



UNDER THE HOOD: Why the Phone is Sullivan Automotive Group's **Most Powerful Tool**

Scott Skougard is a jack-of-all-trades. As his title of Website, E-commerce, and Marketing Director at Sullivan Automotive Group indicates, Scott wears multiple hats and brings incredible expertise and insight to the automotive industry. Car Wars recently had the chance to sit down with Scott and talk shop about the importance of the phone in Service, the unique phone processes in place at his dealerships, and adapting to the fluid market. In this exclusive interview, Scott shares how he and his team leverage the phone to provide excellent customer experiences and contribute to employee growth in Service. With the help of Car Wars Service, Scott and his team are able to gain actionable insights into what's happening on the phone to turn phone calls into booked appointments.



Gain control through the phone.

“We have the most control over our business and our future through our phone calls... For years we have been expanding that platform to have fantastic phone skills and fantastic phone processes,” said Scott. Knowing how important the phone is, dealerships can set their Service advisors up for success with proper phone skills training and offer managers a way to measure that performance. By setting phone performance standards to hit each day, choosing only the very best agents to answer the phones, and introducing incentives for the highest phone performers, the Sullivan team ensures its staff is properly equipped to handle the phones and deliver great customer experiences. Car Wars facilitates this process by providing phone performance metrics that allow Scott and his managers to hold Service staff accountable and pinpoint areas of improvement.



Adapt to market changes.

Inventory shortages are a well-known topic affecting dealers nationwide. One strategy Sullivan Automotive Group uses is having a dedicated BDC team specifically for acquiring vehicles. “Whether they buy a vehicle from our dealership or not, we will buy their vehicle. We automatically text customers in Service, we try to let everyone know we buy cars,” stated Scott. **To adapt to market changes, operational processes should change with it.** To further push his team to find vehicles to purchase from customers, they offer direct forms of compensation for these types of transactions.



Navigate high demand and low staffing.

The ripple effects of COVID-19 have been shown in a variety of ways. Examples of this can be seen with customers holding onto their vehicles longer due to low vehicle inventory and staff shortages at dealerships. “Staffing nationwide has been an issue,” Scott mentioned. “Part of the way we’ve been able to bridge the gap is to find where the inefficiencies are... We shifted the phone responsibility to a separate team to reduce the number of tasks that each person has. We also try to automate as much as we can.” Like the BDC team devoted to acquiring vehicles, Scott and the Sullivan Automotive Group have a BDC team for Service-related phone calls. In order to lessen the amount of time spent on the phones for Service managers and advisors, a Service BDC handles inbound and outbound phone calls. This frees up time for Service staff to focus on the vehicles in the Service bays and Service BDC to provide customers an excellent caller experience.



