Car Buying Insights in a Fast-Changing Marketplace: New Study Shows Dealers and Manufacturers Often Missing the Mark

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Study Provides Actionable Insights Tied to Improving the Customer Experience

SEATTLE--(BUSINESS WIRE)--Oct. 27, 2022-- Marchex (NASDAQ: MCHX), the award-winning AI-powered conversation intelligence company that helps businesses turn strategic insights into the actions that drive their most valued sales outcomes, today released findings from a major study (www.marchex.com/automotive-buyer-behavior) that analyzed more than 60,000 consumer-to-dealer phone conversations, from across the U.S., to assess the current state of car-buying.

Global supply chain crises have transformed how U.S. consumers buy vehicles. With ongoing shortages, consumers are making clear that it is more important than ever that phone calls focused on vehicle availability precede traditional in-person dealership visits. That is, consumers want to call and have conversations with dealers ahead of visiting to simply find out what is available and at what price, or to understand how to purchase a vehicle. A previous Marchex study revealed that roughly 80% of consumers prefer to call and speak with a dealership sales representative ahead of visiting the dealership.

Yet when shoppers try to connect over the phone with a salesperson is the point at which the customer experience frequently begins to erode. Marchex's new study, titled " Car Buying is Evolving: How Dealers and Manufacturers Can Keep Up," finds:

- 16% of customers who call never connect to a sales representative. These are lost opportunities to close more business and protect the customer brand experience.
- For those customers who do get through, 90% ask about the availability of certain makes and models; yet 60% of the time they do not get clear responses or a path to purchase the vehicle. This is attributable to conversation and communication breakdowns at both the manufacturer and dealer levels.
- 40% of calls result in at least three breaches of trust, and leave customers feeling like agents are dismissive, not paying attention, or not taking the consumer requests seriously.

With all that is new, the two primary questions asked during dealership sales calls and conversations remain the same:

- Do you have the vehicle I want?
- How much will it cost?

Traditionally, dealerships that offered poor answers to these most basic questions have underperformed relative to the dealerships that were meeting the customers' expectations with transparent, straightforward answers. Today, according to Marchex's study, the industry has gone backwards – yet this is not attributable to the dealerships only. Manufacturers **must improve their communication efforts** both with the consumers and in empowering dealerships to provide accurate information to their buyers.

First and foremost, dealers and manufacturers must arm salespeople with the specific answers and data they need to address the primary questions customers are asking. These questions are largely known and simply require accurate, scripted answers. These must include details about availability and price, as well as how the ordering process now works. Getting the manufacturer and the dealership coordinated by communicating "as one" with the consumer are critical prerequisites toward building more trust and satisfaction for the consumer.

"As car-buying processes continue to fundamentally change, dealerships and manufacturers consistently struggle in their communication tied to answering inquiries about availability and the vehicle-ordering process, leaving potential buyers frustrated and distrustful. They want to buy a car – yet they cannot get a straight answer as to how. In some cases, these bad experiences are convincing customers to defect from a particular brand," said Matt Muilenburg, Marchex Senior Vice President of Automotive. "This has important ramifications for both dealers and manufacturers, primarily tied to improving communication and creating a better customer experience. The good news is, much of this is correctable."

In addition to improving communication by both dealers and manufacturers, dealerships must fix their inbound phone call routing process. This is a root cause of why failed calls and conversations occur, with the primary factor being issues with the dealership's virtual attendant. Calls "fail" for a variety of reasons including:

- **Automated attendant abandon**
- **Ring Transfer abandon**
- **Hold Time abandon**
- **Unanswered calls**

The study (www.marchex.com/automotive-buyer-behavior) provides additional details on these factors, as well as how to reduce failed calls and conversations with an approach that includes and considers People, Process, and Technology.

About Marchex
Marchex's award-winning conversation intelligence platform, featuring AI-powered sales engagement and marketing solutions, helps businesses turn strategic insights into the actions that drive their most valued sales outcomes. Our multichannel voice and text capabilities enable sales and marketing

teams to deliver the buying experiences that today's customers expect. Marchex is the trusted conversation intelligence partner for market-leading companies in critical industries, including many of the world's most innovative and successful brands.

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