

time. Do you know why they say that? Because most of them are!

The classic dealership sales meeting consists of the sales manager going around the room and asking each sales person how many vehicles they have sold, and how many they have working. Isn't that something the sales manager should already know? Do we really need to get a bunch of people together to go over just that?

The sales meeting is probably the best opportunity we have to communicate and train. Our sales meetings need to consist of positive, motivational information that will equip us with the information to become better sales people.

The universal maxim asks, "What kind of company would my company be if everyone in it was just like me?" If you want to go to the top in F&I, and to the top of your dealership, be the one who people enjoy hearing from because you have something positive and informative to offer the sales team.

First, you'll need to prepare yourself. Every good sales meeting begins with excellent preparation. Ask yourself three questions:

- **What do you want your audience to know?**
- **What do you want your audience to feel?**
- **What do you want your audience to do?**

Remember the following acronym when presenting. Since an effective sales meeting is measured through the audience, don't let them SUFFER through it.

Start: Plan a good beginning since that will catch the audience's attention.

Unlike: They will remember information that is unique or stands out in your presentation.

Finish: Prepare a strong finish so the sales staff wants more. This will keep them talking about your topic long after you are finished.

Frequent: Items that are mentioned several times during your presentation will be remembered.

Exclusive: Material should be presented so it is in the audience's perspective. For example, customers need to be turned over to the F&I manager at point of sale because it will improve the dealership CSI.

Remarkable: The sales people will remember, therefore, they will act upon information that stands out.

STEP 7: WRITE DOWN THE EXPECTATIONS YOU HAVE FOR THE F&I DEPARTMENT

If you want others to know what the policies and procedures are for your department, write them down!

Include things like:

- What documentation is needed for a finance customer.
- Prepare a lender call backlog for all to see.
- Describe the products that are sold in the F&I office.
- How to properly turn over a customer to the F&I office.

STEP 8: NEW IDEAS ARE WORTH LOOKING AT!

I know, those people with new ideas seem to come at the most inopportune times. So, schedule an appointment with them.

The top F&I managers are always looking for new ideas (i.e. new lending sources, products, or other F&I services and equipment).

You may not need them now, but they might be necessary in the future. The more people you talk to about your profession, the more educated you'll become.

STEP 9: READ ABOUT YOUR PROFESSION

Professional athletes these days make a tremendous amount of money. Some say they do this strictly on their natural ability. If you talked to the best of them, I'm sure they would tell you they update their skills everyday. Yet, we in the F&I business think we can go in and wing it.

The best F&I managers stay on the cutting edge of their profession. They stay versed on the latest developments in their field and then respond proactively to the changes that make sense.

You need to read daily about your profession. There are a variety of publications in our industry that are a good source of information. You already know about one of the best, since you found this article in it. There are many others. I'll leave that for you to find. (It will be a good exercise of your will to make this happen!)

Reading 20 minutes a day will give you an edge on the competition. You don't

have to limit yourself only to automobile literature; there are plenty of other good sales books and publications that will help you go to the top in F&I.

STEP 10: ESTABLISH A GOAL SETTING PLAN

The superior F&I people set weekly, monthly, quarterly, and even yearly goals. The goals can be everything from your yearly income, dollars per retail unit, sales meetings per month, or any other task that will get you the results you are looking for.

I recommend brainstorming and coming up with a list of the things you think are important to accomplishing your job as F&I manager. Once you have the list, make a plan for each goal. Each goal should include:

- Definition of your goal
- Established time frame
- Goals must be measurable
- They must be written down
- Make sure they are flexible
- Developed plan of action for each goal

CONCLUSION

Most people think all there is to F&I is selling the products, printing the paperwork and taking a few bankers to lunch. Sure, if you don't want to go to the top you can get away with just that and probably even make a living.

The F&I managers with that "driving edge" are all looking for the subtle advantage that comes from the heart. They expect to be the best, then they set out to accomplish it. The average manager puts limits on him or herself; after all, it seems to them to be much easier to make excuses for their performance than to challenge themselves.

I heard Tiger Woods say once that he shoots for "professional excellence." I'll take that every time! ■

Editor's note: Ron Martin's company, The Vision of F&I, Inc., conveys his vision through seminars and consulting to dealers around the country. To learn more or to order his book, The Vision of Finance and Insurance: A Training Narrative, contact The Vision of F&I, Inc., at (219) 637-2796 or visit www.thevisionoffandi.com.