

# TURNING CHATS INTO SIGNATURES

Securing a deal from the first chat interaction to the last signature



**John Keohane, vice president of operations at Temecula Valley Buick GMC in southern California, has been in the car business since the late 2000's. In 2019, his father-in-law purchased the store and asked John to be a part of it.**

Since then, Reynolds is the only DMS the store has known; and they wouldn't want it any other way. The more their dealership has utilized the Reynolds platform, the more they can't imagine doing business without it.

Here's why.

## **More than a chat lead**

Prior to switching to Reynolds to manage chat leads, they were simply checking a box to tell their OEM, "yes, we have chat". They had chat because they had to, not necessarily because they wanted to.

Those incoming chat "leads" were ignored, largely because of the quality. Leads would come in looking like code and were hard

to read. They were incomplete and missing information. For a salesperson, this was an obstacle, and they weren't following up, understandably so.

But John places customer information on a high pedestal. It's the Holy Grail to do business effectively, and he knew there was opportunity to get more quality touches in this area.

Today, what Temecula Valley gets through chat is more than just a lead. Their fully managed chat platform provides a human to human interaction, making it easy for customers to achieve what they came to do on their site. With this personalized approach, Temecula Valley Buick GMC

is able to capture every needed piece of information on every customer; contact information is never missing. John saw very quickly that **customers' questions were being answered online, and they were capturing information more efficiently. This resulted in qualified leads increasing 5-6%.**

"We get the customer's name, number, the vehicle they were looking at, how far in the process they got. And then, we pick it up from there and sell the vehicle just like any other lead, but now we have more information about the customer."

Another obstacle previously was the lack of integration with their CRM and the rigid sales structure their previous chat provider required. It was set up for a round robin approach. However, Temecula Valley's sales team needs an environment where it's simple to get the job done, so they follow a broadcast lead system where a lead is put out to sales and anyone can claim it.

With a broadcast system, "they get excited and they get after it." **Sales can grab leads from any device, at any time, even when they're not on the floor.** When the lead comes in, they immediately get to work because 1) they're able to claim a lead on their terms, 2) the information captured online speeds up the process, and 3) it's a seamless transition into the CRM and working the deal becomes easy.

### **Expanding traditional retail**

Temecula Valley typically sees upwards of 1,300 incoming internet leads per month. 15% of them start through a virtual retail experience – a customer goes through the standard steps in a deal, sometimes on their own, sometimes with assistance from the dealership, but in a remote environment.

The customer enters their information, reviews applicable rates and rebates, submits the credit application, enters their trade, calculates monthly payments, and even



submits documentation – all from the comfort of wherever they are. These buyers may be starting their journey online, but that doesn't mean they end there. At Temecula Valley Buick GMC, **“less than one percent of car deals sold are completed 100% online.”**

If their online buying segment is so small, does it matter enough to focus on it? John thinks so.

“It helps us compete against the Carvana's and CarMax's of the world. We're able to present the car, present down to the penny payments, and we're able to do it quickly.” Customers complete as much of the buying process online as they want to, and if they choose, can finish in-store. Then the dealership seamlessly picks up the deal right where it left off, with more information than ever before, to get it closed.

John and his team have gone from simply checking a required box to really seeing the value. **“Chat and virtual retail are now an asset, versus something we had to do before”.**

### **Making a mark in F&I**

With customers working through a large portion of the deal before coming to the store, it's less of a grind in F&I. Customers are trusting and agreeing to aftermarket products like GAP or extended warranties and opting for one of the banks Temecula Valley is promoting. John has found that if a buyer makes it this far online, they are far more open and more often than not, it's a done deal. The only thing standing in the way is signing the paperwork.

***“As long as we can get customers to calculate their payment online, we're basically at the two yard line and headed toward a deal.”***

Since California still requires some wet-ink signatures, the signing ceremony is typically when the online to in-store handoff takes place. “Everything the customer has done online is available in our F&I tool in-store. We have the right vehicle and the right customer record, because it's in the DMS. Once the customer walks themselves down the path online, it's a seamless finish in-store. As long as we can get customers to calculate their payment online, we're basically at the two yard line and headed toward a deal.”

### **Seamless workflows**

John is a big advocate for simplicity and accuracy. He likes dashboards and numbers, so it's no surprise he appreciates a clean customer database too.

At Temecula Valley, a lot of their customers have interacted with the dealership before, and new interactions are mainly driven by the customer wanting to ask more questions about a vehicle they've already looked at.

“Our sales team can see how the customer has shopped previously, what their experience was like, what vehicles they drive, who they talked to last and what about, and what they're here to do now.

It's a single source of truth on whether or not the customer has dealt with us before. And if so, how."

This makes a huge impact when customers are shopping online. Temecula Valley's virtual retailing and CRM platforms work together, so every customer touch point is connected and presented upfront. With this approach, they can do more with every customer and get the most out of every interaction.

### **A journey to Retail Anywhere**

The day to day that John describes at Temecula Valley is the Retail Anywhere approach: the idea that customers can start their car buying journey from wherever they are, and move in and out of the dealership at any point, but the key is a single, seamless process for them and the dealership employees.

From the detailed chat record, to the full virtual retail experience, to the connection with the DMS, the Retail Anywhere approach follows every touch point so that Temecula Valley can retail beyond their four walls. They are capturing every opportunity, in the most profitable and efficient way.

Temecula Valley's customers are able to get to the two yard line online, and the sales team gets them into the end zone, or in this case, a new ride.



*To learn more about Retail Anywhere, visit*

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