



## ESSENTIAL GUIDE

# HOW TO WIN THE DEAL ON THE FIRST CALL

*Uncover the Truth About the Most Critical (and Most Mismanaged) Tool at your Dealership*



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New selling techniques emerge and evolve, yet one tool remains a constant and critical part of the customer experience: the phone.

Whether it's a customer calling to schedule an RO, inquire about a vehicle, or request more information, the phone continues to be a vital touchpoint in the buyer's journey.

Despite its importance, the customer experience is often disrupted, or completely derailed, by poor call handling. Missed calls, long hold times, voicemails with no follow-up, ambiguous appointment setting, and dropped connections are all signs of a broken customer journey. And, for dealerships, these issues often translate to missed revenue and lost opportunities.

Many dealerships understand the phone is a critical tool in both sales and service operations. However, despite this awareness, many still fail to handle calls with the level of importance they demand. Car Wars has the data and the stories to back it up.

***What actually happens when a customer calls into a dealership?***

# AGENDA

**1*****Customer Journey Analysis*****PG. 3****2*****Ways To Improve The Customer Experience At Your Dealership*****PG. 10****3*****Turning Insights Into Action*****PG. 13**

# CUSTOMER JOURNEY ANALYSIS

Car Wars experts analyzed the communication journey of multiple real customers... and uncovered a broken system that's not only costing dealers real revenue but also damaging the dealership's reputation.

To understand just how fragmented and inconsistent the customer journey can be, **let's take a closer look at real customer paths pulled from recent dealership call data.** All of them represent real inbound leads and show how a lack of efficient call processes cost dealerships the sale.

In this guide, a small but representative subset of dealership call data has been reviewed, signaling significant challenges with call connection and customer engagement. The data highlights a concerning number of missed calls,

mishandled leads, and lost sales opportunities. In contrast, **Car Wars' top-performing dealerships consistently achieve an 80% call connection rate,** showcasing the potential for significant improvements when the right strategies and tools are in place. This stark difference underscores the importance of optimizing phone processes to not only improve connection rates, but also convert more calls into valuable sales opportunities.

To illustrate these challenges and opportunities further, let's dive into the experiences of **three customers based on real communication journeys: let's call them Jane Doe, Bob Smith, and Billy Williams.** Their journeys reveal firsthand how the current call processes are impacting customer satisfaction and dealership success.

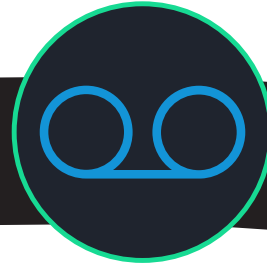
- ▶ **ANSWER:** The customer's call is picked up, whether by a person or machine, based on a technical pick-up signal.
- ▶ **CONNECT:** The customer gets connected ear to ear with a qualified agent who can answer the customer's inquiry.

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## CUSTOMER JOURNEY #1: JANE DOE



Jane Doe is finally ready to start shopping for her next SUV. She's done some research online, narrowed her list, and now it's time to schedule her first test drive. She picks up the phone and calls **Fast Ford**, the top result from her online search.



Her call goes straight to voicemail after pressing "2" to reach Sales. There's no custom greeting, just the generic system message, and Jane doesn't leave a voicemail. She figures she'll try again later. Maybe they were just busy.



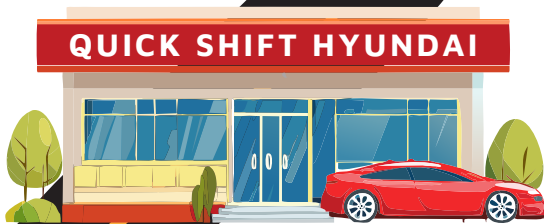
A couple of hours pass, and her excitement about that new SUV still lingers. Jane calls Fast Ford again, but this time, she's placed on hold. She listens to crackly hold music and a looped message saying someone will be with her shortly. After **nearly three minutes**, she hangs up, feeling a bit annoyed.



