

EXCEPTIONAL SERVICE: NORDSTROM TAKES CUSTOMER SERVICE TO THE NEXT LEVEL

canadian
auto dealer

MARCH 2016



Generations of
SUCCESS

Meet the Clarks, the proud dealership family that just celebrated 100 years running Canada's oldest Chevrolet dealership, J. Clark and Son Ltd. in Fredericton, N.B. How did they do it?

PM #42134512



Marketing to MILLENNIALS

Here's what millennials want from their car buying experience

BY HEATHER HUDSON

If 25-year-old Emily Tamfo was going to buy a car, her first stop wouldn't be a dealership. It would be YouTube.

The digital content strategist said she would pour over reviews from other consumers before branching out to blogs and forums for more information from "what other people in a similar situation would choose."

After upwards of several hours of exhaustive online research, she'd reach out to a dealership. But it wouldn't be an onsite visit.

"If I was looking for something specific, I'd email a [dealership] to ask if they have the colour and model I'd narrowed my choice down to, how much would it be and would someone be available to talk with me at a convenient time," said Tamfo.

Only then would she consider stepping into a dealership.

Research tells us Tamfo's buying process is typical for millennials.

This demographic aged 18-34 is quickly becoming the biggest consumer audience.

According to 2015 DrivingSales consumer experience research, in 2014, millennials accounted for 27 per cent of new car sales in the U.S., up from 18 per cent in 2010.

How can dealers adapt to these unique buying habits?

We've compiled a few tips for dealing with millennials.

LIVE WHERE MILLENNIALS DO

If you want to make an impression on this cohort, set up camp online with these things in mind:

- Make sure your website is mobile friendly, meaning it can be navigated easily using a computer, tablet or smartphone;
- Post real — not stock — photos of your inventory on your website; and

- Have a presence on YouTube — make a video, not a sales pitch, that speaks directly to what your dealership offers this generation.

BE RESPONSIVE

There are few things that make you more irrelevant to millennials than being digitally unresponsive.

"If you don't respond to [my email], I'm not coming to your dealership because that makes me think that you don't care about me," said Tamfo.

Promptness is also key. "I would wait a day or two for a response, but I would think more highly of the dealership that answered me first."

Finally, be sure to answer the questions the email contains, including pricing. Honesty and directness goes a long way with millennials.

Just sending millennials a cheerful invitation to the showroom will send them to another store for more complete information.

FACILITATE A CONVERSATION

According to the DrivingSales research, 64 per cent of millennials surveyed said they would buy a new vehicle more often if the process wasn't so difficult.

"My ideal car buying experience would be from a salesperson who not only listens to what I've asked for but suggested things that are useful to me," said Tamfo. "If I come in and say I only have \$20,000 all-in, I'd hope that they'd respect that and work with me for the best possible deal."

Jennifer Bennett, a 29-year-old account director in sales and client relationships, agrees. She came up with a creative solution to avoid an aggressive sales pitch.

Instead of approaching dealerships to test drive cars, she bought a Zipcar membership and borrowed various models a few hours at a time to test drive



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them in real-life situations.

When the lease on her current car is up, she's prepared to enter a dealership with a clear choice in mind for her next purchase.

She's not alone: a 2014 Google survey indicated 50 per cent of potential car buyers know exactly what vehicle they want to buy.

DrivingSales said that millennials want to be served by a dealer they feel they can relate to — even if that means paying a little more for a great experience.

BE PROGRESSIVE

Millennials are accustomed to automated online interactions. When describing her ideal buying experience, Bennett described a system similar to online dating.

She says a dealership that's willing to go the extra mile would secure her loyalty.

"It would be great to fill out a form online describing my needs, lifestyle, preferences and budget and take advantage of a dealer's expertise to be matched with the right car."

Bennett would even have gone the traditional test drive route if a dealership had gone the extra mile.

"Had a dealership offered a concierge service by bringing a car to my home or office for a test drive, I would have done it. And I probably would feel a bit of pressure to give the sale because they made the extra effort. They would have had a sales opportunity they wouldn't otherwise have had and a relationship could have begun."

Like most consumers, millennials want to feel respected and understood — and do business with you on their terms. They expect honesty and creative, flexible thinking when it comes to sales.

Throw in lightning fast text messages, and you've got a new customer.