

LEAD FULFILLMENT WITH NO INVENTORY

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You don't have any inventory to sell but leads keep coming in from various sources, including your own marketing efforts and also leads received from the manufacturers. But how can you sell and nurture leads with nothing to sell? And how can you ensure the leads don't become discouraged and leave in spite of your nurturing efforts or lack thereof?

The worst thing you could do is to become tone deaf to buyers because you're not addressing their concerns and simply choose to ignore the leads because there's little to no inventory. Now is the time to capitalize on lead fulfillment processes and nurturing resources that educate and help you install best practices and tactics for fostering a reciprocal relationship with your customers. Remember, meaningful and dedicated nurturing can set the tone for the customers' experience and how they view your store and the brands you sell.

We all simply need to adapt our messaging to address the elephant in the room: low inventory. You need to show, through proper communication, that your dealership genuinely cares for them and their concerns. Nurturing establishes trust with customers. The MRAA has done a lot of legwork building lead management and nurturing resources to help you find more success. This includes a Resource Center, educational sessions from Dealer Week, programs, MRAAtraining.com, Dealer Certification, all of which are designed to help you continually improve. If you follow these steps below, you can create a lead nurturing process so your team is better equipped with the necessary tools to reduce the potential loss of leads.

**Nurturing leads begins with a proper contact when the lead arrives.
Just don't do it like this:**

Subject Line: No boats!

[Name],

You might not be aware that we are recovering from a pandemic, and everything is in short supply, including boats. We are sold out of boats! Check back with me in a couple of years and hopefully we will have some boats to sell.

If you want, you can order a boat now. I can't tell you when it might arrive. But you'll be ahead of the others wishing they could go boating!

Call or email me if you want to order a boat.

Cheers,

[Email Signature]

Remember, a dealer's lead fulfillment is an extension of its marketing efforts. How do you want your dealership to be remembered after boat sales return to a normal pace?

Your initial response to leads will often be the customer's first impression of the dealership, so focus on making a good impression right out of the gate.

The industry and manufacturers often speak about the nurturing of leads and future boat buyers. For nurturing to be effective, the initial contact must be prompt and useful to the customer. Or your nurturing efforts will be ignored or worse, unsubscribed to.

So, let's talk about doing it right when the lead arrives. By the way, before I jump in too heavily here, it's important to note that our team here at the MRAA has a host of courses available to help you fine-tune your lead management.

Here are a few simple rules and steps to finding success:

- 1 If the lead arrives with a phone number, response time is key: Assign the lead to a salesperson who is available to contact the lead RIGHT NOW!
 - a. First move: Call the customer. Salespeople are most effective speaking with a customer versus writing emails; therefore, the first contact should be made by phone if the lead arrived with a phone number.
 - b. Being prepared for the call is equally as important, and some talking points might be helpful to keep the call on track. When you follow and personalize a script, you make your points consistently, don't miss opportunities, build better rapport and seize your calls to action. [Here's a great article on the importance of not "winging" the phone call.](#)
 - c. Use these initial phone call talking points to get you started.
 - i. First and foremost: Share the current market conditions and situation with hope!
 - ii. Next, learn more about the customer. Are they boating now? How much experience do they have? Do they have a trade-in? With whom do they boat? Where do they want to go boating? What boating activities will they participate in? What type of boat do they believe they are looking for? Do they have a specific model in mind?
 - iii. If you haven't yet learned the FORMAT approach to customer relationship management, which is taught by Sam Dantzler of Garage Composites. MRAA's Certified Dealers have direct access to Sam's Continuous Certification course, "Take Your Dealership from Good to Great with CRM."
 - d. Follow-up on the phone call with an email that supports the phone call, and most importantly, serves as an electronic business card!

Use something like this:

Hello [Name],

I enjoyed speaking with you today about the [Year, Make, Model]. You can find additional information and more specific details here: [insert link]. As we discussed, I think that the _____ will fit well with what you said you are looking for in a boat.