*"If it's this hard to talk to someone now," she thinks, "how helpful will they be when I actually need service?"*



Still determined, Jane dials **Turbo Toyota**, the second choice on her list. This time, the call connects, and she talks to someone, but the conversation feels rushed and unhelpful. She's told she can "probably just come by," but no appointment is actually set. Jane thanks them and ends the call with more questions than answers.

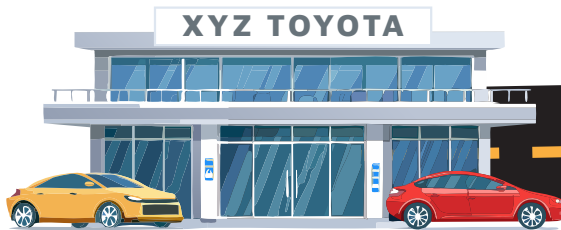


Finally, she tries **Quick Shift Hyundai**. They have a used SUV on their lot that could still be a good fit for her. The phone rings once... then twice... and then a friendly voice picks up. Within minutes, Jane has a firm appointment confirmed for that same afternoon and a follow-up text with all the details.



**Lesson:** Every missed or mishandled call is an opportunity handed to your competition. Simply answering the phone and guiding the customer effectively can be the difference between losing or winning the sale.

## CUSTOMER JOURNEY #2: BOB SMITH



Like Jane, Bob is calling multiple dealerships.

Bob Smith is searching for a reliable used truck to replace his aging work vehicle. He's serious about buying and wants to test drive by the weekend. He starts his hunt by calling **XYZ Toyota** to check availability.



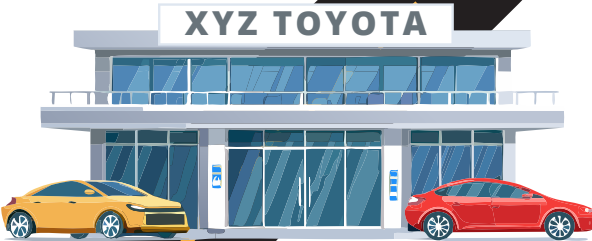
The phone rings, but there's no answer. Bob doesn't leave a message because he's in the middle of his workday and doesn't have time to wait around for callbacks.

Next, Bob tries **Heritage Motors**. The line connects, but he's placed on hold with no indication of how long it'll take. After several minutes, he gives up and ends the call. He's starting to feel like these dealerships don't want his business.



**HERITAGE MOTORS**

Still, he's persistent. Bob calls **Heritage Motors** again the next morning. This time, he reaches someone in sales, and they discuss a few vehicle options. But when it comes time to set an appointment, he gets a vague, "You can stop by anytime this week." No confirmation. No urgency. No follow-up.

**XYZ TOYOTA**

Running out of patience, Bob gives **XYZ Toyota** one last shot. To his surprise, someone answers promptly, takes the time to check inventory, and schedules a firm appointment for Friday at 3:00 PM. Bob hangs up feeling reassured and ready to buy.



**Lesson:** Persistence paid off for Bob. But it shouldn't take four attempts to get clear answers and a confirmed appointment. Customers need fast, confident responses. The dealership that provides clarity and follow-through earns the business.

