



# THE PHONE STILL REIGNS *IN THE* DIGITAL AGE

**VICTOR MONTOYA, SENIOR INTERNET  
DIRECTOR AT SUN TOYOTA, DRIVES HIS  
TEAM FORWARD IN THE DIGITAL AGE -  
AND IS WITH THEM 100% OF THE WAY**

Today's automotive selling climate: high competition, educated buyers and abundant buying choices. The modern-day customer is on-the-go, highly-informed, has price compared and researched the options at multiple dealerships. Shoppers want competitive pricing, convenience, speed, and knowledgeable agents. They need a reason to choose your dealership.

If you haven't felt it already (I'm sure you have), this is the Digital Age.

The challenge here is not only attracting prospects to your dealership but differentiating your dealership from the rest. When a customer finally calls after hours of online research, his or her next



step is eliminating you from the list. They're operating the phone with that mindset in mind, to size you up and see if your agents truly know what they're talking about.

## CUSTOMERS IN THE DIGITAL AGE



### SHOPPING HABITS

**95%** Of vehicle buyers use digital as a source of information.<sup>2</sup>

**75%** More likely to purchase from a business that recognizes them by name, makes recommendations based on past purchases or knows their purchase history.

**95%** Switch brands if a company didn't make an effort to personalize communications.

**80%** Shop online before they come in to a location.

**3x** On average, spend 3x more time researching online than at the dealership.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup>Automotive Shopper Study," by Google/cornScore, Jan 2017.

<sup>3</sup>Car Buyer Journey," by Cox Automotive. 2018.

Ultimately, the phone experience determines which dealership prevails.

Victor Montoya, Senior Internet Director at Sun Toyota, capitalizes on this digital shift by creating a customer-centric mindset within his Internet team encompassing 36 agents and four directors. Montoya leverages technology and software to attract, relate and convert the modern-day shopper into a lifetime customer, and remembers the fundamentals of selling haven't changed: it's the business of people.

## SHIFT YOUR MINDSET

Montoya identifies mindset as the critical factor for success in the Digital Age – the mindset of discovering the *why* – why after spending an average of 14 hours online researching<sup>1</sup>, the customer decided to call your dealership. If an agent fails to connect with the caller or doesn't meet his or her expectations, the opportunity and business are lost forever.

Before the focus on Internet, customers made an average of five dealership visits before purchasing a car. Now the national average is 1.6 dealership visits before a purchase. Meaning that once a customer calls your dealership, he or she is no longer shopping but ready to purchase. Nowadays, it's more accurate to now think of your callers as buyers.

For veteran salespeople, the shift to digital is difficult. They must move toward no longer selling over the phone but now listening and asking the right kinds of questions. When connecting with a customer, the agent is expected to knowledgeably answer the caller's questions, address needs, then tentatively follow up.

Montoya stresses understanding the customer's wants and expectations to

<sup>1</sup>Car Buyer Journey," by Cox Automotive. 2018.





*The agent must view the customer's journey by stitching together the micro-moments that lead up to picking up the phone.*

create relevancy for effective selling. **The agent must view the customer's journey by stitching together the micro-moments that lead up to picking up the phone.**

A rigorous onboarding process instills the right mindset before handling the phone. It starts from the outside-in and learning the ins and outs of the customer's digital experience.

Montoya elaborates, "We walk through the website first to show everything offered online and where to find the information that customers look for. Then, we progress toward our incoming chats to give them an idea of what customers are experiencing there." This process improves their skills as digital communicators and builds credibility as industry experts.

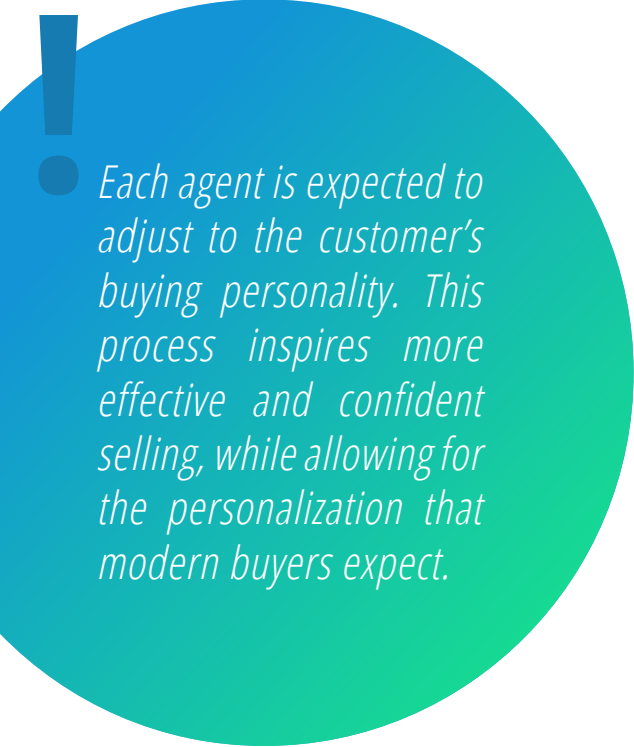
As a result of understanding buyers' online behavior, agents ask better questions and unravel the *why* – the reason behind what particularly attracted the lead to a particular vehicle or the dealership itself.

