

Six Steps to Re-write the Record Books in 2007

By Mark A. Walsh

Is your forecast for a bumper crop in 2007? I suggest you take a close look at the seeds you are about to sow. The difference between top performing Dealerships and under performing Dealerships is this: Top Dealers do things differently **and** they do different things. If the crop you reaped in 2006 didn't tickle your fancy – STOP! Look in them mirror and ask yourself these three simple questions:

1. What did we do right?
2. What did we do wrong?
3. What are we going to do differently to re-write the record books in 2007?

Many managers make the suicidal mistake of thinking moving forward is making progress. It's not – you must go upward. Under performing Dealership's modus operandi is horizontal; they go forward but never go up.

Here are six steps to weave into the tapestry of your New Year stretch strategy:

1. Get Serious

There is not a department in the store that can make you more money more quickly than the sales department – period! Don't let the prophets of doom and gloom take your eyes off the sales profit prize. The key to consistently hitting the jackpot is to create

an unlevel playing field substantially stacked to your advantage through superior people and processes. In an environment where continual process improvement is sort, NO sacred cow can be left standing. There must be a robust review of the rationale for every process to gauge its relevance and effectiveness.

2. Get Focused.

Stop looking out the window for answers and start looking in the mirror for solutions. Managers can't control the weather, the economy, interest rates and competitors actions – in short, the market. They can however control their own actions and responses. Once managers realize that it is internal processes and people, not external conditions that largely determine sales success, they start focusing ferociously on what can be controlled.

3. Get Smart

One wise old owl by the name of Albert Einstein summed it up perfectly *"The definition of insanity is repeating the same behavior and expecting a different outcome"*. Wise up! Failure is not a cataclysmic event, it doesn't fall out of the sky and wipe you out. Failure is largely determined by the choices we make. Don't make the same errors in judgment by not developing the disciplines needed to succeed in 2007. In case you've become complacent over the holidays, let this be your wake up call...*the margin for error this year will be less than ever.*

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"Making a World of Difference"

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The car business is a dog-eat-dog game and nobody throws you a bone. It's your call. You'll pay now with discipline or later with regret – either way, I promise you'll pay.

4. Get Going

The only place success comes before work is in the dictionary, so stop studying the race and join in! Procrastination is opportunity's natural assassin and before you know it the competition has the jump on you. It's far better to make a move and risk shooting yourself in the foot than stand still procrastinating and let the competition shoot you in the head.

5. Get Better

I'm sure every dealership has goals and most have strategies. However, under performing retailers suffer from a reality gap. The chasm between the sales objective and the skills and habits of the people charged with the execution, renders the goal unrealistic from day one.

The faculty of your people will influence your bottom line more than any other single factor. A manager's number one responsibility is to get people better or to get better people. Getting good people better and getting rid of the wrong ones must be a priority and become a cornerstone of your culture. When you raise the bar, not everyone will rise to the occasion – the winners will love it and the losers will leave it. This is par for the course and is to be expected. Staff turnover is not all bad. If someone is an oxygen thief, you want them out!

6. Get Excited

The speed of the leader is the speed of the pack. Your mood sets the model. Henry Ford once was quoted as saying *"If you think you can or think you can't, you'll probably be right"*. A manager with a positive attitude who greets everyday with enthusiasm and embraces every challenge is a giant killer!

This year can be a record. Stop hugging and burping your people and get them performing. Your market is pregnant with the possibility of increasing sales and growing market share. I've said it before and I'll say it again; excuses are the DNA of underachievers – always were and always will be!

Get serious, Get focused, Get smart, Get going, Get better, Get excited and you've got **six steps to re-write the record books in 2007!**