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Finding Greatness in the Box

BY LLOYD TRUSHEL



F&I professionals who stop swinging for the fences and focus on base hits stand to gain the confidence of their customers and the per-copy average that comes with it.

Babe Ruth was a professional baseball player for 22 years.

During his career, the “Sultan of Swat” faced opposing pitchers 8,400 times and was feared as a force to be reckoned with because of his ability to hit home runs. That said, over 91% of the time, he didn’t actually hit a home run.

Babe Ruth’s greatness actually occurred through runs batted in (RBIs). He only hit 714 home runs (an 8.5% success rate), but he was responsible for producing 2,213 RBIs — which wouldn’t have been possible without the base hits his teammates produced.

Take Barry Bonds. He hit more home runs than Babe Ruth but never won a World Series. The difference wasn’t personal ability. It was the ability of Babe Ruth’s teammates to produce base hits consistently.

In the box, we must strive for consistency. We get 60 to 70 at-bats a month and we typically don’t rotate through eight other players before we’re up again. I see a lot of F&I managers focused on the instant gratification and short-term goal of hitting a “home run.” That might feel exciting, but the bigger accomplishment is being consistent.

See, I believe in approaching every customer with short and long-term goals in mind, because the importance of reducing future risks like chargebacks and poor CSI cannot be ignored.

For instance, if I run a very high per-copy average but have a low penetration rate, you can bet I’m a home run hitter. You can be certain I’ll also have lots of “strikeouts,” a.k.a. chargebacks. My customers refinance, they cancel products, they refuse products in the future, and, if they feel taken advantage of, they never come back. This is not a formula for long-term success.

Focusing on producing base hits might not feed my ego, but it will feed the success of the whole team. A base hit mentality doesn’t mean we never hit homers, but it does mean that we will be willing to take a walk or lay down a

sacrifice bunt if it helps our team.

See, in every transaction, the very first decision the customer makes is whether or not the salesperson can be trusted. By adopting a “win-win” attitude and standard pricing models, as well as striving to create loan structures that are intelligent for the customer, we show that our intent is focused on them. This allows customers to relax, consider the benefits, and trust you enough to say “Yes.”

Sure, I could ask for \$3,000 over on a VSC every time, but a more intelligent method would be to adopt pricing habits based on the culture of my dealership and keep my pricing fair. If I find that I’m apprehensive to disclose the price of a product I’m selling, then it becomes obvious I’m only looking for a home run.

Trying to bury your customer actually lowers your chance of success. Like it or not, your eye movement, body language, and vocal tone will betray you, and the customer will subconsciously begin the process of telling you “No.”

It is of paramount importance to operate in harmony with your values. That means creating an offer for your customer that is fair. This may represent selling every product you have, but with a spirit of fairness in mind. You can always adjust your pricing to align with your goals, but consistency is the key. Build your menu around fair pricing and keep it consistent. If you need higher

profits, raise your margins, but maintain consistency in product pricing.

Remember that our long-term goal is consistent income with low chargebacks and high CSI, and we share this goal with our customers and the dealership. ■

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lloyd Trushel is a key member of a group of associated companies and undertakings that include Consator Group, F&IQ, CAP Warranty, First Choice Warranty, Intelibuy and others. He previously served as an F&I trainer and account manager for Assurant. Contact him at lloyd.trushel@bobit.com.

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