

Better, faster, stronger

New technologies can improve and streamline the F&I process for customers — and for those stuck on the other side of the desk



THE F&I OFFICE is one of the biggest money makers at any dealership. Because it's so important, it should be backed by a consistent and efficient process that has customers singing the dealership's praises after their sales experience.

But instead of feeling elated, many customers leave the F&I office scratching their heads and reeling about how long and disorganized the process was for them, taking away from celebrating the big purchase they just made.

It's no secret for dealers that their customers complain about being stuck in a room that's been described as a windowless cell for 60 minutes, while an F&I manager rattles off a list of products with such a cursory overview that the person on the receiving end becomes more confused than enlightened — and often less likely to want to spend more money.

And without multimedia and visual aids to help, the F&I process becomes even more dull and tedious, which doesn't encourage the customer to be more receptive to the additional products and warranties being offered.

Many customers leave the F&I office scratching their heads and reeling about how long and disorganized the process was for them, taking away from celebrating the big purchase they just made.

That's not to say the F&I process is being handled the same way by all dealerships, or even by the individual managers within them.

Customers will appreciate the process if F&I managers respect their time, keep the presentation engaging and are transparent throughout it.

Walking the show floor at the recent National Automobile Dealers Association Convention & Expo in San Francisco, there were rows of

automotive suppliers using flashy product demos and videos on large screens or tablets showing off their their latest technologies aimed at addressing these very issues.

Canadian auto dealer spoke with Reynolds & Reynolds, one of the suppliers that expects to deliver tangible results in the F&I office.

In its booth, the company was showing demos of its docuPAD product.

The technology uses an interactive screen on the surface of the desk in which an F&I manager can pull up videos, graphs and other content to present products and menus to customers in a clear, concise and engaging way. The screen can be tilted, zoomed in and flipped around for added customer convenience.

The company says docuPAD, available in the U.S. with plans to roll it out in Canadian dealerships in the upcoming months, will also add a layer of transparency for the F&I managers themselves, by prompting them to ensure all documents are accurate and have been signed and complete to meet disclosure requirements.

Just looking at the product demos, it's clear that these types of products are aimed at better connecting and engaging with customers using technology. These tools help customers get engaged, and even entertained with the process.

Another challenge for dealerships is to find the time and resources to keep the content and technologies from various vendors updated and current.

That's why Final Coat, a provider of appearance protection and other F&I products, updates the multimedia components on the back end to ensure dealer websites are always up-to-date.

To provide the dealer's site with a constant and refreshed stream of content, Sean Peek, Marketing Manager at Final Coat, says he and his marketing team control the content on their end through a web-based system called iFrame. A serialized code tracks the websites of its dealer partners so that all new photos, videos and any other updates will appear across the board on the dealer's end, says Peek.

Not only do Final Coat's solutions help dealers, but they also educate and empower consumers, who are able to control the information they want to receive — all without having to leave the dealer's website.

Peek says the company's marketing approaches and multimedia solutions ultimately boil down to the dealerships themselves, and their willingness to deliver a better customer experience. That's the only way they will see better results.



Zara McAlister is the Managing Editor of *Canadian auto dealer* and will be covering the business office and F&I trends in this regular column. To reach her or to suggest topics, please email: zmcAlister@universusmedia.com