## CUSTOMER JOURNEY #3: BILLY WILLIAMS

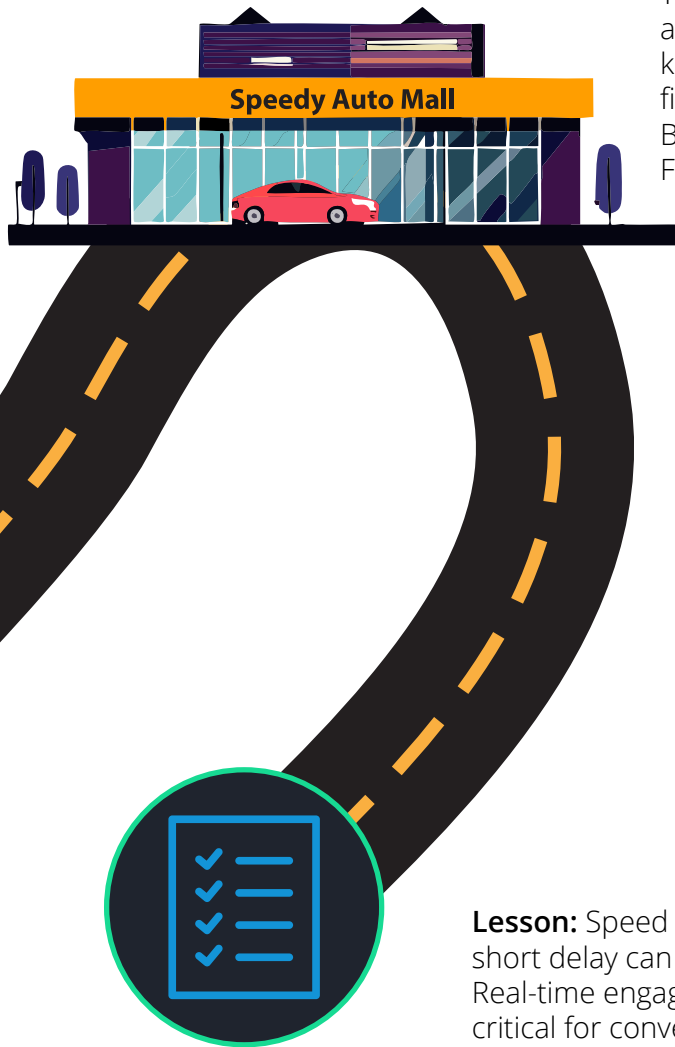


Billy Williams has had his eye on a specific car for weeks. He's reviewed all the specs, watched videos, and now he's ready to test drive. He starts by calling **Wheels Up Auto**. The call goes straight to voicemail, and like many others, Billy doesn't leave a message.

Next, Billy calls **Speedy Auto Mall**. This time, he speaks to a receptionist and leaves a message for the sales team, but never talks to anyone directly. It's better than nothing, but now he's stuck waiting for a callback that may or may not come. In a world where Amazon delivers in hours and Uber picks you up in minutes, that undefined wait feels like forever.







Later that afternoon, Billy decides to try **Speedy Auto Mall** again. This time, he gets through to a salesperson who's friendly, knowledgeable, and ready to set a firm appointment. Within five minutes, Billy has an appointment locked in for Friday afternoon at 3:00 PM.

**Lesson:** Speed and connection win the day. Even a short delay can push a customer to the competition. Real-time engagement isn't just convenient, it's critical for converting calls into customers.

### Why these stories matter:

After examining these three journeys, one thing is clear: customers want to be helped. They want someone, anyone, to **simply answer the phone and guide them**. Often, it doesn't matter which dealership it is, or whether they speak to a person or AI. **What matters most is that someone answers and helps them move forward.**

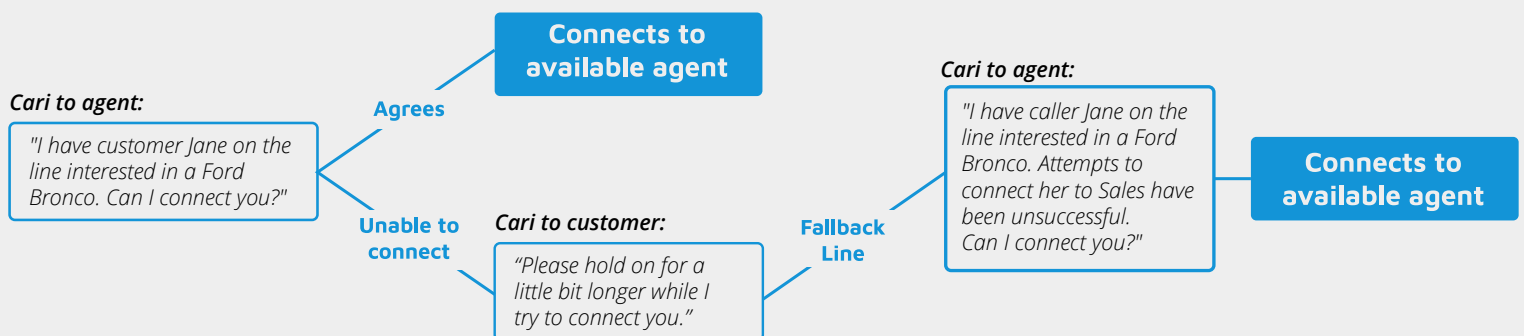
## WAYS TO IMPROVE THE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE AT YOUR DEALERSHIP

