

# THE DIGITAL DANGER



The danger of digital is that we will attempt to rely on it to do the things that our selling skills

BY RICK McCORMICK

**There is a real danger in the rise of new technology within our industry.** Like the opulence of a brand-new car, new technology is showy, distracting, and powerful. It promises solutions for our problems and innovation we haven't considered before. These technological advances have allowed us to grow ever more user-friendly and efficient. The tools that it brings is nothing to scoff at. However, we must remember that technology is neither inherently helpful nor harmful. It is simply a tool. Technology can be used to inspire and catalyze change, but it can also be detrimental if abused.

The danger of technology in the F&I office is the threat of depending on it to fix our problems and replace the need for proficient selling skills. The technology will do the selling, they say. Really? The truth is technology in our field is designed to facilitate a well-defined process. The rest? That's the duty of the F&I professional. It simply becomes one more tool to aid us in building value and enabling customer insight.

I have seen well-developed digital menu systems installed in a dealership and, magically, the selling skills evaporate as if they are no longer needed — customers and dealerships both suffer. There are three things that every F&I

professional must remember as technology continues to rise in dealerships nationwide.

## YOU ARE THE PRODUCT

When you don't have a tangible product to show, you become the product. Since your customer cannot see the features of a product, they must see you as reliable and trustworthy. People buy from those they like and trust. So, the most important part of any interaction is to build a strong connection with them. Every intangible product is judged by the individual that represents it.

In Dale Carnegie's "How to Win Friends and Influence People," he states



couple had already said no multiple times to every product offered. I simply asked one question: “You said you moved here a few years ago. Where did you move from?” Within the next five minutes, we discovered that we both shared connections with many people from that town and they were amazed that we had so much to talk about concerning a city more than a thousand miles away. During our conversation, I texted someone they hadn’t spoken to in years that was a personal friend of mine. Even though I was just having fun and talking, I became the product and his next statement stunned

demand it from first graders, customers expect it, too. When they get the necessity, they will buy more than you could ever sell them. That’s something that technology cannot do.

### **PAINT A PICTURE WITH WORDS**

Moving a customer from a no to a yes requires visual effort and creating a powerful picture with words. Paint a picture with your words and put the customer in the picture. It is not enough that you make the future a reality, you must properly illustrate it with the customer in mind. As an example, simply state: “Four years from now, you are outside of the

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me. “So, what do you think about those coverages he’s talking about?” The only thing that changed was the way the products were wrapped.

### **BRING THE FUTURE INTO THE PRESENT**

Every product we offer is designed to protect customers from unanticipated events and expenses ahead. They need to know that the product you are offering directly affects their future experience. Customers don’t care about presentations; they care about the end result. Will spending additional money now save them money in the long run? Will they be more affected by a small incremental increase in their monthly payment or by a sudden and expensive repair with immediate full payment needed? What does their future look like with or without the product? It is vital that we engage them with a possible reality. When that is illustrated effectively, value is built, trust is established, and needs are properly met.

Customers are looking for more than our words or promises of what our products will do. We must show them proof of what we promise. Showing a customer a copy of a repair order of a real situation, and how it impacted that person, makes the product come alive. Real data and real stories from real customers are what they want to hear — show your work. Teachers

factory warranty and a red light comes on your dash. The estimate of the cost of repair is over \$2,000. What would it feel like to be upset that it didn’t cost more?” Draw them in with a little bit of humor and after they laugh out loud, then establish a fix, “That’s what a service contract will do for you.”

The future is determined by the effort of the present and by the visuals and interactive efforts you provide. So, stop trying to sell and tell them a story with visuals and pictures painted with words. Make them laugh. Give them an earnest conversation from someone that cares about their future. This special touch cannot be provided by a machine.

Relying on other things and cheap tactics to do the job for you is the real death of the salesman. The danger of digital is that we will attempt to rely on it to do the things that our selling skills were intended to accomplish. Technology is not a fixer, only a facilitator. We can embrace it and make it work for us. When we do, the digital danger becomes the digital enabler. Now that is the perfect future for F&I in our dealerships. ■



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were intended to accomplish.

you need to encourage your customer to talk to get them to like and trust you. The more they talk, the more they will trust you. Asking open-ended questions are designed to get your customers to open up and share insight into their world and why they need the products being discussed. They can see the need for themselves. They can see you as someone who is genuinely concerned about who they are and what they need, not just someone who wants to get their money. Genuine interest in the customer is a packaging that makes your products irresistible.

Recently, as an F&I coach, I observed a delivery in person and was interested in something the customer had said. This