

Sales Promotion

Motivating consumers, customers and staff across all media channels

Motivation

Driving sales

With car sales dropping, staff incentives can help to promote sales at dealerships, reports Mark Ludmon



Ferrari driving is not the only incentive popular in car dealerships

New car sales slumped by nearly 19 per cent in August in the face of consumer fears about an economic downturn. With competition tougher than ever at dealerships, there is more pressure on manufacturers and suppliers of automotive financial services to motivate staff to sell their products. "The current uncertain economic climate has brought a difficult trading environment for car manufacturers and with it an even greater focus on sales activity," says Mike Davies, director of performance improvement at motivation and communication company BI, which runs incentive schemes for the automotive industry.

"Auto incentives are a large chunk of Maritz's business and our clients continue to see their value when driving sales in a competitive marketplace," says Julian Bazley, incentives specialist at Maritz. "The key challenge is always to engage dealers from the very start to the end of the incentive period and to ensure the reward is one that appeals to all.

"Incentives which reward for every sale – not just for a combined total – work really well, particularly when themed as they make sure the whole dealership gets involved." This applies to a number of automotive programmes run by Maritz, with themes such as a newly launched film and a football tournament. "Using interactive telephone devices works really well as part of this, where people 'play' for a prize and can choose to gamble for a better prize."

Volkswagen Financial Services used a

quarterly staff incentive scheme created by P&MM to increase sales of three core financial products across the 300-strong Skoda and Seat retailer network by 25 per cent in a declining market. With vouchers as a reward for sales staff and luxury weekend breaks for dealer principals, participants rang a hotline to register their sale and could also win another reward by choosing an envelope marked A, B or C. "This programme easily met its target and was so successful that it was extended for a second quarter," says P&MM's executive director, John Sylvester.

Bazley at Maritz says that travel trips are still suitable dealership incentives, "especially in the current climate where the prospect of an all-expenses-paid trip for you and your partner may be even more appealing". Other suggestions for this market, according to incentives company Unmissable, are driving an Aston Martin DB9 on a racetrack or having the use of an Aston Martin for a weekend stay in the Cotswolds. Other aspirational ideas are a Casino Royale-style weekend living like James Bond, a trip to have a suit tailored in Florence, or a holiday in the casino mecca of Las Vegas. "The car sales industry tends to be male-orientated, with a minority of women," explains Unmissable's managing director, Justine Clement. "The age range of this group is quite wide, ranging from 18 to 50. They all have an interest in cars so car themes would work well, especially being given a

chance to drive even better cars than they sell."

Red Letter Days, with its choice of 120 driving experiences, has worked with a number of dealerships, including multi-franchise groups, on creating complete incentive solutions. But corporate sales manager Mike Bartlett says it regularly creates exclusive experiences for this audience, such as a luxury trip to New York including being chauffeur-driven in a NYPD police car and an access-all-areas visit to the Grand Prix. "The top sellers are already getting a big cash incentive so you need something that is going to stand out and be memorable, something that they will talk about and inspire their colleagues," he says.

Virgin Experience Days provided vouchers for a six-month programme across 200 Citroen UK dealerships. Dealers were split into eight leagues based on their annual sales plan and earned points for each vehicle they registered and each credit package agreed. The dealership topping each league received a team prize of £1,000 of vouchers, with a runner-up prize of £500 in vouchers.

Maggie Tindal, head of direct and travel rewards at Thomas Cook, says London theatre breaks and spa days were the two most popular redemption choices among automotive customers, while Julian Bonnett, UK sales manager at Marriott Individual Incentives, reports that its Pamper Day vouchers are popular in this market, generally as a gift to give to wives or girlfriends. Marriott's Golf Day and Weekend Break vouchers are also among the top selections. However, it is not just "experiences" that appeal, with Oldeani reporting take-up of its branded chronographs as well as upmarket brands of watch such as Omega and Raymond Weil (pictured).

Tindal points out that what motivates a car salesperson has changed over the years. "The once-popular day-out with a Ferrari on a racing track has definitely seen its day, and now rewards have to appeal to a wider audience," she says. "It is no longer a male-dominated industry, and vehicle manufacturers are increasingly aware and asking us to be very creative with the incentives they can offer to their employees."

