



BY RICK MCCORMICK

Circle of Development: Refresh

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Regardless of how long you may have been in the F&I profession, there is one thing we know from personal experience: knowledge fades over time. If we allow our daily routine to be void of learning new information and/or being reminded of the principals that guide our efforts, we begin to lose our cutting edge. We must refresh our skills and process, or we may slip into a rut or a robotic effort to help customers that is less than compelling. We either “use it or lose it.” Here are some ways that refresh efforts benefit everyone.

REFRESH EFFORTS BUILD LONG-TERM MEMORY.

Our memory is like a muscle. To strengthen it, we need to keep it challenged. When new skills are learned, it is only a matter of time before they are forgotten. To assure that we retain new, they must be used and practiced in role-play exercises regularly. While a top performer may have great numbers, they are only a top performer if they are challenging themselves to be better than they were on their best month.

REFRESH EFFORTS REDUCE COSTLY MISTAKES AND PROMOTES MORE SUCCESS.

One of the main reasons professional athletes practice the basics regularly is not because they don't know them. Practice makes them second nature, and it makes it less likely to mess up in the real game. Responses to common objections and the path to lead even the most resistant to buy from us, are best learned in the training room and then worked out on game day. The more we learn in scheduled refresh

sessions, the more effective we are in real-life interactions with our customers.

REFRESH EFFORTS MAKE LEARNING AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE CULTURE IN OUR DEALERSHIP.

In our lives or in the dealership, we either have culture by design or culture by default. A culture that has the expectation that everyone is consistently learning and growing their skills will reach levels that others only dream of. That doesn't happen by chance, it happens by regularly providing learning opportunities both in the dealership and off-site where the distractions are limited. Team members that buck the culture usually go away on their own or by help from above. That's a healthy part of a growth culture that all benefit from.



REFRESH EFFORTS DEVELOP CURRENT MANAGERS INTO FUTURE LEADERS.

We must develop leaders among our ranks. That can include current managers or those who desire to move up the ranks. We must develop “the bench” or we are only a step away from a potential major disruption in our business. Managers that are filled with curiosity and a hunger to learn, regardless of levels of current success, become great instructors — you can't effectively teach what you haven't done yourself. Many times, we promote those who have had success in their current position without regard to leadership ability. The result is we have many managers and few leaders. When we consistently demand efforts to learn and grow in their current responsibilities, we are looking for future leaders who can reproduce that in others.

Refresh efforts must be intentionally structured and scheduled — professionals who practice, produce. While our industry focuses heavily on the ability to produce, the most profitable thing a leader can produce is success and, more importantly, leadership in others. Refresh is an integral part of the circle of development. Mindset, skill set, execution and refresh is a complete cycle of developing our skills and also developing the next generation of leaders. We need them. ■

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Rick McCormick is the national account development manager for Reahard & Associates, which provides customized F&I training for dealerships throughout the U.S. and Canada. He has more than 20 years of auto retail and finance experience.