



Upgrade Your F&I Sales Process (And Profits!)

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Reciting word tracks and spewing benefits is one of the least effective ways of selling F&I products to today's continuously online, iPad wielding consumer. If your F&I manager is still using product brochures and an evidence manual with three year old repair orders enshrined in plastic sheet protectors to pitch F&I products, as John Stossel would say, "Give me a break!" Maybe it's time for you to upgrade your F&I sales process... and your profits!

Today, every part of the F&I process must add value for the customer. Your F&I Manager has to be trained how to help customers, not just sell customers. That requires he or she utilize a needs-based approach, not a greed-based approach. So let's look at five ways you can upgrade your F&I sales process and profits.

First, change your customer's perception of the financial services process by changing the way you do business. We have to eliminate self-serving processes and manipulative sales techniques when it comes to quoting and negotiating payments. Selling F&I products is not about outsmarting customers or hiding the true cost of those products. It's about giving them all the information they need to make the right decision for them and their family.

Today's F&I department and F&I professional has to create an atmosphere that ensures every customer has an enjoyable, stress free

experience. That means eliminating sales pressure, and not forcing customers to listen to sales pitches for products they have no interest in. Today's F&I manager must be trained to make customers thirsty for their knowledge and expertise, rather than make them endure multiple product presentations.

Second, utilize a needs-based, not a presentation-based sales approach. Every customer is a unique individual. So are their needs. Which means every F&I product presentation must be tailored to those needs. Selling F&I products is like building a house. Just as the most important part of a house is its foundation, the most important part

*Utilize needs-based
selling, not greed-
based selling!*

of selling F&I products is the needs discovery process. If an F&I manager spends no time discovering why a customer needs a particular product, then he or she is forced to spew forth benefit after benefit, hoping one those benefits will run into a customer need.

Unfortunately, the verbal vomit technique is not very effective, or very efficient, because today's informed

consumer will not buy something they don't want and don't think they need. They're much more likely to buy when we can communicate how a particular product will benefit them specifically. Today's F&I professional must be capable of discovering each customer's unique needs, so he or she can show the customer how a product will benefit them specifically.

Third, make sure the F&I process adds real value for the customer. An F&I Professional adds real value to the customer's experience by reviewing their credit application, and helping them understand the criteria a lender uses to evaluate credit. An F&I Professional adds real value when they ensure the information in their credit bureau is correct, and educates the customer as to the reason for their credit score, and how their score helps determine the interest rate they qualify for. And an F&I Professional adds real value when he or she helps the customer get the car they want at a payment they can afford.

Ensuring there is value in the F&I process for the customer demands that an F&I professional seek out, with eagerness, reasons why they need each and every F&I product, and be capable of helping them see how that product will benefit them specifically. If a customer believes that person knows what they're talking about, and feels like they're genuinely trying to help them, they will value that person's knowledge, expertise, and input.


Fourth, rather than merely tell a customer why they need a product, an F&I Professional must engage the customer in the sales process. Allowing a customer to self-discover the value of a product is much more effective than telling them a bunch of reasons why they need it. Handing the customer a mass airflow sensor or an antilock brake computer gets them involved in the presentation, and helps make something intangible... tangible.

Allowing a customer to self-discover the value of GAP with a simple hand drawing is much more effective than "Let me show you something." A hand-drawn illustration keeps the customer engaged, and helps them see why they need GAP, a service contract, or tire and wheel road hazard. When that illustration is tailored to their unique situation, they can't dispute the information, because they provided it.

Finally, an F&I professional has to be capable of making customers thirsty for their products. Thirsty to learn more about that product, thirsty to know the benefits of that product, thirsty to know why they need that product, and more importantly, thirsty to buy that

product. That's what selling is. That's what it's always been. Making customer's want what you have.

Unfortunately, too many F&I managers think creating interest requires asking that tired, worn out, old-school "If I could, would you?" question. "If I could get you a better rate, would you finance with me?" If I could get you the service contract for \$100 less, would you buy it?" That is not making them thirsty, that's making them wonder why you tried to rip them off.

Are you thirsty to increase your F&I profits? Maybe it's time you upgrade your F&I sales process! 

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