



Profitable Ideas for Automobile Dealers

Increase Service Sales for the Price of a Quarter



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Most customers know that their tire tread depth should be at least to the top of Washington's head on the US quarter. So give your service advisors a roll of quarters.

When the customer pulls their car into the service lane, require your advisor to walk around the vehicle and measure every tire. Check the inside and outside wear.

If the tires are wearing evenly and of a good tread depth, give the customer the quarter along with a business card.



If the tires are not wearing evenly, a rotation is needed. Maybe even an alignment is needed. All this while the customer sees the quarter test.

If the tread depth is below the top of Washington's head, here is your opportunity to sell a set of tires and time to exam the brakes. This is also a good time to educate your customers on the necessity of good tread depth.

Your customer will appreciate the attention. They have seen this common test even if they do not understand the meaning. You educate your customer in the products available, there is no reason for them to go to a tire store or anywhere else.

All of this for the price of a quarter.

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Tips for a Clean Database

Edited by Vawter, Gammon, Norris & Co., P.C.

There is a common misconception among dealers that their biggest asset is their inventory. In fact, your customer database is your greatest asset. If you don't have a customer base, you can't sell your inventory! Despite this, many dealers have neglected their customer database. How can you avoid this costly mistake?

Clean and maintain your database! Here are some key steps to follow:

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Tips for a Clean Database

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- **Back up your existing data.** Data can be damaged or lost during the cleansing process, make sure to start by backing up what you have. This also provides a reference point for comparison once the cleanse is done.
- **De-duplicate it.** Many databases have duplicates due to nicknames, misspellings, etc. For example, you have Jim Smith, James Smith, and Jimmy Smith in your database, all with the same address, phone number, and email. Your database is counting this customer 3 times, and you're sending him 3 emails or direct mail pieces. By de-duping, or combining these records, you're not only helping clean your database, but saving money when marketing to this customer.
- **Check for address and email changes:** By running your data through the National Change of Address (NCoA) database, you're able to update addresses of customers who have moved. If you're sending direct mail, this could save you thousands by not marketing to customers who are no longer in your area. While addresses are nice to have, the modern focus is capturing email addresses. Via a process called email append, we are able to update email addresses that have changed, are unused or were never captured in the first place.

By now you should have a cleaner database than you started with. You should be able to mail and email customers with a higher contact rate since you're now communicating to the proper customers, via the proper communication method and with, hopefully, the right message. The next steps are about diving deeper into your data and maintaining it going forward.

- **Audit your data:** Examine the sources feeding your database to ensure they're providing you with proper information. Remember, garbage in, garbage out. If internal staff is entering data, proper training is key for consistent data entry.

Another step during the audit stage is to examine customers' lifecycles. Not only is this a great exercise to do during the database cleanse, but also it helps pinpoint a great target set of customers to communicate with. By learning where certain customers are with reference to their sales, service or F&I lifecycles, you have the ability to spot exactly with whom you need to communicate and to determine the proper message. There is no need to send a communication to a customer to sell them a car if they just bought one last week. This will save you a lot of time and money on marketing because; let's face it, that's the goal, right?

- **Maintain your data:** You've just spent considerable time and possibly money to achieve a clean database. Don't let it go to waste by abandoning it for another five years. Set up a process to continually clean the data, train data entry staff, and update address and email address records. Databases are continually changing, so your effort to keep quality data cannot stop.

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- **Finally, be patient.** Cleaning your database is an art, not a science. It will take some time and learning along the way. A clean database doesn't happen overnight. But with some help, you could have a clean database that will generate greater sales with less effort by approaching the right customers in the right way. Remember, customers, not inventory, are your greatest asset.

If you have questions about database management, please contact one of our professionals today.

Article by Derc Teschler

Derc has been in the world of automotive for over 8 years with experience in targeted data marketing. He has worked with hundreds of dealerships throughout North America on a consultative level to help increase sales and service at all levels of dealership management. He is currently the President of Dealer121 and presented for our NAADA Group earlier this year.



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