



Jeff Doerrler sales & training solution

GENERATIONAL TRENDS: How to Sell Every Age Group

The buying process can be difficult for salespeople and customers alike, and it isn't getting easier. Customers scoping dealerships out online long before they walk into the showroom make the road even more challenging. So, when a customer visits a dealership, it becomes important to make the most of it. It's necessary to realize that buying a car isn't just filled with objections and needs; it's also filled with preferences that vary by age, gender and income. There's plenty of research that has been done on generational buying trends, and I'm sure many of you have heard those statistics. The challenge becomes how to turn those numbers and trends into information you can use at your dealership.

Baby Boomers

The Baby Boomer generation is roughly defined as anyone born between 1946 and 1964. This means that they are anywhere from 48 to 66 years old. So, what do you need to know about them when they walk into your dealership?

Fast Stats:

1. They prefer luxury cars, purchasing 41 percent of all new cars and 50 percent of all luxury cars.
2. They are interested in fun-to-drive and performance cars.
3. They have more money to spend.

I'm sure you are thinking, "How do I use that information?" As a salesperson, you can't always control who is drawn to your dealership — whether they are a luxury car buyer or not. You can, however, emphasize the luxury qualities of the car you're trying to sell them. It might also be a good opportunity to up-sell them. They are typically more interested in fun-to-drive cars and are performance focused. It would make sense to emphasize how the car will handle when driving, and verbal affirmation before and after a test drive could be important.

It's really about taking the things the buyer is interested in and using them to your advantage. The reason that it is useful to know these preferences is that they tend to be true for the given generational group. What better advantage than knowing what the buyer wants before they even tell you?

Generation X

Generation X refers to those born between 1965 and 1981, which means that they are anywhere from 31 to 47 years old.

Fast Stats:

1. They prefer roomier, family-friendly vehicles (minivans, SUV).
2. They are the highest purchasers of Audi and Volkswagen.
3. They are wary of mass-marketing tactics.
4. They will buy cars they perceive as having high value.
5. They think about size and family needs, rather than cost of ownership.

Again, it's time to look at Generation X's preferences and decide how to use them. While mass marketing initiatives are always part of a dealership's business model, you might want to use other tactics, as well. I'm sure that any seasoned salesperson knows the tried-and-true "feature and benefit" selling system. Well, here's your chance to bring it out. Generation X will buy a car they perceive as being high in value. They also think about their needs more so than what the cost of the vehicle is. You have the opportunity with Gen X to build the value and sell features before they will want to negotiate price. Salespeople should integrate more questions into their vehicle "presentation." The questions will help to fully address the customer's specific needs and wants. Also, the typical Gen Xer is thinking about the needs of their family when buying a car. Emphasizing family-friendly vehicles like minivans and SUVs will also benefit you.

Generation Y

Lastly, Generation Y are those who were born between 1982 and 1999, which means that they are 30 years of age or younger.

Fast Stats:

1. They are more interested in the customer experience than the car they're buying.
2. They are interested in hybrids and electric cars.
3. They are looking for in-car technology.
4. They prefer used vehicles.
5. They account for 40 percent of buying population.

Generation Y has witnessed change in the auto industry. In the time they have come into the market, many of them post recession, there have been many changes in the way dealerships are run and how business is done. In general, the customer experience is very important to them. This doesn't just include their time in the dealership, either. It also consists of online usage and interaction over the phone. Gen Y is looking for a dealership with strong customer service skills.

Those in Gen Y are interested in car technology. Any in-vehicle navigation feature, satellite radio capabilities and telematics products would be an opportunity to win a typical Gen Y buyer over. In that same regard, they are also big purchasers of hybrids and electric cars. If you've been trying to unload some of these newer trend vehicles, your dealership might want to target Gen Y purchasers. As this generation represents 40 percent of the total buying market, it is important to recognize and be aware of their preferences, as they will have a huge impact on the market for years to come.

Understanding generational buying trends isn't a one-size-fits-all solution. Buying trends among different age groups can help all salespeople understand how to better sell customers, and what exactly tends to be important to the customer. While it's not easy, it can be done. If you're interested in more ways to understand generational buying trends, and how to use them to your advantage, you can contact me at the address below with the subject line "GENERATION" to request *G&A's Guide to Generational Buying Trends*. It will provide more information to help you earn potential buyers from each generation.

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