



## ARTICLE

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## Pulling Out All the Props

### **THE RIGHT PROP CAN BE THE PERFECT OBJECTION KILLER, BUT CHOOSE YOUR TOOLS WISELY.**

By Gerry Gould

Props aren't just for theatrical productions; they can be the perfect tool for selling intangibles like F&I products. Not only do they serve as great visual aids, but they can also liven up your F&I presentation. More importantly, a well thought-out prop can help develop a dialogue with your customers.

Just remember that a prop can't sell your products by itself. You first need a well-rehearsed presentation, which should include questions that will help you gain an understanding of your customer's ownership habits. Here are a few examples:

Mileage question: "How many miles a year will you be driving, and how long do you plan on keeping the vehicle?"

Raise awareness: "What is your insurance deductible and do you know if they offer discounts for theft-deterrent devices?"

Plant the seed: "We'll be paying off the remaining balance on your trade. Are there any products for which we should be applying for a refund?"

Now, whatever you do, don't spring your props on your customers without getting their permission first. Here's a nice way to do just that: "There are three things you cannot control while you own this car: weather, the driving habits of others and road conditions. Do you mind if I share something with you?" Also try: "I don't expect your new car to break down, but you never know. Do you mind if I share something with you?"



### **Mightier Than the Sword**

When you're pitching products from the menu, use your pen like a conductor's baton. See, the pen can be used to control the pace of your presentation. It can also be used to direct your customer's focus. For example, if you want your customer to look down at your menu, point your pen down or toward specific sections on the menu while making verbal points about your products.

Additionally, keep a pad of paper close by so you can jot down specific points you've made about your products. Feel free to draw illustrations during your presentation or close. Illustrations can communicate a much stronger message than words alone.

### **Just the Facts, Ma'am**

An evidence manual is a must-have for any F&I manager. And as the saying goes, a picture is worth a thousand words. So, dust off your camera and snap a few shots of your service department, diagnostic equipment and toolboxes. You also want to get a few shots behind the parts counter, as this will help you illustrate to your customer the investment the dealer has made to keep the shop running efficiently. Pictures of vehicles that have been repaired by a paintless dent repair technician are also helpful. Just remember to make your evidence manual look neat and tidy.

Before-and-after photos of reconditioned vehicles treated with environmental protection are also good to include in your manual. Photos of trade-ins being appraised by the used-car manager are another must. They help to illustrate how a vehicle's condition can affect its resale value. Just make sure you're pointing out how your products will positively impact the future value of your customers' vehicles when showing off your photos.

Copies of repair orders — particularly those showing the cost of a claim related to the products you offer — are also good additions to your manual. You should also include a copy of a recent invoice your dealership paid to the dent repair technician. This will demonstrate to your customers that vehicle damage can happen anywhere if it can happen on your lot.



### **Not Just a Novelty Act**

You can get a little creative when pitching environmental protection. For exteriors, treating half of a detached hood with paint protection is a perfect demonstration tool. For interior protection, you'll have to get a little creative. I equip my toolbox with a tipped-over juice box and coffee cup, each bonded to a melted plastic material I've colored to look like juice and coffee.

Yes, these sales tools are a bit comical, but they're also effective. What you do is leave your creation on the visitor's chair in your office. Once your customer sees it, pick it up — plastic "liquid" attached — and explain how easily stains can be removed if interior fabric guard is applied. The goal is to get them to inquire about the consumer kit you have sitting on your desk. Their inquiry is your green light to break down the features and benefits of your protection products.

Some providers can also supply you with a fabric demo card, which is an effective demonstration tool. Simply dip the card into a cup of coffee or soda and pitch away.

### **Flank Their Objections**

Your customers may know that manufacturers are extending out their powertrain warranties. What they may not realize is that there are still a lot of holes your products can fill. Don't be afraid to ask what their understanding of the factory warranty is and, once they've answered, flank their "I don't need it" objection with a couple of objection-handling tools.

First, pull out the laminated desk mat most service contract providers provide to set the record straight. Use it to point out specific components your service contract can cover, the length of coverage, as well as other benefits your program offers.

If the customer remains unconvinced, show him or her a window regulator. They're not likely to recognize it, and they'll be amazed at the cost to repair or replace it. Most importantly, you want to tell them that the part won't be covered under any powertrain warranty.

If the customer still objects, pull out a vehicle computer. Explain to the customer how today's vehicles are like computers on wheels because virtually every component runs off of one of these devices, which

makes them more expensive to repair. Finish up your pitch by explaining that these units can only be replaced when they fail.

### **Jarring Pitch**

Nothing tells the story of the benefits of tire-and-wheel protection than a mason jar filled with tire debris. Just make sure to explain each road hazard contained in your jar. For customers who say they'll take their chances, a damaged rim might be the only way to go. Just make sure to point out how tire-and-wheel protection works when showing off your damaged rim prop.



### **The Mini Cart**

A mini shopping cart is a great way to start a conversation about paintless dent removal. Once the customer sees it, try this line: "The reason I keep this on my desk is to remind myself to park as far away from the real ones as possible, because you never know when one will bump into your car. However, the only real way to avoid them is to never drive your car. Obviously, this is not an option for you." This is your opportunity to close with the following: "Now, wouldn't you agree it's better to have it and not need it than to need it and not have it, especially for such a low monthly cost?"

When used properly, props will help you get closer to a "Yes" with your customer. They work because they evoke a memory in the customer's mind. If things go as planned, that memory will help the customer realize why he or she needs your protection products.

*Gerry Gould is director of training for United Development Systems Inc. He can be reached at [gerry.gould@bobit.com](mailto:gerry.gould@bobit.com).*