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I had been in the market to buy a new vehicle. My current vehicle is very old and costing me more money to fix than it is worth. I know that I am looking to buy a used truck - a four door truck, good on mileage, kept in good shape without any dings, and a car fax. After going to a few dealerships and car lots, I came across a specific dealership that became a nightmare.

I was at a Chrysler Dealership looking to buy a used Jeep Cherokee. A salesman walked outside, came up to me, and says "You're a little young to be buying a new truck. Your parents must be proud of you. How can I help you?" I looked around thinking he was talking to someone else, realized I was the only one there, and knew right away that this deal was going to go bad very fast.

The salesman automatically viewed me as a young man, whom he would like to take advantage of financially during this potential deal. Immediately, I put my guard up and wanted to deal with another salesman, but I gave him a chance to prove himself. My first impression of this salesman was not pleasant. The barriers to conflict

resolution were tactical and strategic, as well as psychological.

His tactic was to sell me the truck as expensive as he could with me accepting the deal. My strategy was to buy the truck as cheaply as I could. He would not tell me how much the truck cost until I told him about how much I was willing to spend. This was my second hint that this salesman was not looking out for my best interests. This is a psychological game most dealerships play in order to maximize their profits. When they finally gave me the price, it was very high. The reason for giving a high price is that they expect to negotiate and counter with a lower price. The salesman then went into his office and spoke to his boss. The price was magically lowered by \$1,000. This showed me that there was potential to get the price lowered even more. The salesmen are trained not to let the customers leave, no matter the situation. This gives you chance to play chess with the dealership and to capitalize on their weaknesses. Every salesman wants to make the sell. This is how they are paid.

My next tactical strategy was to have the price lowered even more by telling them how low I want my truck payment a month. We went back and forth. The salesman was trying to make my payments exactly what I requested, and he

finally did. At that moment, I was very happy, but in shock. It was too good to be true. I was once told, "if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is." I started to ask more questions: "Are there any other hidden fee that you are not telling me about?" He responded with no. So we went inside and showed me some paperwork. It was at this moment that I noticed that the sales tax had not been included in my monthly payment that he had given me outside. Neither was my down payment, Department of Motor Vehicles fees, nor transfer of title fee.

I grew angry and explained that with these fees, my month payment would go up from what I had been told originally. His answer was, "Only by \$65." When you are accounting for other bills, as well \$65 extra a month, the dealership was ripping me off right in front of my eyes. The salesman was explaining to me that the price would not be lowered anymore. I told the salesman that I was going to go to a different dealership and started to walk away. I had enough of this gentleman and dealerships scam for one day.

As I was walking away, he stopped me, and told me to hold on, while he spoke to his manager. I agreed to wait fifteen minutes for the manager. Why had he not spoken to the manager originally when my monthly payment was not what

he told me it would be? Why make me get up and leave to change the price? The salesman was too proud to ask management for help. So instead of making a sale and asking for help, we just wasted two hours and got nothing accomplished.

The manager walked out with him and expressed that he can meet my monthly payment and the extras I requested as long as I bought the truck today. Immediately, I asked, "So I cannot take the night to think about this? It is a big decision I need to make and quite honestly after this experience, if I do not get a day to think about it, I am going to say no now and go to the next dealership. I explained to the manager how I felt being talked down to and not given an exact amount for how much the truck would cost. I told the manager I would be back within 24 hours to give an answer and he allowed it. Of course he allowed it, he wants his dealership to get the sale.

I followed this conversation up the next day with management, expressing how much research I had done previously coming to his dealership to buy a truck. The more I thought about how unfairly I had been treated, the more I wanted to decline the offer. In the end, I declined their offer and went to another dealership. My last comment

to the dealership was to "treat others the way you want to be treated."

According to Weeks (1994), while I was outside arguing with the salesman about my monthly payments being under a specific value, the effective atmosphere would have been to come inside and talk to numbers instead of arguing in front of other customers, and making the salesman feel that he is being undermined. The salesman perceived me as an easy target because I was young. I perceived the salesman to be rude and had a perception that he was not looking out for my best interests. According to Weeks (1994), "resolving conflicts takes hard work and perseverance." The salesman should have focused on my specific needs: What kind of truck I wanted to purchase, and the amount I want to spend monthly instead of just trying to make his quota. The salesman was telling me what I wanted to hear, but was not the truth. The moment I found out the offered price, I realized he was manipulating me. I have learned from this experience and look forward to doing business with another dealership. The salesman created stress for me by continuously lying to me to make the sale. Weeks (1994) states, "one party may fear conflict while attempting to resolve a conflict, and do not want to admit something has gone wrong." If salesman had generated options about me, he

should have been honest, I would have brought a vehicle from his dealership. If this sale would have had gone correctly, I would have been happy to develop a long-term relationship with the salesman, and recommend him to others. But, we did not come to a resolution and were not able to come up with a mutual-benefit agreement.

After reading, Ross, "Barriers to Conflict Resolution" (1995), the author states three different categories of barriers. The three categories are tactical and strategic barriers, psychological barriers, and organizational, institutional, and other structural factors. From my experience at the Chrysler Dealership, the barriers to the conflict resolution were tactical and strategic, as well as psychological. We were bargaining back and forth and could not come to a resolution for a sale for the vehicle. Ross (1995) states the salesman and I had tension because we had two different goals; negotiators normally face these problems when there was pressure. We tried to play mind games with each other, and neither of us was successful. It was a waste of time for the both of us in this situation. For example, the Ross (1995) article had an example of Mary and Paul Templeton getting a divorce. They were fighting over money and custody of their child. After the couple spent their savings fighting each other in court, the end

result was that Mary got primary custody and Paul would be entitled weekend visitation. They should have been worrying about the well-being of their child, not about who could win in court.

In the article, "Trust and Distrust in Organizations: Emerging Perspectives, Enduring Questions," Kramer says, "trust has been defined in terms of several interrelated cognitive processes and orientations. Trust entails a state of perceived vulnerability or risk that is derived from individuals' uncertainty regarding the motives, intentions, and prospective actions of others." During my experience at the Chrysler Dealership, if the salesman could have earned my trust, I would have bought a vehicle from him. Instead, he did the complete opposite. There is a reason they are salesmen; they are trying to sell a product for commission because it is their job too.

The salesman and I did not come up with a solution to the car being purchased. Purchasing a truck in the future was never the same. I always felt like I was getting ripped off and automatically on the defensive side. At the end, I purchased a vehicle from another dealership, and never would let a situation escalate like this one, while buying a vehicle. When we fear conflict or observe it as a

negative experience, we hurt our chances dealing with it effectively.

References

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