

The very model of a MODERN BUSINESS MANAGER

Stephen Whitton analyses the multi-farious pressures faced by business managers in today's changing climate.



So, the customer journey has changed! Most of their research is now done online. The average number of visits to dealerships before buying is well reported at being as low as 1.3 – a far cry from the 4 or 5 of just a few years ago! However, 80% of vehicles are bought with borrowed money – and on new cars, dealer penetrations can easily be near that.

What then, does that mean for the F&I or business managers (BM) in dealerships? This bunch of hardy professionals are gatekeepers for dealer compliance, ensure F&I KPIs are being met, and should also be coaches and leaders to the team. But, that's not the same as just being the person who single-handedly sells or sets-up the F&I products for the customer once the deal is done!

There is, and has been, a lot of inconsistency around how the BM is viewed, how they operate and where the importance of F&I is placed in the business. A traditional model for assessing the effectiveness of F&I in a business (outside of the performance KPIs), is the five critical success factors:

Management commitment – is everyone in the business from the top down, truly focused on F&I's place in the business as a revenue stream and enabler of vehicle sales?

People – What are the attitudes of the team like and does the BM have its support?

Processes/Controls – How does the business adhere to structured and disciplined processes and is the BM part of the management team to oversee that?

Training – It's only fair to expect the above if all concerned have been given the training and requisite skills in the first place, so what does that look like?

Compliance – How well is the need for compliance embraced and embedded: is it seen as a chore, or is it adopted as a means of demonstrating professionalism?

In a world of increasing legislation, complex product offerings and a

torrent of reviews and information online, the modern BM needs to package all of the above with laser sharp professionalism and exemplary customer focus. This allows them to both adapt to the changing customer journey and be a role model to the team!

DEFINING GREATNESS

So, is a great BM a tireless, commercially astute, results-oriented, people developer with strong leadership, communication and coaching skills? Someone who can see the bigger picture, who is just as much at ease talking to the MD as they are talking to the drivers and valeters? Are they an agile person who can follow process, produce and analyse reports and use them to make good decisions on coaching, customer involvement and team motivation?

Our view: yes they are! This is why we are working closely with the IMI to develop standardised F&I/BM competencies and an accreditation process aimed at getting the BMs onto a professional register.



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