



7 Steps to Earning Trust in Your Sales Process

In “The 2017 Dealer Trust & Transparency Survey,” conducted before and during the 2017 National Automobile Dealers Association (NADA) Conference & Expo, nearly 70% of dealers said their stores have earned a “high level” of trust among their customers.

However, a December 2016 Gallup poll found that only 9% of car buyers felt the same.¹ This significant gap shows just how much dealers may need to rethink their operations and customer experiences.

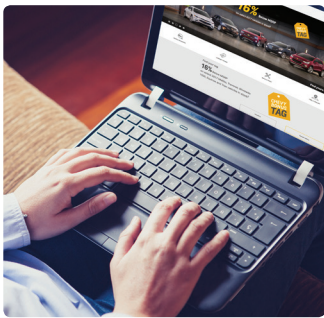
Don't fret just yet. With some modifications in the sales process, you can close the gap. Let's walk through 7 steps that may help you earn more of your buyers' trust.



1. Create Outstanding Online Experiences

During the car buying process, shoppers spend 60% of their time—5 hours and 12 minutes, to be exact—researching online or with apps.² That time likely includes a perusal of your website, as 72% of shoppers will visit a dealership's website before walking into the showroom.³ A buyer's experience on your website can be a deciding factor for whether they'll visit your dealership.

So, think about including information that makes your dealership more relatable, like a page that talks about your dealership's history, your involvement in the community, and even how you will help them save time and money. Customer testimonials are also a great way to help build trust and differentiate you from others. Build a library of testimonials and rotate them frequently. If you can capture them on video, even better.



2. Be Transparent Online

If a buyer is online looking for a specific model and features, they may compare prices on the OEM website, your website, and your local competitors' websites. If the model they want is listed at a higher price on your website compared to other websites, you may lose the sale without ever getting to greet the buyer.

Make sure your online inventory is complete and competitively priced. Also, be sure the vehicle information listed online stays in sync with what's on your lot—if it doesn't, your shopper may feel swindled right off the bat. However, if you provide transparent prices and information online, you'll start to earn the buyer's trust.



3. Build a Connection With Chat, Phone, and Email

Every time a shopper interacts with your employees by chat, phone, or email, you have an opportunity to create a positive impression. Some dealerships assign very experienced sales consultants to manage the "digital" channels. Be sure any information your shopper hears from your employees matches what they'll receive in your store.

If the shopper feels connected and informed, they're more likely to visit your dealership—and the stakes are high, considering 68% of shoppers visit just two dealerships or fewer before buying, and 40% of those shoppers visit only one dealership.⁴



4. Set the Tone

When the buyer steps onto your lot, start off on the right foot. If you start with a sales pitch, the buyer will most likely put up a barrier and you'll lose trust immediately. Start with a conversation and get to know the buyer as a person.

Since most shoppers have spent a lot of time exploring exactly what car they want and the price they want to pay, they might be able to tell you exactly what they want, down to the interior options.

If they don't know what they want yet, offer them a soda or coffee and ask questions to learn more about their desires—are they looking for something eco-friendly or do they want a vehicle with the latest technology? Starting off with the right information helps you find the right car for your buyer, leading to a better customer experience.



5. Listen to the Buyer

As the buyer is talking about their preferences and dislikes, *listen* to them. They may drop hints that will help you discover the perfect car and accessories package for them. Try active listening, which involves listening to your buyer, following what they're saying, and responding with a brief summary.

Don't make the mistake of "listening" to the buyer and then not really meeting their needs. If they're interested in a car with package A, don't ask them to test drive one with package B.

Body language, like eye contact, is just as important as listening and lets the buyer know that you're paying attention. A buyer might reveal more if you actively listen to them, plus, you'll gain their trust and better understand their needs.





6. Don't Leave the Buyer

How does your salesperson check inventory on the lot? What happens if they need to walk over to their manager for a question? Does your salesperson ever run inside to copy a driver's license? In these scenarios, and many others, the buyer is left alone to wonder and even worry what you may be discussing about them. They might even decide to walk right off the lot.

Today, many DMS providers offer mobile solutions for inventory, scenario building, deskings a deal, collaboration, alerts, and more, so you can stay with your buyer for the entire sales process and never leave them to worry. Not only does your presence increase trust, it also reduces your buyer's time at the dealership.



7. Give Added Value

Buyers are not only looking for a good deal, they want added value, like an easy and quick transaction. Does every step in your sales process help speed up their buying process from choosing the vehicle to looking at pricing options? Are you offering quality service at every turn? Have you partnered with third-party vendors who add value for your customers?

It might be time to analyze your technology provider's solutions as well, and make sure they're helping you streamline processes and reduce transaction times. More added value creates a happier customer and, in turn, increases their trust in your dealership.

Summary

The more trust you build with your buyer, the more likely you'll get the sale (and at a better margin), as well as improve the probability that they'll return for service and, ultimately, buy their next car from you. According to a J.D. Power study, highly satisfied customers are almost twice as likely to return to your dealership.⁵ Once you've built trust and good rapport with your buyer, after the sale, ask them to refer their friends, family, and colleagues to your dealership.

With some small adjustments, you can change your sales process and build trust—a win-win for you and your customers!

1 <http://www.autodealermonthly.com/news/story/2017/04/survey-dealers-have-trust-issues-lack-product-knowledge.aspx>

2 <http://press.autotrader.com/2016-03-21-For-Dealers-Online-Presence-Key-to-Influencing-Car-Shoppers>

3 http://perq.com/auto-dealer-digital-marketing/?utm_source=website&utm_medium=link&utm_term=autodealerdigitalmarketing&utm_content=2017carleads&utm_campaign=2017carleads

4 <http://www.dmeautomotive.com/announcements/1-in-6-car-buyers-skips-test-drive-nearly-half-visit-just-one-or-no-dealership-prior-to-purchase>

5 <http://www.jdpower.com/press-releases/2016-us-consumer-financing-satisfaction-study>



Autosoft provides and supports a complete dealer management system (DMS) that has received the Highest Rated DMS award from DrivingSales three years in a row. With affordable month-to-month contracts, Autosoft's DMS improves processes and reduces operating costs in over 2,000 franchised automotive dealerships. Easy-to-use, affordable, and innovative software helps dealers focus on their customers' needs.