

CHURCH: DO YOU HEAR WHAT I HEAR | McCORMICK: RHYTHM OF THE SALE | VAN OVER: THE SYSTEM IS DOWN

# F&I and Showroom

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## THE F&I EXPERIENCE

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# SELL THE EXPERIENCE

The goal should always be to listen and understand your customers better, not just to present a menu and overcome an objection.

BY LLOYD TRUSHEL

**Do you ever have a customer that says “no” right away? The kind of person that rejects your information immediately, without even listening to your presentation? They make decisions without any real data.** It’s completely dysfunctional, yet it happens to every one of us. The decisions we make are only as good as the data we use to make those decisions, and customers without good data cannot make a good decision.

They won’t listen to the data. They don’t trust you, so they tune you out. They have the perception of you as not trustworthy, and therefore your words have no meaning. It’s hard to move these people with word-tracks designed to sell a product. They simply go off script. This type of person can wreck an F&I manager’s morning.

Many times, this customer actually needs your products, but a canned presentation isn’t going to get them past their cynicism. They need personal attention. They need to know you’re doing this for them, not you. To get past their cynicism, you have to be more focused on them and less focused on selling products. I know that it’s counter intuitive, but it’s the only way you’re going to communicate with them. You need a dialogue, not a monologue.

The goal is to listen and understand

them better, not just to present a menu and overcome an objection. Besides, they’ll have another objection, so when does it end?

Instead, focus on what’s important to them. I try to gather data about their habits. For instance, where do they shop? Someone that usually shops at Walmart gets an entirely different experience than someone who shops at Macy’s. So, I ask myself: Which kind of customer do I have? Walmart or Macy’s? Maybe it turns out they don’t care deeply about the overall experience. Their concern might only be narrowed solely down to “price,” but that’s rare and getting rarer.

Today, lots of people simply won’t shop at Walmart for a myriad of reasons, and low pricing simply won’t entice them in the door. It’s not all about price. It extends to feelings about trust, character, and value. Personally, I do not spend money with people I don’t like, and if you look, act, or sound like you’re only job is selling, I’ll say “no deal.” Instead, show me your true colors. Forget price for a moment. Forget about the bump. Forget your sales quotas and just show me how you can honestly help me have a better experience with your product or the vehicle I’m buying, and then I’ll vote with my wallet.

## WHO ELSE VOTES WITH THEIR WALLET?

Three out of four people that visit Disney become return visitors. Why? Disney isn’t the low-price leader, are they? They’re just like Apple, Lego, and many other companies that sell experiences rather than price.

People already have the data on Disney. It’s about the experience. It’s about trust, character, and value. The overall perception is that Disney always delivers, and accordingly, people vote with their wallets by paying up for the better experience. The same dynamic should occur when someone is buying a new vehicle, and our focus needs to be on helping our customers get the best experience available.

Yes, the best experience always costs more, but it’s worth it. It’s worth it for many reasons, but I’m going to cover two big ones: Economics and emotions.



**REMEMBER, YOU'RE NOT JUST SELLING PRODUCTS,  
YOU'RE SELLING AN OWNERSHIP EXPERIENCE.**

**1 Economically:** Three-fourths of Americans live paycheck to paycheck. If you're living check to check, then what's easier, coming up with \$30 in 30 days or \$2,500 right now?

**Try this:** Instead of selling a VSC or GAP, focus on helping people secure economic protection. It's more difficult than it sounds. It requires you to think differently. It also challenges your belief systems if you don't believe in the products you sell.

**2 Emotionally:** If your focus is only on the "one bad day in the shop" type of manipulation to close the sale today, chances are, they'll tune you out. Customers are turned off by people that only use scare-tactics. Notice I said "only." You need balance — you can talk about scary things when the threat is real, and you balance your discussion

equally with benefits. Overall, the most profound benefit I've experienced is peace of mind or the avoidance of stress, so go there.

**Try this:** Imagine yourself living check to check. You just came out of the grocery store and suddenly your car isn't starting. You just spent a huge amount of money on groceries, and they're going to spoil fast. You must arrange a tow truck and decide which mechanic you'll trust to tear your car apart and determine the problem. Also, you have no extra money. How do you feel? How will you pay? How will you get to work? If you miss work, how will you pay other bills?

When your customer is in a difficult economic position and you can't communicate with them, you and the customer have engaged in a relationship where both parties lose. You miss

your sales goals, and your customer is unprotected against economic catastrophe. It's a lose-lose situation.

Had some real communication occurred, they would have bought a VSC and would not be in a downward economic spiral, and you would have gotten the sale. There's no longer a problem. Instead, they call a tow truck and have the vehicle towed to the dealership. The tow is covered by roadside, and the repair is covered by the VSC. A rental is provided. Peace of mind and avoidance of stress continue for you and your customer.

Remember, you're not just selling products, you're selling an ownership experience. ■

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

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