

HOW TO OVERCOME  
"IS THAT YOUR BEST PRICE?"  
P. 12

CREATE MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIPS  
WITH YOUR CUSTOMERS  
P. 14

A SNEAK PEEK AT OUR VISITS  
ACROSS THE COUNTRY  
P. 19



# the CRISP Quarterly

AN OFFICIAL CAR WARS PUBLICATION | ISSUE 8

THE PROS AGREE:

YOU'RE NOT

PROMISED A

SECOND CALL

P. 06

*Cole Fisher, Sales Manager at Lance Cunningham Ford, explains why being on your A-game on the phone is so pivotal.*





**NISSAN OF  
NEWMAN** |

**Left to right:** Ram Torfeh (*Internet Sales Manager*), Derek Felix (*BDC Manager*), Scott Evans (*Car Wars Associate Consultant*)



**LEADER  
TOYOTA OF  
LINCOLNWOOD** |

**Left to right:** Charlie Hansmeyer (*General Sales Manager*), Nina Nowaczyk (*Car Wars CRISP Certification Engagement Director*)



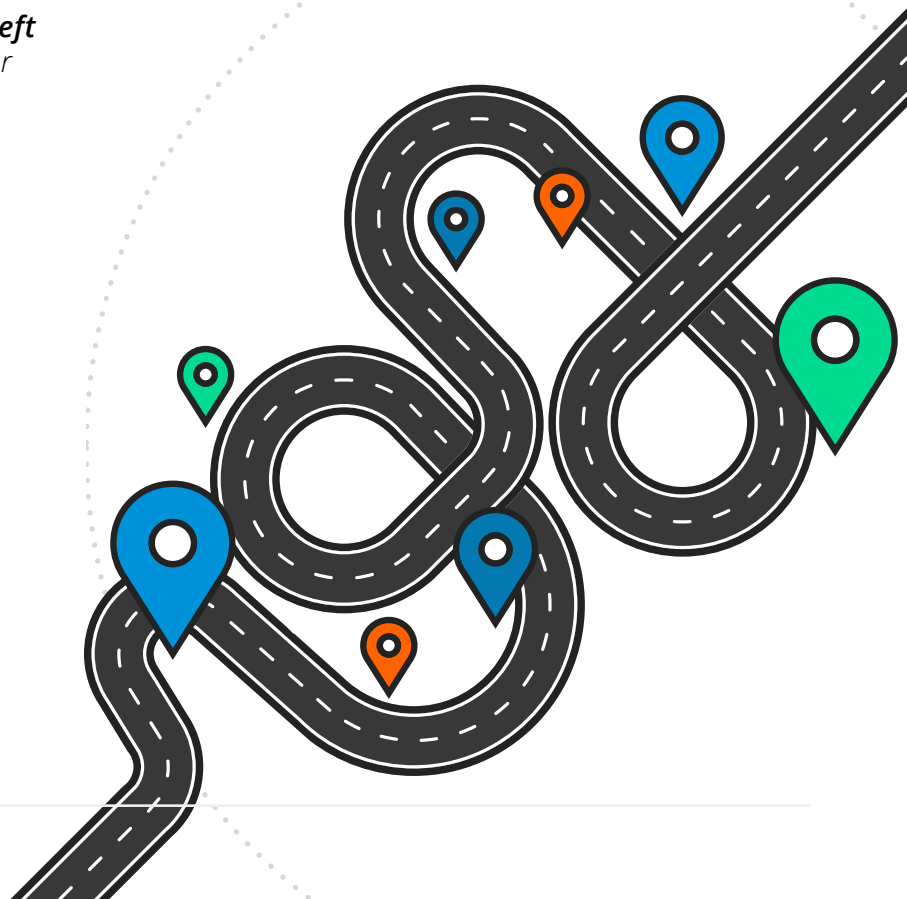


↑ **ALLAN VIRGIL FORD LINCOLN** | *Left to right: Andreal Cooper (BDC Director and Internet Manager), Marcus Ware (Sales Manager), Kate Gordon (Car Wars Associate Consultant)*

## ON THE ROAD

WITH CAR WARS

P. 19





# A LETTER FROM **OUR TEAM.**

Dear Reader,

This issue of the CRISP Quarterly was written prior to the pandemic largely affecting us all in North America. We understand the stress you're going through and how difficult it is to navigate the situation with different regulations and mandates affecting your dealership. Despite the uncertainty, the mission remains the same: connect callers to someone who can help. The approach both of our featured dealers take with their customers and how they handle calls still rings true today, so we wanted to continue to share their success stories.

