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AS OUR ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT IN GENERAL AND THE MOTOR TRADE IN PARTICULAR, HAS TRANSITIONED THROUGH COVID, SUPPLY ISSUES AND A HOST OF HUMAN RESOURCES CHALLENGES, IT'S BEEN INTERESTING TO NOTE THE CHANGE IN THE ROLE OF THE AVERAGE SALESPERSON. I TAKE MY HAT OFF TO EACH AND EVERY ONE OF THEM. SALES MANAGERS, BUSINESS MANAGERS, SERVICE AND PARTS, ADMIN, THE ENTIRE CUSTOMER SERVICE AND SALES COMMUNITIES, HAVE HAD AN INTERESTING LEARNING EXPERIENCE. THE QUESTION IS; WHAT HAVE WE CHIEFLY LEARNED? BONUS QUESTION: WHAT ASPECTS OF OUR ROLES HAVE WE DISCOVERED WE NEED TO BE BETTER AT OR REFINE THE PROTOCOLS OF? I'VE LONG HELD THAT SALESPeOPLE ARE ACTUALLY MORE ACCOUNT MANAGERS THAN SALESPeOPLE AND NOW THAT CUSTOMERS HAVE TO WAIT TWO OR MORE YEARS FOR THEIR NEW CAR, THAT OPINION HAS BEEN VALIDATED. SO HERE'S SOME STUFF TO CONSIDER & A TIP OR TWO

CAN YOU MAKE A TRANSACTION IN THE ABSENCE OF A RELATIONSHIP?

Well, the answer is "yes." That was and will always remain a challenge; as customers don't pro-actively come into a dealership (or any other retail outlet for that matter) seeking a new friend. Whilst it's understood that creating a relationship is desirable, it's entirely the responsibility of the company's agent to ignite one. And then to prolong it. The traditional, "what's your best price mate?" isn't exactly conducive to a new friendship and the truth is that a customer/salesperson encounter can often commence or even conclude adversarially. "Order takers" know this. If the gross profit in the product is then used as a bargaining chip, there's not much hope for a mutually beneficial relationship. Indeed, the bigger the discount, the worse the account management or post-delivery relationship would be. Nowadays it's a bit of a different dynamic but a similar result. "What's your best price mate?" is now "how soon can I get one mate?" A different priority and a better one in some ways as the dealership can hold the price point but still in the absence of a relationship. You see, the encounter defaults to the result without any focus on the process. Unlike negotiating, supply is what it is. Stark reality. Cold hard facts. If a sale is concluded, it's transactional. A loveless marriage of convenience. This pisses everyone off and creates bad habits in the sales community and sour grapes in the customer community because they didn't feel they got a bargain! Not only that but now they have to wait. And then to wait.

TIP: I have no idea what the new normal will look like but I'm already seeing quotes from rival dealerships land on my partner's desks. Two things. Firstly, sending out a quote with little to no commitment to buy is like issuing a hunting license. Secondly, the quotes themselves show large discounts. Is the feeding frenzy over? Did they learn nothing? Suddenly those transactions done in the absence of a relationship have come home to roost. I hear terms like "gutsing the car." In case you don't know, this means ripping out all the gross profit and quoting to be unbeatable. It doesn't sound like there's much respect for the profession, the product or the company though, does it? My advice is to commence your customer encounters by being proud of the price. Bring it up first and then demonstrate value that surpasses it. This requires your belief, a bit of theater and some creative emotive words. Probably leave out the word "retail". No one is going to brag that they paid retail. "Current", "advertised", "campaign", "introductory" is better. Seek commitments as you progress throughout your process rather than expect one big glob of commitment at the end. Finally, like any relationship, yours will be doomed if the commitment isn't made mutually. So, never make a commitment without one otherwise you'll think you're selling but you're actually only serving. Go get 'em!



TIP: If you're in sales, you probably have a mountain of carry overs. That's a log jam that will distract you from creating new relationships. You may be frustrated and your time management skills tested. Your pending deliveries should be your priority because you don't get paid until they go out and they are eminently responsible for your next CSI score or google review. For new leads, you can safely assume the bulk of them will be totally aware of supply issues. Why not acknowledge that from the outset. "Steve, I'm sure you've done your due diligence and you're no doubt aware of the two-year ETA for delivery on that model. The good news is...." Put a spin on the size of your franchise and its influence. Note that customers often move up the waiting list faster than anticipated as people ahead of them experience changed circumstances. When you're following up, remember that if you make the call with an update, it's an explanation. If they call you for the same update, it's an excuse.



3 HOUR WAITS AREN'T UNCOMMON IN DISNEY PARKS. PATRONS ARE INFORMED BEFORE THEY COMMIT TO THE QUEUE. THEN THEY'RE ENTERTAINED AND TWO THINGS HAPPEN. TIME FLIES BECAUSE THEY'RE CONSIDERED AND THE ORIGINAL ESTIMATE ON THE WAIT WAS EXAGGERATED SO IT REALLY FLIES.