If you have any additional questions in the meantime, please drop me a line. I am looking forward to helping you get on the water in your new [model] as quickly possible and easily.

Sincerely,

[Email Signature]

2 If the lead arrives without a phone number, you must reply with an email with the goal of both answering the customer's question and moving the conversation to the phone. In addition, in today's market environment, you will want to set the stage that the current process for buying a boat is not normal, and there is hope to getting a boat.

Try something like this:

Subject Line: [Dealer Name] - [Boat Model of Interest]

Hello [Name],

Thanks for your interest in the [Year, Make, Model]. We are working hard here at [Dealer Name] to match customers with their dream boat.

Boating has made huge gains in popularity over the last two seasons that was spurred by "social distancing" but has quickly reinforced that boating is the best way to spend time with family and friends. This demand, along with current supply chain challenges, has significantly impacted our current inventory.

However, opportunities to buy a boat have been presenting themselves daily. Let's talk so I can understand your needs and we can find the best boat for you.

Please give me a call or reply with your phone number and the best time to call.

Thanks,

[Email Signature]

I'd like to call your attention to the subject line I'm recommending with that email. Too many sales people don't do a good enough job branding their subject lines with the dealership name and the boat that the customer is seeking. When this happens, the chances that that email will land in a spam folder or will just be overlooked grow significantly. Customize your subject lines to speak directly to the customer's interests.

3 If the phone call or email outreach does not make contact, it's time to utilize texting. At MRAA's 2019 Dealer Week conference and expo, I and a colleague from a leading texting company presented a robust course on the pros and cons and the do's and don'ts of texting customers. There's a right way and a wrong way to do it, but when done well, it can be an extremely effective method for connecting with customers.

Log in to MRAAtraining.com to watch "Texting Customers: Do's, Don'ts and How to Make It a Win-Win," and for a shortcut, consider using a text such as this:

Hi Sara, Bob McCann here from Bob's Boats. I'm responding to your request for information about the 2018 Zorch 240. I've found the answer(s) to your questions that include some options that would be best to cover on a phone call. Are you free at 1 p.m. today? Bob McCann, Bob's Boats, (727) 480-6061 | Text STOP to Opt-Out

You cannot nurture your customers if you're not approaching it as though you're caring for them. Even without inventory, you need to genuinely care, establish trust and seek to build long-lasting loyal customers. When the lead arrives, your team's immediate response sets the tone for how they view your dealership and the brands you carry. Ignoring leads because of a lack of inventory is simply the wrong message to send to potential customers and will not help your dealership or the industry in the long run.

The reality is asking commissioned sales people to do a lot of nurturing work that may not pay off immediately. However, it's imperative that your sales team and your marketing team work a little closer to ensure your messaging and nurturing approach both address the current conditions and customer experience. Nurturing leads properly can make a difference in your aim to win more business than your competition.

The MRAA's continually evolving and expanding library of great resources can help you create a more effective approach when it comes to nurturing leads. The Resource Center features both free and member-based content to help you refine your lead nurturing process. Specific items like a virtual Business Development Center, Dealer Week, MRAAtraining.com and Dealer Certification can help you continually improve regardless of market conditions.

Check out the following MRAA resources:

▶ Turning Leads Into Sales in Any Market Place

You and your team need to continuously evolve and update the way that you manage and nurture leads and convert them into sales. The MRAA already offers numerous resources and educational materials you can turn to for help. Check out these courses and blogs that provide you great insights into how to capture sales in any market environment.

▶ Lead Management Courses:

- Optimize Sales Lead Performance for Maximum Return
- Texting Customers: Do's, Don'ts and How to Make It a Win-Win
- How to Hold Your Digital Accountable
- Dealer Certification's Guide to Improving Your Sales Process Map

▶ Nurturing Leads into Sales

- Amp Up Your Email Marketing video
- It's Time to Embrace Digital blog
- Slow Down and Create Customers for Life blog
- How to Sell to First Time Boat Buyers
- Implement Digital Into Your Sales Process