



Matt Baker

WANT SUCCESS IN 2010? STOP PLAYING MIND GAMES

Open any trade publication this month and you're bound to find at least one article packed full of speculations on what we'll encounter into 2010. Rest assured, this is not that kind of article.

During a time when many are contemplating New Year's resolutions, I have been inundated with questions from GMs, dealers and even dealership salespeople who are looking for ideas to increase business or enhance personal performance in 2010. While each question focused on achieving different results, all of the answers boiled down to the fact that each person's outcome this year will be directly related to their personal outlook.

Want to get a better understanding of what that means? I've compiled a few of the most pressing questions I was asked, in an effort to help you gain insight on some different ways to improve yourself and your business in the new year.

Q: "In my market, unemployment is high and credit is tight. Given our current situation, what can we do to get more deals bought?"

Dealer, Detroit, MI

A: This is not an easy question to answer. Not because high unemployment and tight credit are impossible obstacles to overcome, but rather because the answer is not often what people want to hear. In cases like this, a dealership's ability to close deals relies more on mindset than it does on magic tricks.

I hesitate to share this because I don't want to hurt feelings, but in my experience I've come across a lot of people at dealerships who have gotten caught up in all the reasons why deals *can't* get done. Once this "doom and gloom" philosophy takes hold of one person, it can spread across the dealership like wild fire, ultimately limiting everyone's ability to see opportunity.

Think of it like this. A basketball player lines up to shoot a free throw and thinks, "I hope I don't miss this." With a mindset like that, what do you think the odds are that he'll make the shot? Slim. If, instead, that basketball player approached the free throw

by thinking, "I've got this one," his chances of making it go up dramatically. Just like the basketball player, dealership sales teams need to believe in their ability to put deals together so they see the opportunity instead of reasons why deals won't come together.

Encouraging confidence among your sales team is not always an easy task. Ensure good work is recognized publicly, and remember to pass any potential issues up the chain of command while pushing positive news down to your salespeople. Consider bringing in outside influencers to shake things up. This can include auto consultants, motivational consultants, or even books and tapes designed to inspire sales professionals.

It may sound crazy, but simply changing your frame of mind can make luck appear as though it is on your side. Things begin to come together and ultimately more deals get closed — no matter what apparent obstacles may be out there.

Q: All of our customers know that dealerships are struggling, which makes them want to negotiate a better deal. What can I do to make more money this year?

Dealer, Phoenix, AZ

A: Increasing gross is a key aspect of my business, just as it is with any dealership. As a result I've spent a lot of time over the course of the last year watching the trends in consumer car buying. That being said, I've noticed an interesting pattern over the last seven or eight months. Our retail sales teams have actually seen an increase in grosses over this period when working with dealers across the U.S. How can that be? It seems that over the last 12 to 14 months, people in the market to buy a car have been stockpiling money for that big purchase. Since these consumers have chosen to save their cash before they buy, they have more funds available to put toward a down payment.

Moral of the story: Focus less on negotiating price and more on down payment and the customer's monthly payment.

Q: My sales guys need an attitude adjustment. What will get them to break out of their negative mindset?

GM, St. Louis, MO

A: Giving sales people too much time to concentrate on the negatives will only make things worse. Keep your sales team active. Get them prospecting on the phone. If you're looking for a better way to network with the consumers in your market, consider getting your sales people involved in community events. This helps your sales team prospect to potential buyers while promoting your dealership as a community focused business.

All dealers want to stop advertising during a down economy. In reality however, the decision to stop advertising only makes the problem worse. I have a rule I live by that states, "Things in motion stay in motion. Things at rest stay at rest." In order to ensure your dealership stays "in motion," you'll need to keep advertising to attract more customers. More customer visits means more opportunity for your sales team and ultimately more money in your pocket. Busy sales people are productive sales people and before you know it, they'll be "accidentally" closing deals.

Take the initiative to help them get and stay motivated. Suggest books or tapes that they can engage in every day, which are focused on creating or discovering personal drive. If you're looking for a place to start, I highly recommend the book *Rhinoceros Success* by Scott Alexander. And if motivational tapes seem more appealing to you, check out *Get the Edge* by Tony Robbins. Both are powerful tools and have had a remarkable impact on many of the salespeople I've worked with.

Do you have a question about how to improve your personal performance or your business throughout 2010? E-mail your question to me at the address below and I'll be more than happy to offer some suggestions in an upcoming issue of AutoSuccess.

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