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Crystal Clear

Clarity demystifies the F&I process.

Today's demanding car consumer has a thirst for knowledge, not only about the vehicle they're purchasing or leasing, but about everything a dealer may offer—like F&I products and services.

"They want information about rates, the best options for leasing or buying," says Patrick Horne, Director Product Planning at Naked Lime. "There's a definite upside for a dealer to put F&I online for transparency's sake. Right away, the customer feels more comfortable having a conversation with that dealership about those products."

As a company that works in both the U.S. and Canadian markets, Horne has noticed transparency is particularly important to the Canadian car consumer. "All the dealerships we work with have told us they need to be fully transparent," says Horne. "They tell us their customers aren't going to tolerate anything less—all the line items show exactly what makes up that price, everything has to be clearly illustrated."

Educating the consumer

Transparency creates trust in a dealership. "The consumer can get that information from anywhere," notes Horne. "Why not provide it to them in the same media that the consumer is using, like the internet. When the dealer has more information on their site, the consumer will

to do so," she notes. "And you might potentially lose business."

It's not about selling F&I online, but more about educating the consumer and giving them what they want in order to make the best decision. "If a consumer has done some research, they can ask the proper questions when they come in," says Rowsell. "It now

in Canada. "They expect transparency," says Rowsell. "They love reading reviews, self-educating blogs, linking to product information. If you can be the dealer to deliver it, that solidifies your position in the market."

Elisa Krummen, Marketing and Communication Co-ordinator at EVOLIO, compares transparency to the first door that a customer will open at a dealership. "Customers are shopping around different dealer websites," she says. "Let them know what features and benefits your products have."

It also goes a long way to demystifying the F&I process. "Some dealers feel they may be eroding profit opportunities by providing information," says Christine Rybas, Executive Vice President of Marketing at LGM Financial Services. "But you're providing information, not the price. A dealer's opportunities will increase if consumers can get information. This has happened with every retail environment—transparency will come, and be an excellent benefit once everyone learns to embrace it."

"When the dealer has more information on their site, the consumer will understand what they're buying."

Patrick Horne, Director of Product Planning, Naked Lime

understand what they're buying. It improves the relationship."

Trish Rowsell, Director of Client Services and Marketing at Strathcom Media, says having F&I information online could mean the difference between gaining and losing a sale. "If you're not delivering that information to consumers, someone else is happy

becomes more of a conversation where you can introduce them to other products that tie into their needs."

Millennials expect transparency

Transparency is particularly important to Millennials, who are poised to become the most relevant demographic

Getting the F&I Leads Out

Web offerings can work wonders.

These days, vehicle sales leads from online car shoppers are a tidy source of business for dealers.

And when you add F&I products and services to the mix, there's an even higher quality of leads.

"Even three years ago, there was no such thing as getting F&I leads at all from a website. They were pure sales leads," says Trish Rowsell, Director of Client Services and Marketing for Strathcom Media. "But now, dealers get questions about F&I products as well as vehicles, making for a higher lead quality. The uptick in those leads means the sales and finance team work together to respond, and get that shopper in to answer their questions."

"That's where we've seen the hugest difference in those Dealerships that have embraced providing F&I products on their sites. The payoff is the leads coming in based on those products."

Whet customer's appetite

According to Elisa Krummen, Marketing and Communications Co-ordinator at EVOLIO, the key to having customers make contact with inquiries is to offer just enough information to whet their appetite.

"If you put some information and provide a form, they will send it to the dealer with their questions," says Krummen. For example, explaining that you have quality insurance and optional add-ons that provide superior benefits to the consumer. "You want to give as much detail as you can to attract the customer, and then a call to action with a form that's easy to complete and forward to you."

For example, an express credit application can work well. "It's very short and uncomplicated, so people are more inclined to submit their co-ordinates," says Krummen. "There are many leads that come in from express credit applications, more so than the formal long credit applications, the customer doesn't have to give



Trish Rowsell, Director, Client Services and Marketing, Strathcom Media

says Rowsell. "So if a customer in your area—Google is very committed to serving local results—is searching for F & I products, even if it isn't your brand or the models you carry, you have a better chance of having your website show up in the first page of the search results."

So a dealer who has an entire landing page around extended warranty and why it's important, complete with keywords, will improve their SEO rankings. "There are all kinds of benefits for the dealer, you might pay less for online advertising because you're performing well from an organic perspective, so you may not have to invest as much," says Rowsell.

"You'll have good site data, you'll be able to see as people click through, and certain pages will spark interest. You'll have all this great data that you as a dealer can now use to maximize your lead flow through ratio."

Krystyna Lagowski

all their information. It becomes the first step where the dealership will communicate back and finalize the process either on the phone or in person."

Noticed by Google

And when there is a lot of interaction and activity on a website, it will get noticed by Google. "When Google notices that a dealership is clearly knowledgeable about a topic, it will get crawled and indexed more frequently,"