It's important now more than ever to make sure you're taking advantage of every lead you get. Focus on what you can control right now and ensure every inbound sales call is handled and managed properly. These phone calls are both mission critical and a breath of fresh air. If the phone isn't ringing as much as before, then it's time to buckle down on the basics when it does.

We hope you enjoy this issue and can implement some of our featured dealers' practices into your own stores to come out of this stronger than before!

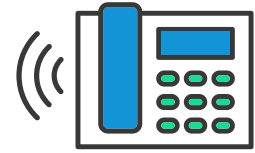
# WHAT IS CRISP?

& WHY IS THIS CALLED THE CRISP QUARTERLY?

**G**ood question, reader. CRISP is our methodology that's been helping dealers like you for almost a decade. Connect more callers, Request and Invite more prospects into the dealership, Set more appointments, and Pursue more stranded leads. It's the most simple, yet effective technique dealers use to quickly see a boost in overall Sales and Service performance. That's why you'll read a lot about CRISP throughout this magazine. It's our meat and potatoes. The backbone of what we do. The reason we get up in the morning.

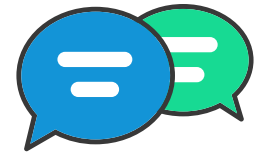
**You'll learn how our dealers are implementing the CRISP methodology at their dealerships to connect more with the customer – particularly by leveraging the phone – to see huge, tangible results.**

**Customized training and shifting toward a different perspective on how a customer is viewed have helped our featured dealer groups – Lance Cunningham Ford and Smith Automotive Group – succeed. Hope you enjoy!**



## CONNECT

Connect each caller quickly to a qualified agent



## REQUEST & INVITE

Request and Invite the caller into the dealership for a test drive



## SET

Set a firm appointment with a specific date and time



## PURSUE

Pursue new leads and rescue missed opportunities



DEALER SPOTLIGHT



**Photo:** Maggie Little (center), CRISP Certification Coach, with the Lance Cunningham Ford team.

THE STATS ARE THE STATS.

# THE PROOF IS THE PROOF.

Sales Manager Cole Fisher's  
commitment to phone skills  
development produces big results.

BY STEPHANIE REYNOLDS

**E**veryone can learn something new today and I take that very seriously. Anyone in the industry who thinks they can't learn anything new is hurting business."

Cole Fisher, the Sales Manager at Lance Cunningham Ford, is no rookie to the automotive industry. With over two decades of experience, he's witnessed the shift in landscape toward the phone as the customer's first contact point. Years ago, a customer would visit the dealership for information. Now, they have all the information they need at their fingertips. When they call, they're ready to buy. Providing a great first experience is not optional but a requirement.

**"You're not promised to get a second phone call nor are you**



**promised a second contact with this customer, so making sure we are on our A-game is pivotal,”** emphasizes Fisher.

Located in Knoxville, Tennessee, Lance Cunningham Ford’s motto “Selling smiles for miles” reflects the dealership’s southern hospitality and goal to provide outstanding customer service. Fisher places a high value on phone skills. He shares, “They are calling for a reason, so why not wow them? **If you can wow the customer, the fact is, selling the car is going to come with that.”**

Do not let Fisher’s southern charm fool you. He holds high standards and expectations for his team to consistently deliver on the phone and maximize on that first call. Time is money – for both the dealership and

customer – and it’s crucial to answer the customers’ questions promptly (and correctly) and most importantly, get the customer engaged and committed as soon as possible.

## **GOOD ISN’T GOOD ENOUGH**

Settling for “good” phone skills isn’t good enough at Lance Cunningham Ford. Fisher’s commitment to exceptional customer experience centers around a phone skills training program to achieve tangible results and accountability on the phone.

