The Advantages of Selling Beyond the F&I Menu at Your Dealership

By **Kristine Cain** - October 11, 2018 0

Back in the 1990's, menu selling was becoming an accepted way to make it easier for the F&I managers to be able to present all of their products all at once to the customer. It was meant to take the guesswork out of the presentation and make the customer's decision quick and easy. No more flipping through stacks of brochures and turning around the computer screen to show product descriptions.

Menus were meant to give a measure of control to the customer and give them the choice of what products they wanted and what financing scenario they felt most comfortable with.

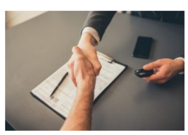
But there was a downside to this new technique.

Some F&I managers became lazy. The menu would be set down, the customer then told about their options, and told to pick the products they wanted. The real customer connection was lost in the process. The menu did the selling, not the F&I manager.

And to make matters worse, tablets and touchscreens have replaced the laminated paper menus for an even quicker experience and execution. As if we did not already have enough technology permeating our lives…now it's all over the dealer experience, too.

Let's look at a few quick reminders of how F&I can leverage menus without losing its humanity…

- Tell, don't sell: The menu program doesn't and should not replace good old-fashioned storytelling techniques. Paint the customer a picture of how and why the product is important. How will it protect their investment? How will it help to keep their family safe or help get the car back on the road? Walk them through stories you have heard over the years. The selling will take care of itself if you have mastered this and the menu will simply be a fast way to get them to commit.
- Be Human & Connect: It's easy to get caught up in the same routine of loading the deal, presenting the menu options, getting signatures, and sending the customer on their way. But don't forget to take the time to get to know the customer. Empathize with whatever situation may have brought them into the dealership to buy a car (sometimes it's not a happy occasion…they could have totaled their old car or had it breakdown beyond a reasonable repair).



The more you find out about the customer, the easier it will be to present and sell product. Sure, plenty of people may struggle with small talk but it gets easier with each customer. Nothing too deep of course but just enough to get the insights needed to seamlessly transition to the menu presentation.

If you come across as truly interested in them and helping them choose the products they need the most, it makes everything easier. Pointing at a screen without making a real connection can impact your CSI and make you appear disinterested.

- Menu is for the Customer: After getting to know a little about the customers, make it clear that the menu is there for THEM, not you. If presented as a tool to help them choose the products they want or don't want, it can be less intimidating, and they are more likely to pick a few that they see a need for. It's all about their choice.

Menus serve a dual-fold purpose in the F&I office…to help sell product and to help maintain regulatory compliance. Keep in mind that while it can help streamline the process and improve customer engagement, it's no substitute for a real human touch and solid selling skills in F&I.

And it doesn't matter if your customer responds better to old-school paper menus or an electronic menu…what will matter to your PRU is how you set up the sale before you use the menu. That is the foundation of your higher profit.

TAGS: F&I | menu selling | sales strategy | Auto Retail

Previous article
Artificial Intelligence in Automotive Sales

Next article
Redeeming Your Time

Kristine Cain

Kristine Cain is a freelance writer who loves the car business, hiking long trails, and the Steelers (not necessarily in that order). After finishing a degree in psychology at George Mason University in Virginia, she got her first taste of the dealer world working in the service department of a high volume Honda store. Warned early on that the car business would 'get in her blood', it did and Kristine made the leap into F&I departments at several stores around the Washington DC area and later to an automotive information company in dealer sales. A veteran of over 20 years in B2B sales to dealers, she leverages that knowledge to help write within the dealer market. Kristine lives in Holly Springs, NC with her husband and family.

TWITTER

Tweets by @CarBizToday

CBT News @CarBizToday
On today's CBTNews Tip of the Day with David Kain: Putting a Post-Script After Your Email Signaturecbtnews.com/putting-post-s…

Oct 26, 2018

CBT News @CarBizToday
Week In Review: Reducing Your Recon Timeline | Incorporating Your CRM with Your Phone Process | Discipline in Your F&I Process | The Importance of Investing in Your Salespeople cbtnews.com/daily-automoti…

Embed | View on Twitter

HEADLINES

Confirming and Destroying Stereotypes
Saturday Morning Sales Meeting Jonathan Dawson - October 27, 2018

Week In Review: Reducing Your Recon Timeline | Incorporating Your CRM with Your…
Daily Newscast CBT News - October 26, 2018

The Advantages of F&I Early Intervention
F&I Today Becky Chernek - October 26, 2018

Putting a Post-Script After Your Email Signature
Tip of the Day David Kain - October 26, 2018

SHOWS