

More To Show From Your Show Investment

Get extra sales using this lead-management approach

BY BOB MCCANN



Most new prospects who visit a dealer's booth at an RV show for the first time aren't ready to commit on the spot. RVs are luxury purchases that often require a long-term research and buying process, so this first visit is often the beginning of the sales process rather than the sale per se. That's why having a strategy that starts before the show and continues afterwards will translate into more sales in the long run.

Build buzz

Drive potential buyers to your booth with a pre-show e-mail campaign. Send a short message to your prospects giving the dates, location, and models you'll be displaying. Give them the opportunity to find out more by including a hyperlink to a page about the show on your website – not the show's website – to keep them focused on what your dealership has to offer.

To spur potential buyers into action, include dealership traffic builders in your e-mail. No one can resist a freebie – invite prospects to come by and pick up free or discounted show tickets and parking passes. While they're at the dealership, tell them they can get a free T-shirt, hat, or koozie by visiting your booth. Wouldn't you be more inclined to buy an RV from a dealership that treats you so well this early in your research process?

"We give out free or discounted tickets to our hot prospects," says Mike Pearo, general sales manager, Hilltop Trailer Sales, Fridley, MN. "At the last Minneapolis/St. Paul RV, Vacation & Camping Show, we offered discounted tickets to 130 potential customers, met with 32 of them at the show, and closed five of them."

The assigned salesperson should send the pre-show e-mail, since a personal touch gets a prospect's attention. In fact, our research shows that when potential buyers receive an e-mail from the salesperson they know, open rates are 400 percent higher than when the e-mail is sent by the dealership.



Mike Pearo (top photo) gave discounted show tickets to his top prospects and was able to close with five of them. Mark Eisenhart (left) garnered 3,500 leads by having show attendees submit their contact information for a chance to tour a \$1.5 million luxury RV.



"Each of our sales associates runs a pre-show campaign, inviting prospects and customers to come to the booth," says Steve Fretz, general manager, Fretz RV, Souderton, PA. "We also send an e-mail blast to our newsletter subscribers and promote our presence at the show via Facebook."

Mark Eisenhart, director of marketing, Tom Johnson Camping Center, Marion, NC, has a slightly different approach. "We send out a pre-show newsletter using our lead-management solution. The content refers to the show but also includes other sections about exciting offers at our dealership. The two most popular news items in our last pre-show campaign included a new line of travel trailers and a model clearance sale."

This may seem like a time-consuming endeavor, but it doesn't have to be. There are affordable and proven lead-management solutions that let you search and segment your database and launch e-marketing campaigns in minutes. Look for a provider that includes templates you can use as a starting point and personalize to promote your dealership. With the right solution, you can customize a

template-based e-mail to change the default e-mail name and address to those of the assigned salesperson.

Gather prospect info

At the show, each salesperson should use multi-copy customer information cards (CICs), with one copy going to your lead-management employee. Require your sales staff to collect as much information as possible from all prospects they spend significant time with.

Motivate your sales team to gather lots of prospect data with a daily contest. Example: Give a \$100 gift card to the salesperson who gathers the most CICs with one e-mail address or two phone numbers (home and cell). And encourage prospects to share their info by holding a give-away that they can enter by submitting their e-mail address. "Our last give-away was a 42" HD TV at the Greater Philadelphia RV Show in Oaks," says Fretz. "About 300 people signed up for it."

"We do a daily drawing for a \$500 gift card valid at our parts store," says Pearo. "At our last spring open house, we generated almost 400 new leads from that contest." Eisenhart also has give-aways for customers who enter their contact information, including camping stays at the dealership's centers. One of his most popular give-aways was the chance to tour a \$1.5 million luxury RV during last year's North Carolina RV Show in Charlotte. "People had to register and provide their full contact information, which generated 3,500 leads," says Eisenhart.

Show leads should be entered into your lead-management system as soon as the prospect leaves the booth – not simply kept at the salesperson's desk. After the data is in your system, follow-up activities can be automatically scheduled. Fretz has a defined strategy with specific touch points, including e-mails and phone calls that he schedules with his lead-management system.

Get a jump on follow-up

Follow-up should actually begin at the show. Schedule a simple "thank you" e-mail to prospects as soon as their contact information has been added to the database. Wouldn't you feel special if you came home from a show and found a friendly and helpful e-mail from the salesperson you met only a few hours ago? Wouldn't that dealership stand out in your mind?

"We always send out a 'thank you' e-mail from the show using the automated template in our lead-management solution," says Pearo. "We know it accelerates the buying cycle because we often get an e-mail back from



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those prospects, that night or the following day, which leads to a new appointment, either at the show, or a few days later at our dealership."

Be sure to add the automatic template to your lead-management solution before the show, and assign a lead-management associate at the event. "Our person is in charge of e-mailing a 'thank you' within 10 minutes of the prospect leaving the booth," says Eisenhart. "Our solution lets us to do that in a few minutes and a couple of clicks."

The message should be short and branded with the dealership's logo. Thank individuals for stopping by, invite them to contact the salesperson they met at the show for further assistance, and include a link to your website for more information on your dealership, inventory, and events.

"By starting follow-up right away, we increase our chances of being the first dealer to show interest," says Pearo. "It demonstrates our high level of customer service immediately and builds trust."

At the show, have the lead-management associate sort leads by salesperson and print them at the end of each day. The following morning, while the show is still slow, have your salespeople make follow-up calls to thank prospects for coming by (they may not have read your e-mail) and to find out where they stand in their decision-making. Beginning the follow-up process at the show makes your dealership stand out in a crowd of fierce competitors and establishes that crucial personal connection with potential buyers.

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— Steve Fretz, general manager, Fretz RV, Souderton, PA

Bring them back to the dealership

Organize a post-show open house for no later than two weeks after the event. Create two e-mail campaigns – one for booth visitors and one for the remaining prospects in your database. Thank visitors for stopping by, mention the RV they discussed at the show, and invite them to an open house – their last chance to benefit from special show prices! Ask them to call or e-mail to schedule an appointment during the open house, and link to your website for more information on this special event. "Our strategy is to

offer special show pricing for another week to both customers who came by and to our newsletter subscribers who didn't make it," says Fretz.

The e-mail to the remaining prospects should say, "Sorry we missed you at the show; come to our open house and benefit from special show pricing." Hilltop Trailer Sales' Pearo says that during his open house after the 2010 Minneapolis/St. Paul RV, Vacation & Camping Show, he "sold nearly 70 percent of what we sold during the show."

Generating interest before the show, beginning follow-up at the show, and extending the opportunity for a great deal with a post-show open house will help you stand out from the crowd and build customer relationships. This three-pronged strategy will make you the dealer who comes to mind when prospects are ready to buy. Small and large dealerships alike can use website and lead-management solutions to automate portions of the sales process and maintain crucial, sustained relationships with prospects.

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