

EARL ON CARS

2023 New Year's resolutions for car dealers

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Car dealers are running out of time to radically change the way they retail their new and used cars, as well as their service and parts. Car dealerships have been frozen in time for about a century in the deceptive way they sell cars.

You must have realized this when you bought your last car.

The out-the-door price you paid was much higher than the advertised price, and you paid a different price for the same car for which others paid a higher or lower price. If you financed your car through the dealer, your finance costs were considerably higher than your bank or credit union would have charged.

Why do I say car dealers are running out of time? The answer is the KNOWLEDGE EXPLOSION, occurring for the first time in human history.

My father was born in 1892 and in 1900, human knowledge was doubling every 100 years. Car dealers came into existence in the early 1900s after Henry Ford invented the Model T and assembly line production. By the end of 1945, human knowledge was doubling every 25 years. In the 21st century, we witnessed some scientific breakthroughs that have turbocharged human knowledge. This began with the Internet, which sparked the digital age, bringing Google, quantum computing, the Cloud, and the 800-pound gorilla, ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE, or A.I. Today, human knowledge is doubling about every 13 months and very shortly



will be doubling every 12 hours.

What all this means is that all humans, including car buyers, are immensely smarter, with instant access to more knowledge than anyone could have imagined a few years ago. Not only are car buyers a lot smarter, but so are the politicians and voters.

Up until now, lack of consumer awareness of car dealers' deception has allowed regulators and legislators to permit car dealers to run amuck. Auto manufacturers and dealers have had politicians and regulators in their pockets for a long time. Without the support of Big Auto, a politician can't get elected. The new voter, benefiting from the knowledge explosion, will no longer elect politicians who play ball with car dealers and manufacturers. In fact, the new voters will elect politicians who will play ball with them, the car buy-

ers. To get elected, politicians will have to convince the voters that they will "come down" on crooked car dealers, enforce the consumer protection laws already on the books and add more if needed.

Here are my recommendations for car dealers who would like to remain in business in the 21st century by being able to sell cars to the new fully informed car buyer.

Car dealer 2023 New Year's resolutions:

- Advertise and post the price online that you'll sell your cars for, no more or no less. Every other retailer has already learned this lesson.
- Eliminate all fine print that secretly increases the advertised price (like a large down payment). Manufacturers and dealers are guilty of this. Both violate Federal Trade Commission rules when they do.
- Do not advertise that you have cars in your inventory that you do not. Cars

that you ordered from your manufacturer can take months to arrive.

■ Do not add options and accessories to your cars unless you include the cost of those in your advertised price.

■ Do not add hidden charges, often called dealer fees or junk fees, to your advertised prices. These charges are additional profit to you. All costs should be included in your advertised and posted prices. Federal, state and local government fees are the only exception — sales tax and license plate.

■ Inform your customer that your dealership makes a profit when it finances new and used vehicles. This profit averages about \$2,000 for every car sold and derives from interest rate markup and "products/services" like GAP insurance, extended warranties/service contracts, prepaid maintenance, road hazard and roadside assistance. Car buyers should be informed that they should compare financing from their bank or credit union.

The average car dealer reading these resolutions will either laugh in disbelief at my naivety, because he doesn't believe my basic premise; or he'll be horrified at what adhering to such changes would do to his profits (GIGANTIC at the present time).

Here's something I wish each dealer would consider: Because most dealers will ignore my suggestions, you can be one of the few who actually prospers because you will be the choice of the new, 21st century, fully informed and aware car buyer. He'll bypass your competition to buy a car from you because he understands and trusts the way you do business. If you disagree, check out my Toyota dealership in North Palm Beach, Florida, where the educated consumer is my best customer. ■

CLIMATE

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on their choices.

Translating that success to climate change is trickier, but doable, Dalene says.

"Nutrition labels on food are effective because consumers generally have a basic level of knowledge about nutrition, about what is healthy or unhealthy," he says. "But the average American isn't steeped in the science behind climate change and greenhouse gas emissions."

So how to counter that?

ICEMAN converts metric ton measurements of greenhouse gases into a simple, universal indexing system based on a percentage value of carbon neutral.

"This index system can be universally understood by any consumer anywhere in the world regardless of what measurement system they use or their level of knowledge about climate change science," Dalene says. "Placing these labels on a product will eliminate the mystery of whether or not a product is truly 'green.'"

'Good for brand image'

With that knowledge, consumers already weighing factors such as price and quality will also be able to make purchasing decisions based on which product has the smaller carbon footprint.

"It's just common sense that someone would want to pick the product that would have less of a negative impact on the environment," Dalene says.

And that, in his view, is how the mar-

ket could help drive the battle against the forces of climate change, as opposed to government mandates.

"With people getting more and more onto the green bandwagon, being environmentally responsible is good for brand image," Dalene says. "Everybody wants to be viewed as environmentally responsible. ICEMAN allows a company not just to seem environmentally responsible; it allows a company to demonstrate, as an objective mathematical fact, exactly how environmentally responsible they are."

About Frank Dalene

Frank Dalene, the author of "Decarbonize the World: Solving the Climate Crisis While Increasing Profits in Your Business," is president and CEO of Telemark Inc., a construction services business he co-founded with his brother Roy in 1978. Over the past four decades, Telemark has become known for being a national leader, embracing the latest in energy efficiencies. Dalene is innovating the manner in which companies can assess their carbon footprint. Through his ICEMAN (International Carbon Equivalent Mechanism Attributed to Neutrality) methodology, companies can get an accurate snapshot of their product's carbon emissions on a standardized scale. Dalene has presented keynotes across the world on sustainable construction, carbon neutrality and ICEMAN. He also has been quoted or his work has appeared in such publications as The New York Times, New York Post, Architectural Digest and The Wall Street Journal. ■



Lang Realty's Allyson Sullivan and Amy Snook with Santa.

COURTESY PHOTO

Lang Realty helps 50 families over holidays

Lang Realty offices in Boca Raton, Boynton Beach, Delray Beach, Palm Beach Gardens and Jupiter spread holiday cheer by decorating their offices with angel trees with names of those in need. The company said it helped 50 families.

"For the second year, our agents and staff identified people in our community who would benefit from this program, especially families that may get overlooked by larger programs," Amy Snook of Lang Realty said in a news release. "We had angels ranging from small children to grandparents. This project is truly inspired by our Lang team members with the hopes of making a difference."

Each angel included a wish list for the adoptee to fulfill and place together un-

der the tree, which was delivered before the holidays at a special holiday event held at Lang's Central Boca sales office. Attendees enjoyed gifts, cheer and holiday treats.

The angel tree program was a Lang Cares effort. Lang Cares is Lang Realty's community outreach initiative, formed to support local nonprofits that are already working hard with limited funding to feed food and secure families. The Lang Cares program provides resources to the local communities and encourages all of Lang Realty's agents to make a difference in someone's life today through donations of money, goods, services or even a donation of time in volunteering.

For more information about Lang Realty and details on current listings, call 561-853-2300 or visit www.langrealty.com. ■