

Five steps to improve your lead conversion

 By [David Sieff](#)

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The inability for the automotive industry to embrace change is staggering. It's almost as if the only positive movement comes in the face of insurmountable evidence that smacks you between the eyes while sitting in an ExCo meeting pouring over declining CSI stats, conversion rates or sales data comparisons. That, or a clear and obvious strategic change from a competitor that will expose a weakness in your own operation or a gap in your product line-up.



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I've always been a supporter of change, but for the reason that change, or the understanding of what the change means, is an opportunity to reflect and plan possible scenarios, which then opens up other discussions and allows for the impact and extent of the change to be fully realised.

Why is the approach to winning and retaining your customer ripe for change? Very simply because the world is a very different place today. Unfortunately, the standard practice within the dealership space is largely unchanged and this is not sustainable.

We are seeing the effects of this resistance to change manifest in five key ways.

1. Internet leads are not as important as a warm body in the dealership

The urgency that a traditional dealer places on an internet-generated lead seems to be diminished. Generally, the notion that a lead originated from an online source seems to lessen its importance when quite the opposite is true. The fact that someone has taken the time to engage with your brand and provide you with contact details as a minimum should be a reason to drive as quick a response as possible.

2. The basic follow-up is no longer prioritised

In tough trading conditions, one would think that every sniff of a deal would be hunted down and signed, but sadly the ratio of follow-ups on enquiries is appalling. A mystery shop of your dealer groups will give you a quick gauge. The quicker the follow up and the better prepared you are to meet the needs of the caller, the easier you win.

3. Gather more than the minimum data about your customer

Big Data! It's a cliché for sure, but also a reality in a noisy market. Data allows you to rise above the constant communication buzz. It gives you means to personalise, add value and understand your customer to deliver what they want.

The irony is that the minimum of data is gathered at deal time and typically gravitates around data regulations and getting the deal done, with no thought to gathering data for insight and understanding. The more you know, the better you can tailor your subsequent communication and drive a strong retention strategy.

4. After sales is largely a neglected focus area

How many dealer principals and/or sales people spend their mornings in the service reception area? Is this not the area where your customers are bringing their most prized purchase in to be loved and maintained? Is this not where your loyalty is built and an easy environment to sell your next shiny new product or accessory? The path to brand loyalty and repurchase lives and dies in after sales, not in the showroom. It continues to be a great source of leads with a high conversion rate.

5. Be more targeted in your marketing

Use a rifle, not a shotgun, when you are communicating with your perceived target market. The spray and pray approach will only deliver leads that will make you busy but reduce your conversion efficiency.

In order to target properly, you need the above-mentioned data and insights to make sure you position your product and your business to the right people, at the right time, with the right message. Essentially, you are using targeting to do a certain level of pre-qualifying, which is more productive than running a lead-generating strategy that drives volume over quality.

The focus on these five simple areas is not for your benefit, but rather for the customer's benefit. If your actions provide them with benefits, then ultimately you will be more successful and profitable in the medium to long term.

In reality dealers have been slow to look at how a fundamental culture change towards service and technology adoption can drive lead generation and its conversion, will prosper in years to come. But it does require leadership and openness to change, and maybe an acknowledgement that the world is a different place and that doing what you did yesterday is just not good enough anymore.

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