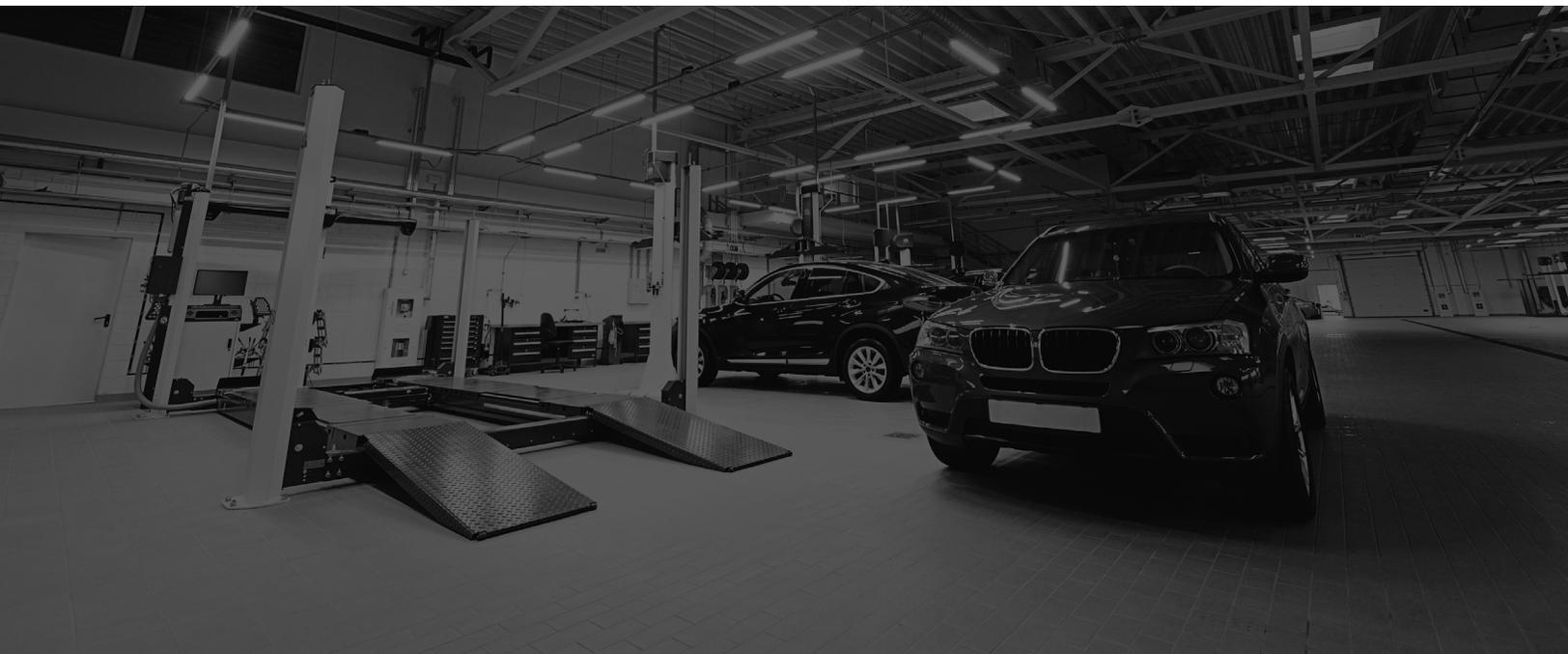
Have tools that generate answers, not questions.

“All of our data is centralized in one reporting tool... [Car Wars Service] allows us to maximize opportunities and adjust according to availability to supply demand,” said Scott. With Car Wars Service, all the information a Service Department needs to know regarding their phones is organized in a clear and concise place. Car Wars Service allows dealers to see how many outbound phone calls their advisors are connecting with customers on, meaning getting ear-to-ear with a live customer. Additional data, such as the most popular days and times customers call in, helps inform managers when the phones need to be covered and plan accordingly with staffing. There are also reporting tools within Car Wars to track which marketing sources are bringing in the most calls — informing business decisions on how to allocate marketing spend.



Prepare for when the market turns.

“As far as I’m concerned, the market has already started turning,” Scott declared. “It’s not just coming, it’s here. With that in mind, the only thing we can do is a big focus on ‘back-to-basics.’” At the end of the day, despite market fluctuations, customer service is a major factor in determining the success of a dealership. **Customers will come back if given a great experience, and the phone is the resource to look at to provide that experience to them.** Create a phone culture centered around proper phone handling skills and processes, as well as have tools in place to measure them. “Our phone training and phone conversations are critical to our business. Those types of conversations directly apply to the conversations we have in person. If it’s the same conversations on both sides of the phone, in person, and with a device between us, the quality of results will be much more controlled and consistent.”



Steps to take now to fix the phones.

Fixing the phones requires a proactive and dedicated approach with buy-in from Service staff at every level. Here are Scott's five steps to take to improve the phones:

- 1** *Decide whether you're committed to using the phones or not.*
- 2** *Have multiple BDC teams dedicated to different areas.*
- 3** *Have tools to measure outcomes and use them on a regular basis.*
- 4** *Have serious meetings with decision makers and honest feedback that makes a difference.*
- 5** *Focus on the process step-by-step.*

Scott and the Sullivan Automotive team understand the power behind the phones in Service. By emphasizing phone handling processes and having a resource like Car Wars Service to measure performance, dealers can create standards to hold their teams accountable, convert inbound and outbound phone calls into booked appointments, provide top-notch customer experiences, and boost bottom lines.

Learn more about how Car Wars can help your dealership
Own the Phone in Service at carwars.com/service.