



Total Price Advertising Guide

How winning dealerships are turning transparency into stronger appointments, better gross, and real competitive separation.

73%

Increase in show rates with proactive trade introduction

100+

Stores trained by Proactive Training Solutions

10k+

Sales professionals trained nationwide

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This guide is designed to help dealerships navigate the shift to Total Price Advertising with clarity, confidence, and a process that earns trust. It is not legal advice. Consult your compliance team for regulatory specifics.

01

Let's start with a simple question.

Are you struggling to get customers to commit?

Struggling to move conversations forward?

Struggling to turn leads into real appointments?

If you are, you're not alone. And the reason may not be what you think.

In fact:

- The majority of customers don't buy the vehicle they submit a lead on
- Most customers are still working through a decision when they reach out
- When the trade is introduced proactively and positioned correctly, appointment show rates increase by 73%

What this tells us is simple: customers aren't committing to a car. They're working through a complicated decision.

And that decision moves forward when they feel understood, they see options, they feel there is opportunity, and they trust the process — not just the price.

This is an opportunity, not a threat.

A lot of the conversation around Total Price Advertising has been framed as a problem dealers have to survive. The reality is, it's not.

It's a chance to simplify conversations, build trust faster, and differentiate in a way that holds.

Because the stores that are clear, transparent, and confident are the stores customers move forward with.

02

What's changing in the store (and why it matters)

Dealers have already heard the legal explanations.

This is about what's happening in your showroom and on your phones right now.

When customers think pricing is unclear, they do three things:

- They stop believing what they see online
- They stop trusting what they hear on the phone
- They stop showing up

Total Price Advertising is forcing the market toward clarity. That means customers will compare stores on something else. And as those comparisons get drawn, one truth shows up fast:

This is not a pricing problem. It's a process problem. When price disappears as a differentiator, process gets exposed.



03

What “price-led” really looks like, and why it breaks down now

Most stores did not set out to become transactional. It happened over time.

Price became the easiest hook to generate leads, create urgency, and start conversations.

Here's how that shows up day-to-day:

- A lead comes in and the first move is to defend the number instead of understand the customer
- A customer asks, “Is that the real price?” and the answer becomes a source of tension instead of a path forward
- The team stays locked on one stock number, hoping the customer still shows up
- The trade comes up late, after momentum is already lost

That worked when the market tolerated ambiguity.

As transparency becomes the standard, those patterns create friction, distrust, and no-shows.

04

How winning stores handle the pricing question

Winning stores do not avoid price.

They disclose clearly, and then they use the pricing question to take control of the conversation.

That means they:

01

Answer enough to build confidence

02

Open the customer up to more inventory

03

Learn what is driving the decision

04

Bring the trade into the conversation early

05

Set an appointment with commitment, not hope

That means they:

"Absolutely, I can help with that. The vehicles that you're seeing online are only a small representation of what we have available.

If you don't mind me asking, what is it about that vehicle that caught your attention?

Would you consider anything a little newer or something similarly equipped if it fit what you want out of a vehicle?

Are you currently driving something you'd consider trading in?"

That's the difference.

It feels helpful, confident, and clear. It moves the conversation forward.

And it protects gross because you are not negotiating in a vacuum. You're building value through process.

05

Transparency as an advantage (not a checkbox)

Full disclosure is not just compliance.

It's the fastest path to trust, and trust is the fastest path to the showroom.

Dealers who win with transparency do three things consistently:

They eliminate surprises. No hidden fees. No "gotchas." No last-minute shifts.

They are confident in the number. They do not sound defensive or uncertain.

They connect transparency to a better experience. "Here's the real price, and here's how we make the process simple."

When customers feel clarity, they give you something back: **attention.**

Attention becomes conversation.
Conversation becomes appointment.

06

The pricing consistency rule that actually matters

This is not just about being consistent across platforms.

It must be consistent at the **specific-vehicle level** across every touchpoint.

If a customer sees one number online, hears something different on the phone, and gets something else in the showroom, three things happen:

- Trust is gone
- The deal becomes harder
- Your exposure increases



Consistency means:

- ✓ The same vehicle is presented the same way online, on the phone, and in-store
- ✓ Fees are explained in plain language
- ✓ Changes are documented and justified, not improvised

07

The trade: your leverage point (and the fastest way to create momentum)

Most stores treat the trade like a closing tool.

