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Look at restaurant menus for guidance

by Gil Van Over

Let's think a moment about a restaurant's menu. Everybody at the table expects one. Everybody at the table expects one that lists all of the restaurant's dishes. Everyone at the table expects one that discloses what the dishes are. Everyone at the table expects one that tells how much the dish costs. Everyone at the table expects one that shares what optional items are available and at what price. Should an F&I menu be any different?

Applying the principles learned from a restaurant menu can help with F&I compliance.

Everybody gets one

Using a properly structured and completed menu every time ensures that the base payment is always disclosed, that the final agreed upon payment is disclosed and that the products the customer selects on the menu are the products the customer ends up purchasing.

All products are listed

Offering every eligible product to every customer every time not only helps increase product penetration, but helps protect the dealership against potential litigation. A signed menu offering gap to a customer who declined gap and later totals his car will send the dark side attorney looking for someone else to sue.

How much does it cost?

Restaurants list the prices for every item on the menu. F&I menus should as well. Realize how powerful your evidence is if you can show the judge or Attorney General four documents showing the same product pricing signed by the customer accepting the product at a price. The customer can't legitimately say she did not know she was purchasing that product at that price.

Someone takes the order

After going through a restaurant menu, the waiter is available to answer questions and take the customer's order. While the F&I Manager should walk the customer through an F&I menu instead of letting the customer sit there and read through it, the F&I Manager eventually takes the customer's order and proceeds to complete the paperwork.

Standardized format

Some restaurants have menus for adults and menus for kids. F&I Managers should use different menus for cash, retail and lease deals. Each one, though, must memorialize the sale showing what

the customer can take delivery of the car for without the purchase of optional F&I products. Each one must disclose the base payment and term, even one-pays. Each menu must show what the transaction looks like if the customer selects some optional products. Electronic menus are a dealer's best friend when it comes to standardization.

Enjoy the cuisine.

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