



# It's official. The business has changed, and will keep changing



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COLUMNIST

Gone are the days of jam-packed lots every Saturday – the only day and only way people could find out what you had in stock.

Saturday was *the* day for car sales people, as suspects and prospects all came out to see what was sitting on our lots. Remember, this was B.G. (before Google) and the only way to know who had what cars was to come to the lot to find out.

It was this mayhem and mass traffic that really spawned the habit (and necessity) of quickly qualifying and maybe incorrectly pre-qualifying traffic.

The worst fear of the salesman (almost all were men) was to spend too much time with a non-buyer on a Saturday, missing potential sales along the way.

Today, Saturday traffic volume is just like every other day, as customer traffic is spread out and buyers are much more selective with where they go after spending time on the Internet.

Gone are the days of mesmerizing our customers with our product knowledge. They know more about the car than we do – or think they do.

In fact, being too sure of yourself during the discussion of product without taking the customer to your reference material can cause a loss of credibility if the customer has picked up any conflicting information on-line, even if the Internet is incorrect.

Know where to go to get the information for the buyer without making them feel their research is invalid or not pertinent.

Gone are the days of just waiting for ups and making a decent living.

Up volume is steadily dropping as people use email, phone and text more. Sales people used to get an average of three or four fresh opportunities per day; today, it's down to about one.

Yet, the average sales person is still selling about 100 cars a year. So even though fresh traffic has dropped, sales per person have remained constant.

This is because the average buyer is better informed when they arrive, having made up their mind and are further along in the buying process, again because of the Internet. Treating every fresh opportunity as a buyer has never been more important, because statistically more of them are buyers and there are fewer of them to talk to on a daily basis.

The terms "tire kicker," "looker," and "time waster" are now truly obsolete, as people generally tire kick, look and waste time online now, not at the car lot.

Gone are the days of using slang, pressure and dodging price talk. Go to YouTube or Google and search for *How to Buy a Car*, *Can I Trust My Car Sales Person* or *Car Sales Techniques*. These are some of the many searches customers do when researching their car purchase. If you see some of your techniques there, you may want to change them.

The future is now. Learn how to pursue and attract business in larger, more professional ways, and watch your sales grow at unprecedented rates.

The Internet has also allowed the connected and relationship-based sales style to take on a whole new face. Email has now been around for over 20 years. Text messaging is preferred over live phone conversations by many. Social media, such as Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter, are used to connect friends, family, customers

and sales people at ever-larger rates.

Sales people have had access to computers for inventory, pricing and customer management for decades now, and so have our customers. Computers are an administrative tool, a sales tool and an information source when used properly.

However, when the quoting and product knowledge tools are used improperly without any sales ac-

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# Times have changed

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they are an expensive way of selling a ton of cars for your competition, as buyers are simply given information with no sales process, walk out of the showroom with another piece of their buying puzzle completed, and into another showroom that much readier to make a decision.

In my travels working with hundreds of sales people a month, the trend is clear: the gap between the haves and have-nots is widening. You're probably either thriving or barely surviving. It is truly feast or famine.

I have met more four cars-a-month and 40 cars-a-month sales people over the past five years than in my previous 15 years in this business.

As my good friend Joe Girard says: "Most sales people spend more time trying to sell each other cars than their customers."

We have never been more multi-tasked, distracted by irrelevant media, had more time-wasting technological temptations and been more confused about this business than now, and this has led to us spending more and more time talking to each other about what to do than actually doing it.

The exciting thing is that this gap between sales champs and sales chumps is solely dependent on how you run your business, manage your time and your sales process.

It's easier than it has ever been to make money, and will be in the future, if you know what you're doing. Remember, the trend is your friend. Stay a student of our great industry, a champion of great ideas and an executor of best and current practices!

Join the future. It's exciting. It's profitable. And it's here. Sell well! Stay strong and create a great day!

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