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5 Ways to Improve Your Advertising Strategy

By Carl Bennett

If you are feeling the pinch of the economic downturn, you may think increasing your advertising spending and presence will result in more sales and service business.

However, it can be difficult to determine how effective traditional media advertising is and what kind of return your dealership is getting. **Don't assume more advertising will automatically yield better results.**

Here are five quick tips to **increase advertising success, not spend.**

- 1. Pay Attention to Digital Marketing**
Don't neglect your **online presence and what message is being sent.** Consider everything from your dealership Web site to social media, OEM news feeds, etc. In some cases, these emerging tools can **drive a new set of customers** to your showroom floor.
- 2. Create Targeted Advertising**
The key to success is having a targeted advertising plan to ensure you are reaching qualified potential buyers. Create specific ads that **speak the language and grab the attention** of your potential customers.
- 3. Track Ad Visibility**
Ask your customers **how they heard about your dealership** and consider using 1-800 numbers on advertisements. These are simple steps in identifying where your ad spend is working.
- 4. Turn on Your Customer's Radio**
Take note of what radio stations your service drive and trade-in customers are listening to, along with their first five presets. After a month or two, you should know **which stations are most likely to reach potential customers** in your area.
- 5. Track Your Newspaper Promotions**
Evaluate the strength of your newspaper advertisements by offering an incentive to **customers who reference the ad when they visit** your dealership. Then be sure to track anyone who mentions it.

As you assess your overall advertising budget and performance, you may **consider bringing in an outside source** familiar with your market to help make the needed changes.

Effective advertising is not just about increasing traffic to your showroom floor, but increasing the amount of true dealership leads. By applying these tips, you can **start growing your business, not your budget.**

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Reynolds Consulting Services, one of the most skilled and knowledgeable consulting groups in the automotive industry, offers dealers a fresh perspective on common challenges. Experience proven results from over 25 unique process improvement projects, specially designed to focus on specific departments and drive results for your dealership.

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10 Ways to Create a Customer-friendly Perception of Your Service Department

By Gail Sease

Profitable service dollars are directly tied to customer satisfaction. In today's highly competitive automotive service market, this is more important than ever. According to J.D. Power's most recent Service Usage Retention Study (SURS), customer satisfaction with dealer service tends to decline as vehicles age. As a result, **maintenance and repair dollars are in danger of being spent at non-dealership shops.** However, dealerships that "provide the highest levels of satisfaction during the warranty period also **retain a greater share of future service visits** at the dealership, even after the warranty period expires."^{*}



Gail Sease
Practice Development Strategist

Power also notes your customer's service experience can be broken down into five areas: service quality, service initiation, service advisor, service facility, and vehicle pickup. Much of a customer's experience is heavily influenced by their interpersonal interactions with your service employees.

Create a more pleasant customer experience with these 10 easy techniques:

1. Always **acknowledge customers immediately** upon their arrival – it shows you respect their time and genuinely want their business.
2. **Smile and welcome customers** as if you were expecting their arrival – it makes them feel important, which they are.
3. **Call customers by name** – it conveys warmth and sincerity.
4. Be willing to **adapt to customer needs** – go where they take you, but maintain gentle control.
5. **Keep customers informed** on the progress of their vehicle's repair – the longer a customer goes without a status update, the worse they imagine the repair or bills will be.
6. **Offer needed additional services**; explain the "need" in everyday terms – emphasizing safety and reliability.
7. Book the next appointment before the customer leaves – just like the dentist.
8. **Make follow-up calls a priority** to ensure the customer was satisfied and their expectations were met – you can't fix a problem if you don't know about it.
9. **Invest in developing your employees' communication skills** and model what you expect from them.
10. Create and **communicate a standard of customer service excellence** that is SMART:
 - Specific
 - Measurable
 - Attainable
 - Realistic
 - Time-bound

If you incorporate these simple techniques, you will quickly reap the rewards of **high CSI and repeat business**.

**J.D. Power and Associates Reports: Exceptional Service Satisfaction Enhances Dealer and Manufacturer Profitability Through Improved Customer Retention, Even as Vehicle Sales Decline WESTLAKE VILLAGE, Calif.: 25 February 2009*

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Marketing New Cars to Service Customers: Part 1

By Jeff Silverman

Marketing new cars to your service customers may seem **an obvious way to extend the customer life cycle and keep profits flowing**. Then why do so few dealerships actually do it? The concept is simple, but leveraging existing service customer relationships takes planning, tenacity, well-established processes, and ongoing management buy-in.

The suggestions in this three-part series can help you start planning and establishing these processes, so **marketing vehicles to your service customers becomes routine and profitable**.

Encourage Sales and Service to Work Together

If you want to target your service customers, why not enlist the help of your service employees? This process involves two basic steps:

1. **Sales shares lease end/note maturity information with service.**
 - Periodically give service advisors **a list of customers who are within six months of lease or note maturity**. Then they can compare the list to customers they see on the drive or who have upcoming appointments.
 - Advisors should also **engage customers who didn't buy from your dealership**. They can identify these customers easily by asking questions like, "I don't see your sales date in my database...when did you buy your vehicle?" They may then be able to engage the customer in a more in-depth **conversation that turns into a sales lead**.
2. **Service informs sales of new opportunities.**
 - Create an incentive program to **motivate advisors to refer these customers back to sales**. "Pay plan equals performance" is a cliché for a reason – it's true.
 - Break out of the old-school approach of only rewarding leads that end in sales. You'll have more success by paying **incentives for every**

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legitimate lead to the showroom – period.

- **Prevent bogus referrals** by setting specific criteria: referral must be within six months of lease/note maturity, signed by sales management, etc.

Motivate your departments to work together and **watch your cross-departmental referrals skyrocket!**

Stay tuned for Part 2 of this series where I'll share an incentive program you can target at your service customers.

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