



# Navigating F&I

Gearing up for his Industry Summit workshop, the magazine's F&I wiz identifies five ways to streamline the user experience in the F&I office. **By Ronald J. Reahard**

**T**oday's car buyer wants things to be easy. From getting the news to posting about their lives on Facebook, everything is point and click, cut and paste, plug and play. So to keep their attention, F&I professionals must adjust their process to provide the same point-and-click experience.

Bottom line, customers want car buying to be as easy and worry free as making a purchase on Amazon. They've got their credit swagger on, they know what a vehicle service agreement is, and they tune out an F&I presentation like they do an online ad. So how do you keep your customers from tuning you out? Well, I've put together a few tips for doing just that.

**Make Yourself Useful:** For the F&I process to be perceived by the customer as relevant and helpful, the F&I manager must be involved in arranging financing, not just typing up the paperwork. It is also essential that an F&I manager interview the customer prior to submitting the deal to a lender — as well as confirm the information on the credit application — to demonstrate that he or she is a crucial part of putting together the customer's deal.

**Eliminate the Wait:** The F&I manager needs to bring the customer back to the F&I office immediately. We have to quit forcing them to engage in an artificial conversation on the showroom floor that only benefits us, not them.

We also can't waste customers' time by customizing menus based on what we think they need, or what we want to sell them. Instead, custom-

ize the menu with the customer. This will allow them to "see" we're there to help them by adjusting the products, coverage and payment based on their wants, needs and concerns.

**Uncover the Need:** Every human being is unique, so every F&I product presentation should be tailored to his or her unique needs. That's why the needs-discovery process is so critical. If we don't discover the customer's needs, we have no foundation on which to build the sale of our products. What we're looking for in any needs-discovery process is "You told me earlier's," which we can reference later to show them why our products have value for them.

Asking questions about the customer's family, driving habits and reasons for purchasing a new vehicle will quickly engage the customer in a dialogue. More importantly, when the customer is talking, we can discover what they're thinking, how they're feeling and why they might need the products we have to offer.

**Erase the Fear Factor:** To create an atmosphere that ensures every customer has an enjoyable, stress-free experience, we have to be transparent and practice full disclosure. That includes telling customers right up front that they aren't required to buy any aftermarket products.

And stop forcing customers to listen to multiple product pitches. When we eliminate sales pressure, we reduce sales resistance, thereby increasing sales.

**Create Interest:** If we want the customer to be interested in what we have to say, we first have to be interested in what they have to say. Sell-

ing F&I products requires making customers want what we have — and what we have is the knowledge and expertise to help them make a better decision. But if they don't want to hear it, we're wasting their time.

So if you're looking for a more in-depth discussion of ways to streamline your F&I process, be sure to check out my session, "Right Clicking in a Left-Click World," on Sept. 10 at Industry Summit in Las Vegas. I hope to see you there! ■

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## Don't Miss Ron Reahard at Industry Summit

**Session:** Right-Clicking in a Left-Click World

**When:** Thursday, Sept. 10, at 10 a.m.

**Where:** Champagne Ballroom at Paris Las Vegas

In today's point-and-click world, dealers and their F&I teams are constantly on the lookout for that hot new product that sells itself, that new interactive menu that does the selling for them or that perfect close that always gets a "Yes." Ron Reahard will detail what every F&I professional must do to succeed when smartphone-wielding consumers are checking every claim he or she makes.