As seen through these three common caller journeys, dealership phone processes continue to be an issue and area of improvement.

Despite technological advances, many dealerships still struggle with handling phone calls efficiently. Whether it's long wait times, missed calls, or poor call routing, these inefficiencies can lead to frustrated customers who feel undervalued. The problem is not just about answering the phone; it's about answering it in a way that keeps the customer's needs top of mind and offers them the right solution, fast.

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Imagine if **Jane Doe's first call to Fast Ford** had been handled with expertise and precision by **Car Wars' AI powered phone assistant, Cari**. Cari could have identified that the **salesperson was unavailable and warm-transferred Jane to a fall back option**, like a desk partner, cell phone, or manager. That one moment of agility could've saved the appointment and the sale.



**Improving the customer experience starts by rethinking the phone as a sales tool, not just a communication line.** The right technology doesn't replace the human touch, it enables it, supports it, and ensures it shows up at the right moment.

Here are ways to improve the overall customer experience at your dealership:

**1. Prioritize Call Connection:** The first and easiest way to improve the customer experience is to ensure the customer gets ear-to-ear with someone who can help them.

**Implement a Warm Transfer Process:**

Train agents to confirm the person they are transferring the call to is available before blindly transferring to voicemail. Then, they should relay customer details and needs to provide the appropriate party with context before transferring a call.

**Leverage Overflow**

**Resources:** If adding staff isn't feasible, consider outsourcing to overflow call centers or BDCs to ensure no call goes unanswered.

**Implement Backup Systems:**

Utilize fallback processes, such as multi-rings or agent line fallbacks, to route calls to multiple team members, cell phones, or managers after a set number of rings. This ensures that no call gets lost in the shuffle.

