

Be - Backs!

Why Do They Come Back?

A Commentary on the Automobile Business
By Jim Fisher, Former Dealer and Consultant

I have been in about 1,000 dealerships in my career and I have heard and seen every way that dealerships have tried to get customers back into their stores after they have left.

I have seen salespeople follow up, that really doesn't work, because the salesperson has negative thoughts about the customer when they left. They left because they wanted to think about it! They left because the Manager couldn't give them enough money for their trade! They left because the payments were too high! They left because they needed more money down because of their credit score! They left because they were in a hurry! There are a million more! Why would a salesperson call a customer they didn't think wanted to buy a vehicle? Can they give the customer more money for their trade? Can they give the customer the payments they wanted?

I have seen Management follow up, that really doesn't work. In some cases, the calls are made and some customers come back. In a majority of cases, the calls never get made for an assortment of reasons. The main reason is the number of times the Manager gets rejected during the call, makes them not want to make any more. In some stores, they are pretty successful at management calls, but there is a reason and I will cover that later.

I have seen incentives, such as scratch off cards, scratch off checks, be-back dollars, coins that fit the gum machine with three colors of gum, each with a different value.

I have seen CRM programs that email, text or send recorded messages to the customer the day after they leave. I have seen companies that call the customers within two days with a survey to find out the problem. I have seen it all.

When ever I ask the question of what makes a customer comes back. There are also as many different answers as the incentives to return. The salesperson will always say it is because the customer likes them. The Manager will always say it is because of the turn over and we treated the customer fairly. I even get from some Managers that there are no be backs and you better take your best shot now, because they are not coming back. Then there is the old low ball technique, where the customer is given figures that can't be beat anywhere and they have to come back. The answer to that one is always the same. We will handle that problem when they do come back.

There is only one reason the customer will come back and it is the only answer. It is the vehicle. Even if they don't like the salesperson, they will come back for the vehicle. Even if they don't like the prices and payments, they will come back for the vehicle. Even if they didn't like the Manager, who would not take no for an answer, they will come back for the vehicle. If they can get the exact vehicle somewhere else, they

will probably not come back.

Since Selection is the key to a customer returning, it must also be the key to closing the customer the first time in. In many cases, problems with trade in values, down payment and payments are really selection problems. The customer either is on the wrong car or they have not decided to buy the one they picked out.

No matter what the objection (problem), the solution is having the right selection. When confronted with a payment problem, try telling the customer that they may be on the wrong vehicle. There are two things that can happen. Yes this is the right vehicle or no it isn't. If they say yes it is, then tell them in order to get the vehicle they want, they need see what they can give up to afford this vehicle. If they say no, work on selection, even if it means starting all over. We would normally bring around a vehicle that met their needs, that was in the payment range they were stuck on. We would explain that we wanted to show them the type of vehicle they can get for the money they wanted to spend, before they leave.

I was flying home from a convention with Jackie Cooper, the well know best salesperson in the world. Jackie told me about an elderly couple that just wouldn't buy the Lincoln that the salesperson had spent the last three hours demonstrating. Jackie decided to give it a shot. He asked the husband where was the first place he was going to take his new car. The gentleman said that they were buying the car to take a trip to visit their daughter. Jackie asked him what route he was going to take. The elderly gentleman proceeded to tell him every highway and every turn, until he arrived at his daughters house. When he was finished, Jackie asked him if he wanted the new vehicle he was taking on the trip titled in his name or both he and his wife.

What Jackie told me was the couple knew what they wanted and liked what they picked out, but until they made the mental decision of how they were going to use the vehicle, they could not say yes.

So the answer to ensuring a be back is Selection. Revert to Selection every time you run into an objection and you will close more deals and create more be backs.

Ps; The reason that some Managers have good success on follow up calls is how well their sale force is trained and how well they are at making the right selection of vehicles for their customers.

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