

"Sold" Is The First Step To The Next Sale

BY BOB MCCANN



In last month's article, "Follow-up Road Map," I discussed how to reach out to prospects, start building relationships, and convince them to visit your dealership. I also covered how and when to follow up on those dealership visits in ways that convert prospects into buyers. This article details the next step in the process of growing lifelong customers.

What you do after you've made the first sale determines whether or not you drive additional service sales,

close the next deal, or get any referrals. After the initial phase of excitement wears off, new owners need reassurance that they bought the right RV from the right dealership, as they go through a learning process that may include a few potholes. This is your opportunity to support their needs, help them feel confident about their decision, subtly lead them back to you for future purchases, and refer their friends and family to your dealership.

A lead management solution designed for the RV industry will trigger post-delivery follow-up tracks as soon

BUILDING CUSTOMER LOYALTY

A customer's loyalty is earned – not granted. And good old-fashioned customer service is the most cost-effective loyalty-building tool you have. Your employees should be not only well-trained on the technical aspects of selling and servicing RVs, but they should also be passionate about going above and beyond to solve problems. They should want to exceed customer expectations and be willing to fill the occasional odd request or unusual need.

For instance, Tom Johnson Camping Center in North Carolina was recently contacted by a customer who owns a race team. The customer and team were on the road several states away when the engine on his tow vehicle gave out, and he called the dealership for help. "Thanks to our many years in business, we've grown an extensive network of contacts across the U.S., so we were able to get a replacement tow vehicle to him in 30 minutes to keep him on the road and on schedule," says Mark Eisenhart, director of marketing.

The customer posted videos on YouTube and positive comments on Twitter about the service he received from the dealership. "It's the kind of initiative we try to take with all our customers," says Eisenhart.

Driftwood RV Center, Clermont, N.J., has the same whatever-it-takes approach. If a prospect or customer can't come in during regular business hours, "we'll

schedule an appointment at their convenience or take an RV to their home," says John Worthington, marketing & information technology director.

Here are other tips for giving outstanding customer service:

- **Special customers deserve special offers.** Know who your special customers are and treat them as such. Create customized offers and loyalty discounts, making sure to tell them that these opportunities are only for them.
- **Referral programs fuel lead generation.** Offer customers \$100 for every referral who becomes a customer. Make the process easy – customers can either send the referral to your dealership or give you the person's name, number, and/or e-mail. Driftwood RV sends a cash gift to every customer whose referral leads to a sale.
- **People do business with people they know, like, and trust.** Let customers get to know you better by participating in online user groups and forums, as well as by using social media for two-way, free-flowing conversations. Your customers will get a deeper understanding of your values and reputation, and you'll have a better idea of what's on their mind so you can serve them better. Build



credibility with this soft-sell approach.

Tom Johnson Camping Center participates in Facebook and Twitter and also recently launched blogs. "We've had customers post on Facebook about great sales, service, and camping experiences at our dealership," says Eisenhart. "Recently, a potential customer posted that his friend had an exceptional sales experience and advised him that we were the only place to come buy an RV. And another customer responded to a Facebook post from the Tom Johnson Campfire Club, asking us about types of units in stock."

- **The hand-written note is not dead!** In this age of hyper-convenient e-mail and instant messaging, a hand-written note stands out from the crowd. You simply can't duplicate that special one-to-one feeling with any other communication tool. "Our customers are most impressed that we've taken the time to write a note instead of sending an email," says Eisenhart. Don't forget to include a business card, even if you gave one to the customer in the past.

as a customer's status goes from "sold" to "delivered." Be sure to mark customers as "sold"/ "delivered" in your lead management solution and not just in your dealer management system – otherwise, you have no way of accurately analyzing your performance and improving your process.

The first 30 days

The main goal during the first 30 days after a purchase is to demonstrate to the customer that he or she made the right decision. You need a clearly defined, step-by-step strategy for following up at set intervals.

- **Day 1:** The salesperson sends a hand-written thank you card or letter offering to answer any questions or concerns the customer has.
- **Day 5:** The salesperson calls the customer to ask if he or she has any questions, since chances are that by day five the customer has taken a short trip and had the chance to try out the unit's features.
- **Day 15:** The service manager sends a letter that introduces the service department and key contacts, thus positioning it as the only place to rely on for service.
- **Day 30-90:** The salesperson makes a follow-up call, asking open-ended questions designed to evaluate customer satisfaction and uncover potential issues. Sample questions: "Was everything as you had

expected?" and "Is there anything else we can help you with at this time?" The sooner you're aware of problems, the sooner you can fix them.

If the customer is satisfied at this stage, you can start asking for referrals – "Do you have friends or family members who have expressed interest in RVing or who might want some information on a newer model?"

Mark Eisenhart, director of marketing at Tom Johnson Camping Center, a two-location dealership in North Carolina, goes a step further in his follow-up. At the 30-day mark, he mails a letter from the parts department offering 10 percent off RV covers. After 60 days, he sends a service letter with a coupon for 10 percent off parts and service and a reminder about warranty information.

"And at month 11, our F&I department receives a reminder from our lead management solution to offer a service contract to customers who didn't purchase a service warranty, before their one-year warranty expires," Eisenhart says.

Bob McCann is director of education at ARI, where he develops e-business sales processes for dealers and manufacturers in the RV, marine, power sports, and outdoor power equipment industries. He is the author of the e-business sales method known as TIPS. McCann can be reached at (800) 755-6040 or at mccann@arinet.com. ■



NOW— Increase Service Gross Profits by at least \$200,000—GUARANTEED!

Scores of dealers across the US are earning \$200K, \$300K, \$400K and more added Service Gross Profits simply by joining the RVMAX \$200K Club.

Our top dealer will be up more than \$800K Service Gross Profit over last year!

No Risk—if you don't make more money WE DON'T GET PAID!

Call or email today, and we'll get you started with our **NO COST \$200K Club Business Plan.**

Call Today!

Toll-Free: **1.877.RV.PROFIT** or **1.877.787.7634**

Or e-mail Don at: dreed@rvmaxtraining.com

www.rvmaxtraining.com

**\$200K
CLUB**

RVMAX

Don Reed, CEO