When the dealership’s phone closing rate fell below his standard, Fisher refused to resign to subpar performance and knew he needed to get his team dialed in on the phone. He honed in on CRISP and turned toward the experts from the Car Wars’ CRISP Certification program to



devise and implement an action plan to take back control of the phone.

Car Wars call coaches crafted a custom plan for improvement after reviewing the store's current call data, call routing, and phone processes. They then launched the training program with an initial onsite that consisted of training sessions for both managers and agents. With role-plays and one-on-one coaching, his agents learned best techniques to overcome common objections they face on the phone, how to properly transfer callers, and how to guide the conversation towards a firm appointment.

Fisher shares, "My team accepted the fact we do need help. **Nobody is perfect, but most people these days don't like change. So they throw up their hands and don't want to do it.**" Fisher says once his team recognized they had a problem, they were eager to improve because they knew this would translate to their bottom line.

Training isn't just a one and done deal. Coaches work alongside Fisher to hold the staff accountable and take the burden from Fisher to provide coaching on an ongoing basis. Every

*"Nobody is perfect, but most people these days don't like change. So they throw up their hands and don't want to do it."*

**COLE FISHER**

*Sales Manager,  
Lance Cunningham Ford*

week, agents receive personalized report cards on their performance. The feedback loop gives Fisher the assurance his staff is continuously improving and receiving the dedicated attention required to get better on the phone. Call activity is monitored to ensure agents maintain their CRISP Certification status. If an agent's performance begins falling, the coach proactively reaches out to reinforce the training and further develop specific skills.

"The biggest thing today is holding people accountable for their actions on the phone. Simply, training is the



key. When I hear a call that's not handled in the professional manner that I feel like it needs to be, that's when CRISP comes into play very heavily," says Fisher.

Agent performance data allows Fisher to focus on the right metrics to drive the process forward. He begins each day reviewing the previous day's sales opportunities in Car Wars. He listens to every call to ensure the agent is creating urgency and excitement on the phone, and most importantly, setting the appointment.

"When I hear a missed opportunity, I see how I can help the sales rep. improve and create the urgency needed on the phone," says Fisher. "The more excitement you create and the more understanding of the vehicle you have that the caller is asking about, the better results we'll get with setting the appointment and at the end of the day, better show percentages and a higher percentage that sells."

Individual agent reporting and monthly summaries give Fisher a better understanding of how his team is handling phone ups. The improvement has been rewarding. Fisher recalls a call he reviewed from

the prior week. Using techniques and word tracks from the CRISP Certification handbook, an agent overcame objections on the phone and was able to successfully set the appointment with a customer for that afternoon.

"The biggest difference is we're taking control of the conversation. We always want to let the customer speak, but when the customer starts controlling a phone conversation, you've lost a lot of credibility." Fisher says.

### **THE STATS ARE THE STATS. THE PROOF IS THE PROOF.**

Fisher reflects on their success thus far from the program: "It's been awesome. I mean **it's really nice to know how they're doing from an outside source.** Being trained on what to say and *not* to say when overcoming objections ultimately helps our sales percentages that come from the phone."

And the data proves it.

Lance Cunningham Ford saw an immediate boost across the board in its phone performance scores after the program's launch. Not only did

the store connect more callers with a qualified agent who could help, but the agents did a better job of asking for the appointment. The RI (Request & Invite) score jumped from 53% to 68%, which meant agents requested the appointment 28% more often on sales calls.

**The most astonishing result? The 55% increase in close rate on sales opportunities from the phone!**

"Some people look at the national average being 20-23% for closing rate. I'm trying to run between 25 and 30%. **Last month, we worked 28.6% off the phones showing and selling. So it's working. It's working well,**" Fisher concludes. "If you think you've got your store all set and nothing needs to be improved – that's when you lose."

Is your group or store achieving positive results with data already at your fingertips? Share your story with us at [content@carwars.com](mailto:content@carwars.com).

