

What Every BDC Needs

Skills, Not Scripts



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Skills are what will separate your dealership's business development center (BDC) from what customers consider the stereotypical car-buying experience to be, and skills in the BDC revolve around understanding, alignment and communication. Skills can make your dealership stand out from all the other stores in your market.

A BDC should make people feel comfortable and excited about the dealership at the same time. To do that, it's imperative that a business development representative (BDR) sound sincere and speak with customers in a non-confrontational, leading manner. Dependence on scripts or rebuttals in the BDC will not do the job. Rebuttal means argument and that is exactly what scripts are preparing for. Human instinct will drive

someone in an argument into a fight-or-flight mode. Oftentimes, the person in flight mode takes the road of least resistance and sets an appointment with no intention of showing up.

When you think of how your BDRs are communicating with your customers, consider the breakdown of how communication is transmitted—63 percent of communication is body language, 30 percent is tonality and only seven percent is the actual words we use.

Of course, an understandable misconception is that the 63 percent attributed to body language is eliminated when talking on the phone. It is not, and there are two reasons for that. One, it is difficult to sound like you are smiling while you're actually frowning, and two, body language and tonality go hand in hand.

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Being a "type A" personality (BDRs need to be able to identify all three personalities and adjust accordingly), I am a classic example of someone with an intense, fast-paced tone. By slowing down my hand gestures, etc., my tone follows suit. Training and practicing effective communication skills empowers us to speak with common tone and wording. Commonality equals rapport, and rapport is what sells an appointment.

If you train on just scripts, you're putting your money (and possibly your ROI) on that seven percent of communication; you're just training on *what* is said. I believe in training people on *why*, not just *what* and *how*.

Training BDRs to use impact wording and put emphasis on certain words can make a world of difference in people's perception, which, to them, *is* reality. The 93 percent of communication made of body language and tonality *can* be utilized over the phone. How else does one sell the "sizzle" of a dealership over the phone?

Also, because scripts focus on *what* is said, BDRs reading from them tend to sound robotic. No one likes to be on the phone with someone who sounds as if he or she is reading from a script. It's impersonal and insincere. Even if someone has a script down pat, it doesn't create sincerity. While the best way to sound sincere is to be genuinely sincere, watching where and how you enunciate your words will create sincerity in your voice.

Additionally, insincerity detected in a script reader's voice feeds into the customer's fear or perception of the car-buying experience—one where the salesperson pushes what he or she wants the customer to buy and worries only about profit. A skillful BDR doesn't need a script to figuratively validate price as being important. They need to identify with the customer (alignment), get a target budget range and then lead the call by asking an assumptive question like, "Aside from price, what would you say is the next most important factor—safety or performance?"

By utilizing assumptive questioning, you let customers know that you're not avoiding or just focusing on money or price, and from their answer, you can find a point of commonality, which is very important. Establishing a point of commonality helps put the prospect at ease and makes overcoming objections later in the conversation easier for the BDR. Sincerity is a breeze in a skillful conversation.

Too many BDCs and call centers rely on scripts today. Now, I'm not saying BDRs should be just talking from memory. It is a good idea for BDRs to have a guide in front of them with important reminders. For example, the explanation guide used in my BDC reminds BDRs to obtain important contact information, including two phone numbers. Items mentioned on the guide are the law of reciprocity and the need to validate and pace to

effectively lead a customer to your front door!

Also, when examining how BDRs speak on the phone, changing the word order of a sentence or two can have a positive influence on a customer. For example, instead of saying, "If for any reason your contact person is running late, I'll give you a courtesy call. Will you do the same for me?" That may get a yes, but it does not program the subconscious to actually call. But, if you were to say, "If for any reason your contact person is running late, I'll give you the courtesy of a call."

See the difference? You give the caller "courtesy" in the second set of sentences instead of "a call" like in the first set. Change the subject, then ask, "If for any reason you were running late, what would you do?" It gives us

another chance to thank them and more times than not, when posed with being late, someone who said *what* they would do versus just answering a yes/no question will actually call. A customer who calls to say they are running late is a customer who will show and likely buy.

Like other skill sets, BDC skills aren't accomplished overnight. While there's a learning curve and some trainees can hone their skills in a week or two, I suggest a minimum of five to 30 days of training and grooming before a BDR is working alone on the phone.

My BDRs receive at least eight hours of classroom training, eight hours of role playing, shadowing, testing and retesting. We, of course, have the luxury of working in a BDC training center, but anywhere can

work. Plus, once they're skilled BDRs, they continue to have a mentor, as well as be coming a mentor to new BDRs. Mentoring breeds consistency.

Two additional mandatory aspects of my BDCs (in-house or outsourced) are mirrors in front of every computer monitor and coaches. The mirrors are to help the BDRs maintain the proper tonality; I've never seen anyone frowning while talking on the phone in an upbeat voice. To convey genuine sincerity, they need to have the same game face on whether the customers are on the phone or in front of them at the dealership (sales reps take notice). The team leaders (coaches) "circle the wagons" throughout the center as they listen to calls, load lips and look for BDRs needing a T.O. It's far too easy (and

far too common) for the atmosphere in a BDC or call center to get boring, and the coaching, whether weekly or monthly, helps ward off boredom, keep skills fresh and push the needle with training and incentives for greater production.

When skills are the foundation of a BDC, customers attribute keeping their appointments to the BDRs—which is a compliment to the skill-level of a BDR. Train, practice and role-play regularly to learn communication skills for better influence and persuasion. Aristotle summed it up perfectly: "We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit." Develop your BDRs' skills and make excellence the habit of your BDC.

Remember, habit is either our best friend or worst enemy. **ADM**

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