

## TRAINING

# Worthwhile Investment

Find out why it pays to make training a priority and learn about the Acura resources that can help keep your staff up to date

**E**very sales consultant knows they should train. But few actually do. “I would compare training to exercise,” says Steve Brown, dealer manager at Frank Leta Acura in St. Louis, Mo. “Everybody knows you should do it, but everybody says they don’t have time.”

Like exercise, though, sales training leads to results. “You have to get stronger in terms of your knowledge base,” Brown says. “Every time a client asks you a question and you answer it confidently, it builds trust with them. And trust leads to sales.”

In fact, training can lead to a lot of sales. After last year’s RDX sales training tour, sales consultants who participated in the training sold three times as many cars as those who did not. “It doesn’t matter that there’s no new RDX coming out this year,” says Jon Ikeda, Acura brand officer. “If you take the training, you will sell more cars.”

What’s more, the RDX began attracting a new type of client, making it critical to be well informed. “After the RDX, we saw a more tech-savvy, Euro-import-luxury client,” says Brian Benstock, general manager of Paragon Acura in Woodside, N.Y. He expects to see even more of these clients with the launch of future all-new Acura models.

Ikeda, meanwhile, anticipates seeing the same sales increase after this year’s competitive threat training, which focused on the advantages of Acura over other brands. “When we train, we’re not just training on a car, we’re training on the brand,” he says.

When salespeople buy into the brand, they stick around and see even more success. “Training helps improve retention of sales consultants because it makes them feel more connected with the brand,” says John Streckenbein, general manager of Acura of Maui in Hawaii. “And the longer you’re here, the more clients you have.”



LEFT: Sales consultants can easily access the Acura training app—and its videos on the latest in-car technology—on their phones or tablets.

## GET WITH THE PROGRAM

**AIMING FOR THE COUNCIL OF SALES EXCELLENCE IMPROVES SALES CONSULTANTS’ RESULTS, AND JOINING BOOSTS THEIR RETENTION**

### WHAT

The Council of Sales Excellence (COSE) recognizes and rewards Acura sales consultants who have been outstanding in sales volume, client satisfaction and professional development. Rewards range from plaques and business cards to apparel and all-expenses-paid travel.

### WHO

Sales consultants qualify for COSE based on sales volume, client satisfaction scores and a 100-percent training completion rate. All sales consultants are eligible; in Texas and Louisiana, dealers simply need to opt in to the program each year.

### WHY

There’s no more effective way to retain sales staff. The retention rate for COSE members is 83 percent, versus 51 percent for non-members.

# HABIT FORMING

**4 WAYS TO HELP YOU MAKE TRAINING INTO A LIFESTYLE, NOT AN EVENT**

**Have everyone do the web-based training, including management.**

“It’s 20 to 30 minutes, tops, for the web-based trainings,” says Streckenbein. “Every salesperson has time throughout the day.”

**Schedule training like a meeting—then show up.**

Travis Morss, the general sales manager at Frank Leta Acura, sets a time every day for active role-play scenarios. “We made a commitment to scheduling time, and it’s made a huge difference,” he says. “Our sales went up, and our client satisfaction went dramatically up.”

**Incorporate best practices of top sales consultants.**

The online Acura Info Center is a continually updated resource and includes videos with top tips from the best sales consultants across the country. “Anybody can review the best practices,” says Ikeda. “It’s just a matter of taking the time to check out the site.”

**Move some of your ad budget to training.**

“It’s a simple math problem,” Benstock says. “3M did a study that shows you can get a one-to-one return on your advertising dollars. But you can get a 68-to-one return on your training dollars.”