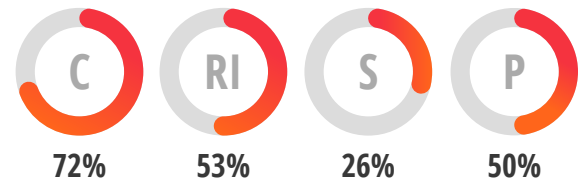
## AMSI LANCE CUNNINGHAM FORD CRISP CERTIFICATION

# IMPROVEMENT

### TWO WEEKS PRIOR TO CRISP CERTIFICATION LAUNCH

OVERALL CRISP SCORE

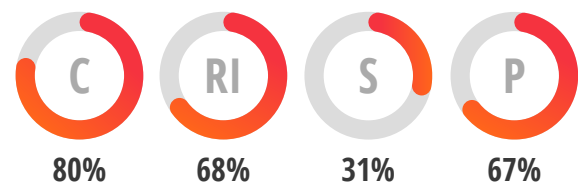
50.3%



### TWO WEEKS AFTER CRISP CERTIFICATION LAUNCH

OVERALL CRISP SCORE

61.5%







# WE'RE YOUR **PARTNER** IN CLOSING DEALS

The Car Wars CRISP Certification program provides ongoing, customized phone skills training to help ensure your staff is well-equipped to handle customer phone calls confidently, no matter what the objection may be.

Our methodology helps you avoid the pitfalls you might face when you bring in an outside trainer or try to take on training yourself. We merge our phone expertise and tailor it to your dealership's unique needs by providing:



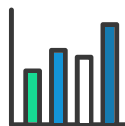
On-site training



Weekly coached calls and one-on-one training sessions



Ongoing feedback through individual CRISP reporting, coach-monitored call activity, and roleplays



Performance reporting for individual agents and overall store performance

**READY TO START MAKING MORE SALES & GETTING THE MOST OUT OF CAR WARS?**

Visit [carwars.com/home/solutions/crisp-certification](https://carwars.com/home/solutions/crisp-certification) or call 833-331-0223.

## BECOMING CRISP

THE SIMPLE  
TECHNIQUE TO  
OVERCOME

### NOTE

Practice mastering this technique to the point it becomes natural. Remember, how you say it is just as important as what you say.

# “Is that your best price?”

BY RYAN PITZ

Ryan Pitz, VP of Training Services, shares one, simple technique to avoid price negotiating on the phone – taken directly from the Car Wars CRISP Certification Phone Skills Training handbook

Handling price questions over the phone can be tough, but it shouldn't have to be. With the right mindset, techniques, and a little practice, any salesperson or BDC agent can confidently answer price questions and gain commitment from callers to visit the dealership – without the conversations escalating into a price negotiation over the phone.

## THE RIGHT MINDSET

A caller asking about price doesn't mean he or she is truly a “price shopper.” Your customers are typical consumers, and just like you and me, they're going to inquire about price. It's important to address the caller's price question while avoiding the conversation turning into a negotiation.



Remember, most often when a customer calls your dealership, he or she already researched and compared your listed price to others on the market – **and they see value in your listing** – otherwise they wouldn't be calling!

In fact, Internet shoppers invest 14+ hours online researching before ever picking up the phone to call<sup>1</sup>, so when they do call, **they're ready to buy**.

Once armed with this mindset, employ the first simple verbal technique for overcoming *"Is that your best price?"*

## STAND YOUR GROUND

Feel confident the listed price is close to the caller's price range. Speak to the value – your vehicles are competitively priced to sell. Emphasize the importance of test driving the vehicle and offer to set an appointment to see it in person.

*"As you may know, all of our vehicles are competitively priced based on the market. We get a lot of interest in \_\_\_\_\_ (model types). I don't anticipate this particular*

*model will stay in our inventory for long. The vehicle is still available, and I have availability for a test drive at 3:15 or 4:45 today, which of those times would you prefer to come see it?"* Then wait...

This may be just enough to address the caller's question and pivot the conversation to scheduling a test drive. If not, it's okay to anticipate and prepare with a second layer of verbal techniques to confidently maintain control of the conversation while working toward a booked appointment.

