

MOOD: MEDIA

THE 4 PILLARS OF THE DEALERSHIP OF THE FUTURE

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Like the rest of the consumer marketplace, the automotive industry sustained a considerable setback in the first half of 2020. Even prior to the age of social distancing, consumer preferences were beginning to trend increasingly towards a more digital car buying experience. Together, these two factors have temporarily left showrooms relatively empty.

However, the industry knows far too well that great challenges present even greater opportunities. The global marketplace will inevitably rebound, and eager buyers will flock back to dealership lots – even if they continue

to begin the process online. As a result, the dealership experience has actually become more important than ever before, and it's going to take more than great pricing and incentives to turn things around and get ahead of the competition.

Your ability to excite and connect with customers on a more personal and emotional level will determine your success in the months ahead, and more importantly, the loyalty you generate for years to come. In this article, you'll learn the four pillars of the dealership experience of the future, and how you can leverage them to remain ahead of the curve as the marketplace strengthens.

Pillar #1 The Experience Must Be Safe

Whether we like it or not, safety and assurance are going to be the primary focus for every industry for the foreseeable future – and automotive is no exception. Yes, spacious showrooms and car lots are naturally conducive to social distancing and present lower risk, but you still need to implement the requisite measures to assure your customers and your team that your business is safe. These measures include:

a) Deep cleaning and sanitization. What clean means today is not what it meant in 2019, and a more comprehensive level of sanitization is needed in today's commercial and work environments. There are a variety of new and innovative cleaning and sanitization solutions available on the market, specifically made for commercial environments. For example:

- + **Health monitoring systems** – a kiosk where customers and staff can check their temperature, obtain masks and sanitize their hands.
- + **LED sanitization lighting** – LED light fixtures that continuously disinfect surfaces while providing light.
- + **UV light disinfection** – mobile lighting units that disinfect spaces with UV light.
- + **Electrostatic spraying cleaners** – cleans and disinfects a variety of surfaces, including many hard-to-reach surfaces, where germs and viruses tend to thrive.

- + **Antimicrobial coating solutions** – used after electrostatic spraying to make surfaces self-disinfecting.
- + **Air quality monitoring** – monitors, measures and reports the levels of all pathogens within the cubic airspace of an area.

b) Communicating best practices. This measure serves the dual purpose of actively promoting a safe environment while openly communicating your commitment to safety and assurance at your dealership. Common best practices you'll want to share include, "Please maintain a distance of 6 feet apart," "Avoid touching your face," "Team – wash hands often for at least 20 seconds." These examples are just a few of the many.

Two of the most effective mediums for delivering these communications are overhead messaging and digital signage. These solutions are simple and efficient to update, they capture our attention, and as you'll learn throughout this article, they are essential elements of the dealership of the future. Be sure to incorporate your safety and assurance communications into your digital signage and messaging content strategies.

Car buying already comes with a degree of tension for many customers, so anything you can do to ease their concerns about the safety of your business will go a long way towards building trust and loyalty to your business.

For more ideas on safety, read [Safety, Assurance & your Customer Experience: 5 Keys](#).

Pillar #2 The Experience Must Build Trust

Yes, building trust is still a necessary key to success for auto dealers. Fewer in-person interactions with customers means that you need to focus even more on making each interaction one that inspires comfort and confidence. Friendliness, relatability, responsiveness and an eagerness to listen are essential characteristics that today's buyers expect to experience from your team.

Even in today's partially remote world of auto buying, trust is still established when there is a personal connection between the dealer and the buyer. Get creative and give some serious consideration to how you can personalize the experience in meaningful ways. For example:

- + Displaying signage that says "Welcome (Buyer)!" when a customer comes in for their test drive appointment
- + Playing their favorite music genres
- + Having the customer's favorite soft drink ready when they come in to sign paperwork

Even for today's car buyers, the small touches still go a long way in building trust and creating an experience they'll want to repeat.

Pillar #3 The Experience Must Be Exciting

The dealership of the future has to look and feel futuristic if you want to keep customers excited. If more customers are starting the auto buying process pointing and clicking their way through your inventory from the comfort of their homes, then why not provide an even more immersive version of that experience at your dealership?

With digital kiosks and interactive touchscreens, you can help buyers draw up their dream car or truck with their fingertips. Make sure buyers know about this technology by including enticing calls-to-action on your website to schedule an appointment to find the car of their dreams.

Other features such as dynamic video walls in the showroom and engaging menu boards in the service area are also incredibly effective ways to bring the wow factor to your dealership - while boosting your bottom line. We're visual by nature, and digital signage gets our attention like nothing else.

Pillar #4 Make the Experience Comfortable

Creating a sense of comfort isn't just essential for the service center - it's also a key keeping your customers in a favorable buying spirit. Everything from the seating in waiting areas and the friendliness of your sales team to the scents you use play a key role in keeping customers at ease and more motivated to buy.

Speaking of scent, the reason it's so important for your Customer Experience is the science behind it. From a neurological perspective, our sense of smell is most strongly tied to memory and emotion - more than any other sense. As such, deploying the right fragrances throughout your dealership can trigger positive memories and create new ones for your buyers.

Depending on your specific brand experience, you may want to go with an invigorating citrus-based scent. If you sell luxury model vehicles, then a more sophisticated vanilla, lavender or leather-based scent will be most ideal. Find a qualified Scent Marketing provider to walk you through your options.

Last, but not least, music is still the key to your customers' hearts - especially when it comes to younger buyers. Make sure that the music you play is reflective of your brand and that it appeals to your target clientele. Choose an experienced provider that offers a wide variety of programming that you can instantly switch and schedule for any time of day.

Safety, trust, excitement and comfort. What will work tomorrow truly isn't much different from what worked in years past. How you address these pillars today is different - and how well you do it will determine your future success and the level of loyalty you generate.

For more information on bringing these four pillars to your dealership, [contact us](#) today.