

AS SEEN IN



Year of the consumer

Are your processes transparent and consumer-centric?



Ian Reilly
INDUSTRY
COLUMNIST

Rapidly shifting consumer expectations and market uncertainty are familiar challenges for automotive retailers, and 2018 will be no exception.

Against a backdrop of uncertainty surrounding the NAFTA renegotiations, one of the few remaining certainties in this industry is the constantly evolving consumer expectation for a rewarding retail experience when buying or servicing a vehicle.

Even with market uncertainties, however, dealers are still in a strong position to flourish in 2018 thanks to the momentum created by a fifth consecutive year of record sales in 2017.

By taking steps to perfect the retail experience, dealers can improve dealership performance in tangible ways regardless of market factors that remain outside your control.

First, are your processes transparent and consumer-centric? With the explosion of e-commerce over the last several years and the ease of access to information that it represents, the desire for retail transparency has cemented itself broadly in the consumer consciousness. And consumer expectations for automotive retailers are just as high.

Disappearing to “run it by my manager” in the middle of a sale or springing some unexpected or poorly explained maintenance on a service customer are non-starters. Review your processes to ensure you are as open, informative and involving of the customer as he or she desires, while emphasizing choice and convenience. Consumers are looking for their in-store experience to mirror the ease and autonomy they enjoy online.

Second, consider technology solutions for your dealership that enhance both efficiency and work performance by digitizing and streamlining existing processes.

The F&I department serves as a perfect test subject of how this can work: investing in an interactive selling tool that provides personalized menu presentations with videos, presents electronic F&I forms and captures signatures digitally turns the tedious process of closing a sale into a brisk, even enjoyable consumer experience.

Finally, maintain a conscious commitment to ongoing process improvement. No dealer can lay claim to a perfect operation, but the key characteristic that separates mediocre performers from those who continue to adapt to an evolving market and industry is constant improvement.

Even when it causes headaches in the short-term, consider this attitude a long-term investment in the future success of your dealership.

Regardless of what external factors come into play, choosing to refocus on these constants of the consumer experience – and to reevaluate how you are executing them across your dealership – will never lead you astray. **AW**