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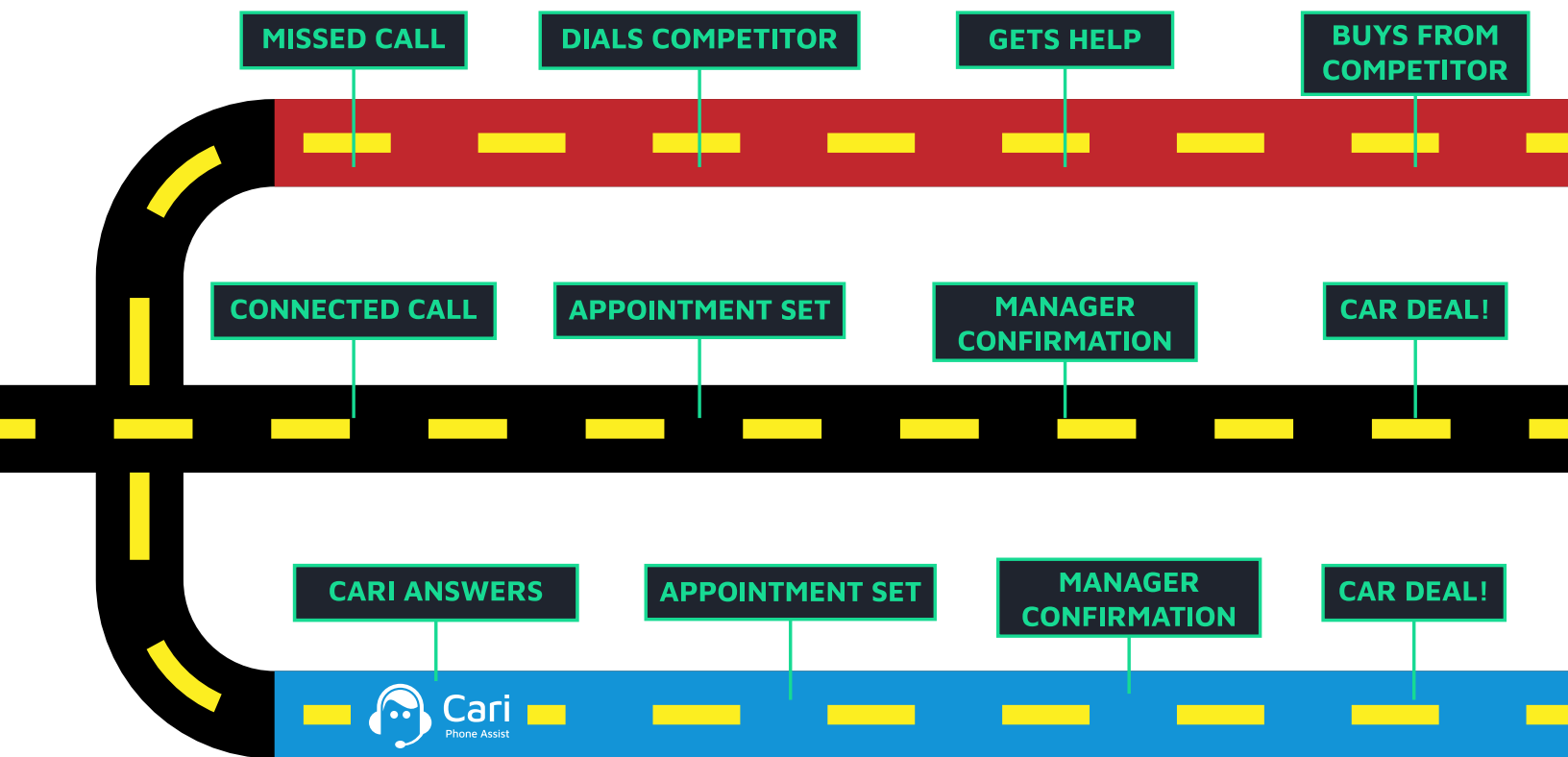
**Utilize a Phone Bridge:**

The faster a caller connects to someone who can help, the better the chance they will do business with you. A bridge, sometimes called a phone tree or IVR, is the simple, friendly, recorded greeting you often hear when calling a business. For example, "Dial '1' for Service, '2' for Sales, and '3' for Parts." This tool is essential to ensure callers are quickly connected to a qualified agent – someone who can actually help the caller. Car Wars' data shows that dealers who have a bridge connect callers 12-15 seconds faster than those that do not.

**2. Emphasize Firm Appointment Setting:** A soft commitment like "come by sometime this week" isn't enough. **Train your team to confidently lock in appointments with specific dates and times.** Make sure agents know how to ask for the appointment, offer choices, and confirm details clearly. This alone could have turned Bob's vague conversation into a booked test drive.



## Possible Customer Journeys



## TURNING INSIGHTS INTO ACTION

A simple change in your phone strategy can unlock more sales, more ROs, and better customer engagement.

Dealerships invest heavily in generating quality leads, but without an effective phone strategy to properly handle customers calling into the dealership, that interest often fades quickly on the line.

These real customer journeys reinforce what many dealers already know: the phone process is broken. While fixing it requires focus and discipline, the potential rewards are immense. A simple change in your phone strategy can unlock more sales, more ROs, and better customer engagement.

Every missed call is a missed opportunity. The path to more revenue starts with fixing the phones.



## *Ready to hire your next star employee?*

Contact Car Wars today to see how **Cari**, Car Wars' AI phone assistant, can transform your dealership's phone strategies.

Designed to handle the complexities of modern dealership communication, Cari ensures every call is managed efficiently and professionally, 24/7 - helping you connect, convert, and close more deals.

## **Meet Cari!**



[https://www.carwars.com/  
home/a/cari-phone-assist/](https://www.carwars.com/home/a/cari-phone-assist/)