



AI Alone Won't Fix Your BDC. Train Your People to Win With It.

Stop Chasing Short-Term Gains and Start Building Long-Term Profit

By Michael Renaud, CEO, Proactive Training Solutions

Walk into any dealership right now and you can feel the tension. Everyone's talking about AI, automation, and efficiency, but very few are talking about how it all connects back to people. The truth is simple: one doesn't work without the other.

AI and training have a symbiotic relationship. Technology can help you respond faster, organize leads, and streamline processes, but it can't build skill, confidence, or accountability. Without trained people, there's nothing for AI to hand off to. And without smart technology, your people waste time on tasks that don't grow revenue. The winning stores in 2026 will be the ones that blend both—where AI supports people, and people elevate performance.

Dealers everywhere are tightening budgets again. The first cuts usually hit automotive sales training and BDC development. Then leadership spends twice as much on a new lead source, a marketing plug-in, or another short-term "fix." That cycle kills profit and culture.

The cost of not training your people is always higher than the cost of training them. The stores that win long term are the ones that invest in their people, their processes, and their ability to adapt to any market.

Use AI for What It Is. Train for What It Isn't.

AI can handle responses, reminders, and routing. But it can't build value, handle objections, or close. Without skilled people, there's no one to hand off to. That's when you end up scaling the wrong behavior.

Do this now:

- Audit every automation or digital retailing tool you're using. Ask, "*Where does the human take over?*"
- If your people aren't ready for that handoff, run a 30-minute drill this week focused on converting those opportunities.
- Treat AI as an assistant, not a replacement. Let it clear the noise so your team can focus on real conversations that sell cars.

Make Training Part of the Operating Rhythm

Training isn't an event. It's a daily behavior. If it's not scheduled, it's optional. And if it's optional, it won't happen.

Do this now:

- Block 15 minutes each morning for skill work before the first up hits the lot.



- Run one role-play or recorded-call review every day.
- Have every manager take one live TO each week. Not to help, but to *model*.

When your people see leaders training too, it stops being “extra.” It becomes culture.

Build a Recession-Proof Dealership Team

You don’t build dealership equity with ads. You build it with people who can execute every day, regardless of inventory, incentives, or traffic. Marketing brings people to you. Training turns those people into profit.

Do this now:

- Identify your top three revenue skills: ex. phone control, appointment setting, or trade conversations.
- Assign a manager to own each skill and lead short refreshers twice a week.
- Track progress like you track leads. What gets measured improves.

A team built this way doesn’t flinch when the market shifts. They keep their foot on the gas because they know how to drive.

Play the Long Game

The next big disruptor in automotive isn’t AI, TikTok, or digital retail. It’s the stores that train every day.

Do this now:

- Review your 2026 budget and move “training” out of the expense column. Treat it like a growth investment.
- Ask yourself this question: *If every person in my store got one percent better every day, what would that mean to my bottom line in a year?*
- Then build a plan to make it happen.

Great dealerships aren’t built on quick fixes. They’re built on people who are coached, confident, and consistent. The long game wins every time. Get out there and crush it.

About the Author:

Michael Renaud is the CEO of Proactive Training Solutions, the company founded by the late Alan Ram and trusted by dealerships across North America. Proactive specializes in BDC development, sales and management training, and leadership coaching that builds confident, high-performing teams. Learn more at www.proactivetrainingsolutions.com.