



BY RICK MCCORMICK

Connecting Over Closing!

Here are a few ways to move your focus from closing to connecting.

“I’ve learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.” — MAYA ANGELOU

How well are you connecting with your customers? Or rather, how are you making your customers feel? What experience are you offering? Do customers leave your office feeling sold and overwhelmed, or excited, informed, and confident? The major contributor to success with any client interaction is connecting with them on a personal level.

As society continues to turn away from in-person conversation in exchange for online meetings, interactions with customers are being tested. When someone makes a major purchase like a vehicle, they are looking for a professional that is both knowledgeable and interested in their well-being. There are still many ways to connect with your customer. Here are a few to move your focus from closing to connecting.

BE GENUINE!

Customers can detect a “canned” process and phony acting a mile away. Genuine professionals know that speaking with care and confidence leads to better results. Customers catch on to your attitude quickly and once they make a judgement concerning your genuineness, it is almost impossible to change it. Get the customer to laugh in the first two minutes and you have paved the way for the rest of your interaction. If you are having fun, they are too, and the resistance they were preparing beforehand, vanishes.

We focus too much effort on asking good questions in the process and uncovering customers’ needs. Genuine people create natural chemistry. It is not a trait they turn on and off — authenticity is always on. Their real interest in other people makes it easier for them to ask good questions and relate what they learn to other important facets of the conversation. When a customer mentions they have grandchildren, simply asking them if they have pictures will prompt many to open their cell phone and share. Asking a real question that matters opens the gate for the rest of your interaction.

LISTEN! LISTEN! LISTEN!

The focal point of connecting is listening to the customer. Asking questions to get to know them and finding out what their needs are shows genuine effort to help the customer, not sell them. They want options in product choice and payment. Our products help



them avoid a potential problem and provides value and peace of mind. When making a major purchase, these are the concerns most customers have, and they are looking for solutions. When you fail to listen, you are not only forfeiting the information you need, but the disconnection created makes the customer feel this conversation is more about your profits than their needs.

Avoid aggressive selling — be consultative and conversational so they understand your intentions are pure. Nobody likes to be sold. Avoid opening with product talk and instead begin with authentic questions. Then sit back, listen, and learn. Many customers will have questions or concerns when seeing the increased cost of the products we offer. Answering with, “You told me earlier...” not only proves you were listening, but it also allows the customer to see that they themselves uncovered their need for the coverage being discussed. We must move from being a good talker, to a great listener.

Connecting with customers is not a technique, it is a commitment that impacts every aspect of your business. When you take the time to create honest and real connections with customers, they will share with others that they’ve found a safe and enjoyable place to buy a vehicle.

Join me on our journey to Peak Performance again next month. Keep climbing! ■

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Rick McCormick is the national account development manager for Reahard & Associates, which provides customized F&I training for dealerships throughout the U.S. and Canada. He has more than 20 years of auto retail and finance experience.