For the remaining four verbal techniques – taken directly from the Phone Skills Training handbook – check out the free video course: **5 Effective Phone Techniques to Handle Tough Price Questions**.

**[FREE VIDEO]** 5 Effective Phone Techniques to Handle Tough Price Questions



[Click here](#) to access the FREE 15-minute video course.



## QUESTIONS ABOUT OUR CRISP CERTIFICATION TRAINING PROGRAM?

Contact Ryan Pitz at [Ryan@callbox.com](mailto:Ryan@callbox.com).

<sup>1</sup>Cox Automotive. (2019). 2019 Car Buyer Journey Study.

## TAKE IT FROM THE PROS



..... **IS YOUR DEALERSHIP**

*Mr Right?*

BY JULIA WANG

Just like you cultivate a meaningful relationship with someone you're dating, Karla Guleserian, eCommerce /Digital Marketing and BDC Director of Smith Automotive Group, extends this same mindset to how she treats her customers





Lithia Springs

NISSAN



Imagine you like someone. You start talking and getting to know the person, then you begin courting this special someone and distinguish yourself amongst the possible options with the hope that he or she will eventually choose to commit to you. After you've committed to each other, you must continue to build on the relationship and prove your significant other made the right choice in picking you. Working with a potential customer at a dealership shouldn't be any different. The rise of digital technology presents ample opportunities for customers to shop around for vehicles. Once you've spoken with that customer, you have to continually follow up and provide value for them – make the customer feel like he or she made the right move by deciding on you. In dating and in your dealership, it's not enough to win over the person and forget about him or her – you risk losing the person to

someone or somewhere else. It's crucial to find a way to make yourself stand out and prove you're the best option.

Karla Guleserian, eCommerce/Digital Marketing and BDC Director of Smith Automotive Group, has seen firsthand how the automotive industry has changed throughout the years, and how imperative it now is to cultivate a meaningful relationship with the customer. No rookie to the game (she's been in the industry for over twelve years), Guleserian's experienced the shift in buying behavior from customers. Having run and managed digital advertising for one of the largest BDCs in Maryland, Guleserian realizes the disconnect between what is going on from a marketing perspective to what is actually happening with leads and phone opportunities in an Internet or BDC setting. She knows how important it is to build a relationship with the

customer rather than just seeing him or her as another sales opportunity to hit your numbers for the month. Because of this realization, Guleserian aims to move away from heavily scripted conversations and trains all her BDC agents to think like a customer. She requires all her agents to walk through an online channel car buying process, from initial research to purchase opportunity. By doing this, her agents are “ready on the receiving end of the telephone call to have a quality, engaging conversation with the customer based upon the behavior and journey of how the customer got to us.” Building a meaningful relationship with potential customers ensures that the agents at Guleserian’s stores are remembered amongst the noise of other dealerships and online retailers. The sales process at Guleserian’s four stores focuses on treating customers like humans instead of transactions.

Customers now go through a much more omni-channel shopping experience than they did years ago. “We know that when customers are shopping, they go to cars.com, they go to Autotrader, they go to TrueCar, they come to your website, they’re finding information on Google...Before they know it, they’ve provided their information to more people than they can count and they have five people



**Photo:** Members of the BDC team focus on natural and sincere customer conversations.

from five different dealerships calling them to try and come in,” claims Guleserian. With multiple people trying to fight for this same person, you have to make yourself better than the rest.

## THE POWER OF TRANSPARENCY

Guleserian believes there’s a lack of information and pricing transparency that overshadows the automotive industry. “People have this vision in their minds that they’re not going to get the information they’re asking for when you call a car dealership,” she states. You have to be sincere and honest with the person you want to date, so why not have this same mentality with a customer? She aims to knock down the barriers customers automatically put up when calling a dealership by transitioning from scripted, insincere calls to quality conversations centered



around building rapport with customers. Instead of following scripts, Guleserian trains her agents to have more natural conversations so as not to come off as “sales-y.” Customers are given a more personable experience that makes the Smith Automotive dealerships Guleserian manages stand out.