**Above:** *The Internet Directors at Sun Toyota (left to right): Bob Butler, Victor Montoya, Thomas Zanos, and Christine Conley (not pictured)*

## REMEMBER: PHONE IS KING

The power of the phone hasn't been lost to Montoya. He shares, "The phone call comes first. We can utilize all of our skills in our vocal format, such as vocal tonality. The words that we use to reinforce our claim we have as far as our why buy and why a salesperson is right for a customer – **you can express those differentiators more quickly and successfully over the phone.**"

The phone is the dealership's lifeline and quickest way to connect. Montoya understands that when his team is comfortable handling price objections, knows the inventory and product, then their confidence is translated over the phone to customers.



*Each agent is expected to adjust to the customer's buying personality. This process inspires more effective and confident selling, while allowing for the personalization that modern buyers expect.*

Each agent is provided an Internet manual that lists every reason a customer might shop online for a vehicle. It then breaks down the Sales process into tasks.

Montoya defines the manual as a helpful resource for the agent: outlining the steps toward a sale, yet flexible enough for customization. **Each agent is expected to adjust to the customer's buying personality. This process inspires more effective and confident selling while allowing for the personalization that modern buyers expect.**

Montoya shares the standard for phone handling within his Internet Department: "Relevance is better than speed; speed over perfection. You don't have to be perfect, but you have to be relevant when you're talking to customers. You want to give yourself a few seconds to look over the lead and make sure you know how to handle that caller."

His team is equipped with valuable information from the moment an Internet

lead comes in. Car Wars' Live Calls dashboard provides relevant customer information, such as where the caller came from and previous conversation history. This allows agents to more quickly assist and tailor the conversation depending on where a lead is in the buying journey.

By following the Internet lead with this process, Sun Toyota agents have a better grasp on who their customers are and what they want, and, as a result, can sell more effectively. Montoya then stays close to see them through.

## INSPECT WHAT YOU EXPECT

At any given moment, two directors are working at a stand-up desk in the center of the Internet Department. They're available as active resources when agents need an assist or clarification about a source.

"We do monitor fairly closely because we inspect what we expect. Not only can we hear phone calls, we also want to make sure that somebody needing something can raise their hand. **We can walk over or take the T.O. on that phone call. We're there to help them 100% of the time,**" Montoya explains the approach.

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**- VICTOR MONTOYA**

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Standing nearby, Montoya and fellow directors proactively resolve any potential problems and easily identify areas that would benefit from additional training. When a call begins to take a turn in the wrong direction, Montoya quickly can jump in for the takeover and rescue the sale.

Car Wars' Live Calls dashboard helps Sun Toyota better manage daily activity. Montoya monitors how much productivity is occurring live, as well as the caliber of each agent's phone handling. He monitors each phone handler's performance by clicking in and listening live to a phone call. This way, he can pinpoint: Were the customer's questions answered? Was it a Sales opportunity? Was the call transferred? Was the hand-off done correctly?

Especially in the Digital Age – where competition is fierce – real-time insight can make the difference between a customer and a missed opportunity.

## EXCEED EXPECTATIONS

Adapting is necessary for survival in the Digital Age; creating a personalized and relevant shopping experience sets Sun Toyota apart from the competition.

As Montoya drives his team forward, he remains focused on the fundamental belief that automotive is a people business. Good processes, a customer-centric mindset and software support the plan and people. The outcome: a client relationship continuing in the future. When the time comes to trade-in or to purchase a new vehicle, your dealership is already top of one's list.

Sun Toyota's  
Improvement Using  
Car Wars' Live Calls

WITHIN  
MONTHS

2

+ 177 More outbound live conversations

+ 111% More claimed Sales opportunities

+ 60% More seized Pursue Opportunities\*

+ 291 More inbound calls

+ 8% Improvement in connection

+ 77 More appointments requested

\*Pursue Opportunities are unbooked opportunities that should receive an outbound call to book a firm appointment. Declined appointments, soft appointments and no appointment requests are considered Pursue Opportunities.