

# Redefining customer experience

In the time of Covid-19

# Introduction

Every dealer will be aware of the essential nature of great customer service. COVID-19 will have amplified the importance to many would-be car buyers. Today, customers will typically be more risk-averse and in search of reassurance. Dealers can benefit by adapting to this new reality in the way they promote themselves, especially online. Take time to consider not just the cars you offer, but the experience as well, digitally or by phone and spare time to increase the focus on added value services such as longer warranty extensions.

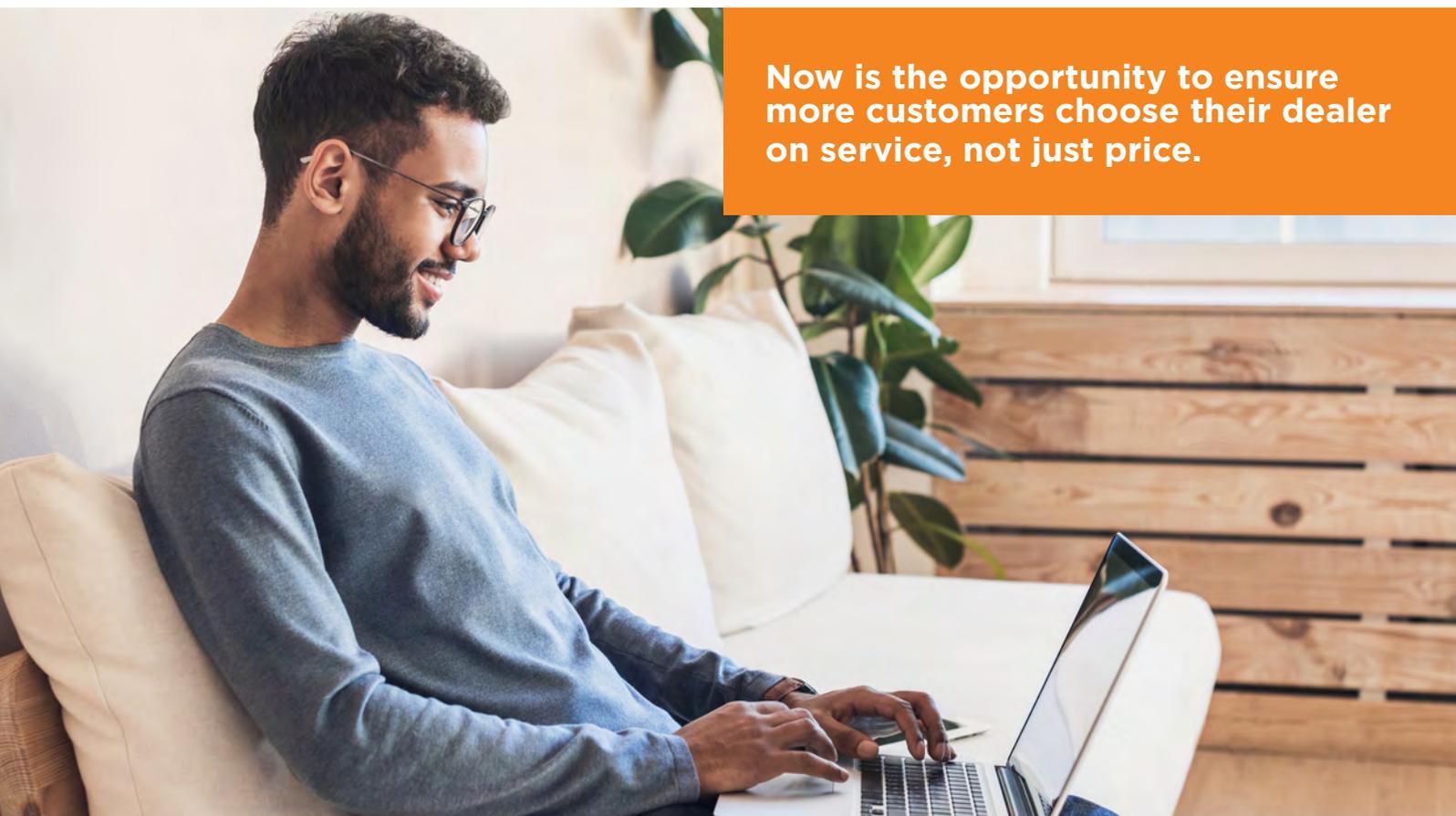
Now is the opportunity to ensure more customers choose their dealer on service, not just price.

## Why a fresh customer experience matters

In today's car retailing world, you and your competitors are reachable with the click of a button. Right now for a risk-averse customer, it is their experiences that are the most defining differentiator.

Customers' feelings and experiences about a dealer; positive and negative can be communicated to the entire world through social media and online reviews. It is more critical than ever to build relationships with customers. People remember experiences, better than things.

In this guide, we provide four steps that dealers can take today in the current changed operating environment to enhance a customer's experience.



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# Step 1

## Creating a 'new normal' starts internally

No amount of well-crafted online content will work for long if there has not been a shift in the way the dealer team is supported and re-directed.

Like customers, the dealership team will have been impacted by COVID-19. Like customers, their confidence and future planning will have taken a knock; they also want reassurance.



### Action

Looking at sales in particular, it is essential that the team is coached, supported and encouraged to create a caring customer rapport by receiving the same level of care from the business.

Every dealer must make their own decision on what will work best, but in such changing times some major shifts in operating standards may be appropriate. Now, is a time for teamwork not competition; collaboration not a pressurised performance environment may be more appropriate. Place generosity and teamwork above all.

We are in choppy waters, where a sales bounce-back is a hope, but not an expectation. Do everything that you can to optimise your tools to support your team, but prepare for a downward shift. Reassure your team that you care about their mental and physical health above all and that you expect their best effort and nothing more.

# Step 2

## Walk in the steps of today's car buyer

Customers want reassurance on every step of their journey; arguably like never before. It all starts online; the challenge here is to be more human across those virtual channels, too, because people can't get that touch in other ways.



### Action

In your digital content, particularly on your website, think about how you can embed human interactions. Be honest with your customers about what's changed, and surprise them with unexpected, caring gestures.

As Click & Collect options emerge, signpost the journey for customers and detail the steps you have taken to protect car buyers and staff. Visits by appointment to view a car; online finance arranged by the customer at home on your website and remote part-exchange tools – all scream care. Add personal notes from your business leadership; it's all about reassurance, confidence and trust.

# Step 3

## Reaching out & supporting customers

Now is not the time for hard-sell tactics; now is the time to reach out and show you care. Many people have been impacted by COVID-19, financially and emotionally.



### Action

Be sure that you understand the steps that your finance partners and others are taking to protect and support your customers. Share these online with direct links to their websites, to signpost your audience to the assistance that may be available to them. It is a considered and appropriate step that says you care.

The lockdown will inevitably create some car issues for people whose cars have not moved for an extended period. Again, remind people about the value of their warranty and let them know how your team can help in an appropriate social-distanced and sanitised way.

# Step 4

## Seek & react to feedback

The pandemic is an opportunity to move car sales away from the unhealthy slippery slope of price. Instead, it is about reaffirming the value of service and care.



### Action

Now, like never before it is the time to seek feedback, encourage customers to complete reviews and share their positive experiences across social media. Similarly, it is important to react to this feedback – just a simple, modest thanks works brilliantly. At the same time, embrace any negative feedback as a learning opportunity and a chance for redemption. Nothing is more compelling than a customer complaint brilliantly handled.

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