

TRAINING

Mastering Your Craft

How can you tell if an F&I trainer is right for you?

How sharp is your F&I game? In these ever-changing times, it's critical to be savvy and up to date, and the best way to do that is to find the right trainer.

"Our programs are extremely flexible," says Nathalie Abdallah, Manager of Retail Training at LGM Financial Services. "That's why we have different types of training sessions such as e-learning, in-class and in-dealership."

With in-store training, the trainer will go to the dealership. "It's a personalized session," says Abdallah. "The client can decide the duration of the coaching session, it can be one day, two days and even more. We focus on the dealership's priorities. We can cover a wide array of subjects ranging from process refinement, organizational management, objection handling and other key performance indicators to achieve success in the Financial Services Office."

The success of tailor-made training is that it focuses on something that's going on in that specific dealership. It will also include the results of research that's been done with the client ahead of time.

Matching beliefs

Ron Reahard, President of Reahard and Associates, agrees that customizing programs is important. "Some dealers have the salespeople handle the transaction from beginning to end," he says. "Others have details recorded on the showroom floor, and established by the desk before involving F&I. You have to have a process that can be adapted

to the dealer's sales philosophy and how they want to sell cars."

Reahard also believes it's crucial to match the philosophy and beliefs of the dealer to the trainer. "You have to match the trainer's approach to the dealer's approach," he says. "Does their approach work with the way the dealer wants their customers treated? That's a very important component."

Reputation is another key issue. "How long has a trainer been in business?" Reahard asks. "Who are they doing business with? Are those dealers I respect?" He works with many dealer groups that are concerned with maintaining their reputation. "They want to make sure they're honest and ethical, and they want to make sure that everybody that they hire and work with is the right type of person."

And although it's a good sign if a company that's been in business for many years, it's still wise to get references. "Do your due diligence," advises Reahard.

Follow up

Look for a trainer who's been published. It provides a view of their belief system, their philosophy and approach. "If they've been published or quoted, they know what they're doing," says Reahard. "It gives you a good comfort level, that you're choosing someone who's been around."

And make sure that the trainer provides follow-up courses. "In a three day class, we throw an awful lot at attendees," says Reahard. "It's hard for them to grasp it all."

"Dealers track results, we track effort," notes Reahard. "If you have a training program and you


monitor whether they're doing their training, their effort will improve. If effort improves, performance improves. You've got to track effort—not just wins and losses. We're going to put you through the training, watch what you do, and help in those areas where you need help."

Trends

"We have weekly meetings and share articles about different industry trends," says Abdallah. "Our company also shares this industry news on our social media feeds, so that our followers, including internal staff, are always one click away from reading relevant information."

"We also have surveys that go out after each session that ask participants about what they thought of the content, the trainer and the event in general. Was there anything else they would like to see? We're always striving to improve ourselves in every single area that we can, not just the main event—the whole journey."

Technology and communicating with customers online is impacting the finance office. "Now you've got turnovers with customers on the phone," says Abdallah. "I always say, act as if the customer is in front of you, use the same visual aids that you previously emailed to your customer, sit straight in your chair while you're talking, speak with a smile on your face, even if the customer is not in front of you."

"Those are all little tips that we're able to train on and it's the reality of the future. We don't just stay with what we have—we adapt to what's needed in the field."  *Krystyna Lagowski*



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