



BY RICK MCCORMICK

# Have It Your Way!

The customer is speaking loudly, they want to have it their way, and it's forward-thinking and profit-building when we do.

*"We don't want to push our ideas on to customers, we simply want to make what they want." – Laura Ashley*

One of the greatest American retail counterpunches occurred in 1974. A commercial hit the airwaves saying, "Two all beef patties, special sauce, lettuce, cheese, pickles, onions on a sesame seed bun." And with that, McDonald's was the hamburger king.

Then a competitor determined it was more than making a better hamburger. Instead, it would be found in a better process. They were convinced if they gave the customer the experience they wanted, they would buy more...and they did. So, Burger King said, "Hold the pickles, hold the lettuce, special orders, don't upset us. All we ask is that you let us serve it your way. Have it your way." They brought timely insight into the business world that still holds true decades later. Customers buy when they feel like the process is focused on them. So, what do customers want in the finance office in a dealership? Here are three focus areas that should not upset us:

## VALUE MY TIME

Customers hate waiting — waiting to get into the finance office and the time spent in the finance office, if the process is not focused on them. However, when we shift the focus to what the customer wants throughout the process, the time factor becomes less of a concern. But simply learning about the time factor is short-sighted. What customers want is to have it their way.

We must update, adjust, and change our process to focus more on what they want instead of what we want, and make good use of their time. If customers are learning insightful information and feeling an emotional attachment to the products offered, they will be motivated to buy more often, and the time spent is valuable to them. Customers are more liberal with their time if it is time well spent.

## ASK INSTEAD OF TELL

We have too many pointing of fingers and too few openings of helping hands. What the customer has to say is more important than what we have to say. However, if we are focused on sharing all that we know and making sure we tell them everything we think is necessary, they never get the opportunity to say much. There is a direct link to how much the F&I manager talks and their production level. The more they talk, the lower their production level. If the focus is on asking great questions as opposed to



making great statements, the customer will do most of the talking. They are liking it, and we are learning more about them, benefiting everyone in the room.

## LISTEN TO ME

Customers don't want to be talked to, they want to be heard. They have valuable things to say and are waiting for the opportunity to tell their story and their reasons for buying a new vehicle. When they encounter a person in the finance office who makes opportunities for them to talk, as well as someone who listens with an obvious intention to learn more about them, they feel that person is genuinely interested in them. One of the most important factors that distinguish a top performer in F&I from their counterparts is a genuine interest in their customers. Customers respect authenticity and demand it if they are going to open up and engage in the process.

The choice in hamburgers and our process is between our way and yours. The customer is speaking loudly, they want to have it their way, and it's forward-thinking and profit-building when we do. ■

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Rick McCormick is national account development manager at Reahard & Associates.