Winning stores treat the trade as a control point in the conversation.

Why it works:

- It creates flexibility in the deal
- It gives the customer something tangible to engage with
- It builds “unknown hope” that keeps the customer moving
- It changes the dynamic from “Is this the best price?” to “What is the best path forward?”

The trade is the great equalizer in every deal. And when introduced early, it increases engagement and appointment strength.



08

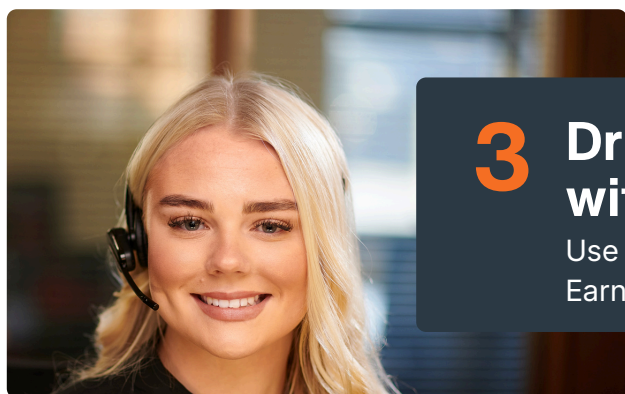
The three shifts to make right now



1 Disclose the number clearly
Do not dodge. Do not over-explain. Be direct.



2 Explain the “why” in plain language
Not a lecture. A simple reason that builds confidence.



3 Drive the appointment with control
Use questions. Open inventory. Hook the trade.
Earn commitment.

When pricing compresses, the sale happens in the conversation, not the ad.



Why this is a moment for Proactive Training Solutions

Proactive Training Solutions was built for this shift.

Where others taught price-led tactics, PTS built process-led conversations that create clarity, confidence, and appointments.

This isn't about sounding better.

It's about installing a system your team can execute consistently.

When price disappears, process gets exposed. Stores that strengthen conversation structure, trade handling, and appointment control will gain market share.

10

Implementation Checklist

Align your store for Total Price Advertising (and better performance)

A

Digital Pricing & Messaging

- Ensure every advertised price reflects the total price required under the rule (excluding only government fees and taxes, as applicable)
- Remove "bait" language and lowest-price positioning that creates distrust
- Confirm pricing for each VIN is consistent across your website, third-party listings, and paid ads
- Add plain-language fee explanations where customers actually look
- Make trade tools easy to find and positioned as part of the buying path

B

Phone & Lead Handling (BDC and Sales)

- Train the team to disclose pricing confidently without sounding defensive
- Replace "Just come in" with an appointment close that earns commitment
- Introduce the trade early in the call flow
- Use a consistent "disclose, explain, drive" framework
- Require questions that open inventory and uncover the customer's decision drivers



C

In-Store Process

- Ensure the pricing story in the showroom matches what the customer saw online and heard on the phone
- Position appraisal as value creation, not negotiation
- Present proposals clearly, with no surprises
- Coach the team to run process under pressure, not improvise

D

Leadership & Coaching

- Coach conversations and execution, not just activity
- Role-play transparency and trade introduction regularly
- Audit calls and handoffs for consistency
- Track appointment quality, show rate, and close rate alongside lead volume

E

Compliance & Monitoring

- Complete a legal review of all customer-facing pricing displays
- Run regular audits for VIN-level pricing consistency across every touchpoint
- Use mystery shops to test real behavior on phones and in-store
- Create a feedback loop for fixing breakdowns fast



Final Takeaway

Total Price Advertising is not the real problem.

It is the moment that exposes whether a store has a process that earns trust and moves decisions forward — or not.

Dealers who lean into transparency and install a repeatable conversation system will sell more cars, protect gross, and build stronger appointments.

This is a process problem. And process is where winning stores separate themselves from the rest.

Ready to install a process that wins?

proactivetrainingsolutions.com

866-996-4665

Schedule a Free Consultation