up by various organizations that have secondary or hidden agendas.

- Regularly go to Google and YouTube and learn all you can – the pros and the cons – about the models that make up three-quarters of the sales at your dealership. Your customers do. Consider bringing up and eliminating the "cons" before they do.

- To keep the customer's attention, keep them occupied. Keep them engaged with you at all times. Give a prospect some homework in the form of a blank credit app or trade-in appraisal form before they leave your store. Give them your smart phone number in case they have any questions.

- To encourage be-backs, send each customer you deal with a text message or a hand-written thank-you card inviting them to do business with you.

- Instead of just calling, emailing or texting a customer to ask them if they're still interested, give them reasons to come back: you have someone interested in their trade, the sale is still on, etc. The message should have just enough information to bring them back in.

- Change the way you talk and you change the way you and your buyer think. Don't

say "desk." Say "workstation." Don't say "The MSRP is \$..." Say "It's built to sell for \$..." Don't say "the contract" or "bill of sale." Say "paperwork." Don't say "What do you want for your trade." Ask "Has it been professionally appraised." Don't say "It's loaded. Say "It's fully equipped."

- Text messaging is the best way to keep in touch with the customers who want it.

- Unless they're busy, your sales manager should thank everyone for coming in and/or say good-bye to all customers. It makes the customer feel important.

- You are not going to sell everyone a car. Don't get upset; laugh it off. Go on with your day.

Duane Marino is the principal of NAASSA Training Academies and MarinoTV. For more information, call 1-888-735-6275 or visit www.duanemarino.com.

What we learned

Canadian AutoWorld went to Duane Marino's "Sales Machine" seminar on Aug. 22 at the Crowne Plaza hotel near Pearson International Airport. We asked three of the participants what they found the most useful about the seminar.

Raoul Santimano, Brampton Mitsubishi, Brampton, Ont.

Santimano has been in sales three years and during that time he's seen the car business change. He says the seminar taught him that he was right about the new customer. "People know what they are buying. And a lot of people are leaving other dealerships for a couple hundred dollars. People know more before they come in and they shop a couple stores before they make their decision."

Ashraf Zohni, Roy Foss Thornhill, Thornhill, Ont.

"The session has opened my eyes to how the industry has changed. And it's opened my eyes on how things can be done differently. I'm going to be using different language," Zohni said, referring to page 21 of the sales manual Marino gives to participants.

Mohamed Alibhai, Roy Foss Motors

Alibhai is a senior sales person and "one of the top producers." "I always make follow-up calls. But you leave a message often you don't get them. The suggestion here is that we use texting. I never thought of that. I'm going to try it."

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