Of course, moving away from scripted phone calls does not come without its own set of challenges and pushback, especially from agents and salespeople that have been in the industry for years and are used to a certain way of taking customer calls. “There is a resistance to this accountability salespeople are now being held to, where they have to pick up the phone, reach out to customers, and move away from scripts in order to have quality conversations,” Guleserian says. It can be daunting not having a script to follow because a lot of people aren’t comfortable or trained on the phone to handle calls well.

Guleserian aims to ease these nerves by instilling her three pillars of accountability, which include management accountability, peer-to-peer accountability, and sales accountability. From the management side, BDC managers are held accountable for making sure everything is properly logged into their CRM. Agents are held



accountable for their peers by making sure that if a customer is handed off to another agent, he or she won't experience any kind of disconnect in conversation. Sales accountability ensures the call is a quality conversation and doesn't sound heavily robotic.

## GROWTH COMES FROM WITHIN

"Every dealer group I've ever worked at, you have phone problems," Guleserian states. From BDC managers not listening to phone calls or failing to log those calls properly into the CRM, to BDC agents falsifying their calls and not calling customers back to set a firm appointment, Guleserian has seen it all. She emphasizes the need to "use Car Wars to the capacity that it can be utilized to improve phone culture in our dealerships." You can pay for the technology, but if you aren't using it, your phone process won't improve.

Since using Car Wars, Guleserian has seen major improvements in her group's numbers. Her Pursue score, which measures outbound live conversations, is now at 100%, where it used to be 30%. The group's stores now have a Connect rate of 70.3%, where it used to be 40%. Guleserian admits, "It's a tremendous amount of

▼ **Photo (below):** Guleserian outlines daily goals and stats to keep her team motivated.

| Date: 11-15    | Phone Calls | Lunch | B            |
|----------------|-------------|-------|--------------|
| BDC Reps:      |             |       | 86           |
| Gelyssa: IIII  | 83 - 3:00   |       | 101          |
| Laquisha: IIII | 93 - 3:00   |       | 125          |
| Toni: IIII     | 71 -        |       |              |
| Tyrena:        |             |       |              |
| April: II      | 80 - 3:00   |       |              |
| Chelsea: I     | 86 -        |       |              |
| Simone: III    | 86 - 2:00   |       |              |
| Wanda: II      | 75 - 1:00   |       |              |
|                |             |       | Interme Sale |
|                |             |       | 67           |
|                |             |       | other &      |
|                |             |       | 40           |

everyone have a good day!

accountability. It's a lot of very granular work to develop these processes and practices every single day with all of the tasks that a BDC manager has to do in the BDC department." It's not easy work to transform into a culture of accountability and revamp the sales process, but it's the only way to truly build a relationship with the customer. Despite the challenges Guleserian's faced, she's found that having a structured process in place that promotes accountability is the only true way to see if your efforts are working and if you are actually building a relationship with the customer through sincere conversations.



ON THE ROAD

# ON THE ROAD



**GERMAIN FORD OF COLUMBUS** | Left to right: Nina Nowaczyk (Car Wars CRISP Certification Engagement Director), John Germain (Director of Variable Operations), Chad Secrest (General Manager)



← **OCEAN HONDA OF WHITTIER** | Left to right: Felipe Aguilar (Sales Manager), Christy Alford (Car Wars Account Specialist), Andrew Hassoun (General Manager)



**DCH MONTCLAIR ACURA** | Tim Hlavenka (General Manager)



**SUTHERLIN NISSAN MALL OF GEORGIA** *Left to right:* Shane Romelus (Internet Director), Kyle Howard (Car Wars Customer Support Manager)



**VOLVO CARS OF MARIETTA** *Left to right:* Graham Watson (Car Wars Consultant), Michael Gerbick (General Manager)

→ **DCH FORD OF EATONTOWN** *Left to right:* Priscilla Robinson (Customer Relations Consultant), Maggie Little (Car Wars CRISP Certification Coach)



← **LAFONTAINE VOLVO CARS OF FARMINGTON HILLS** *Left to right:* Lance Rhodes (Car Wars Account Specialist), Greg Ostrowski (Sales Professional), Matt Griffith (General Manager), Thomas Marvaso (Pre-Owned Sales Manager)