

# Does Training Really Work?

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

There are many forms of training. Classroom, online, newsletter and book reading. I have found that most automobile salespeople who have customer interactions daily, only listen or read about what they think is important. If they do not see a procedure or sales close in person, they do not believe that the concepts work. Or they go out without learning the entire procedure and fail, which leads to, never trying that again.

I was in Lafayette, Indiana holding a week long training session with new, inexperienced salespeople and a few old pros. The first day went very slow and there was doubt in the atmosphere that what they were learning really works. The second day started out the same as the first and I decided that the salespeople needed a “real life experience”. Ed French, the General Manager and I took all eight of the “green peas” to the local Rax Roast Beef restaurant for lunch.

As I completed my order, I asked a simple question, ”Can I have a free cookie?”<sup>1</sup> Rax Roast Beef at the time had freshly baked Chocolate Chip cookies, right where you order. The answer by the cashier was no and it would cost me \$.99 for the cookie. I then told her that if she gave me a “free” cookie, I might buy one the next time I came in. <sup>2</sup> She said that she was unable to give me a “free” cookie. I then asked her who could give me a “free” cookie? She told me that the manager was the only one. I asked to talk to him.

The Manager came up and asked, “Is there a problem?” I told him that I had asked for a “free” cookie and the cashier told me that you were the only one that could give me a “free” cookie. <sup>3</sup> He said, “We don’t give “free” cookies.

I then asked him, “If you give me a “free” cookie and I like it, we have nine other people who may buy one, isn’t that a good reason to give me a “free” cookie? <sup>4</sup> He told me that if he gave me a “free” cookie, other people are going to want “free” cookies.

I then asked him, “What do you do with the cookies at the end of the day if they are not sold?” A look came over him that I can’t explain. He said, “We throw them away”. I then asked him how many they usually throw out and he said , “OK but you are the only one that gets a free cookie.”

I thanked him and asked him I could get a discount on the cookies for the other people? <sup>5</sup> He gave me 10 cookies and told me not tell anyone that he gave us the free cookies.

The moral of the story is: I asked at least five times before I got a positive response. How many times do your people ask your customers to buy?

When we returned to the store, every salesperson gave me their full attention. I then went back to Raxs’ and gave the Manager and the Cashier twenty bucks a piece and thanked them for letting me use them in my experiment.

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