

DIARY OF A CAR SALESMAN

*My Life on the Blacktop, 1,200 Cars Sold, and 28 Secrets
Dealerships Rarely Explain*

*A Life of Work, Business, Family, Reinvention, and 28 Secrets
from the Car Business*

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This memoir reflects the author's experiences, memories, and opinions. Some names and identifying details may be simplified or changed for privacy. Dealership practices vary by store, state, lender, manufacturer, and transaction. The 28 Secrets are practical observations from the author's experience and are not claims about every dealership or every sale.

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Author's Note to the Reader

This is a life story told through the experiences that shaped the way I work, sell, build, adapt, and survive. It is not an inventory of every mistake I ever made. A life can be truthful without giving every chapter equal weight.

I have chosen to focus on the parts of my journey that taught me something worth passing on: family, faith, entrepreneurship, technology, car sales, illness, customers, pressure, reinvention, and the long process of learning what success actually means.

Some names and identifying details may be simplified in a future publication edit for privacy. The lessons are the reason these stories are here.

Dedication

To my family, for the lessons I understood immediately and the ones that took me decades to understand.

To every customer who trusted me.

And to anyone who has ever had to start over: the next chapter is still yours to write.

Introduction: Before the First Car

People hear the words car salesman and think they already know the character. The loud tie. The fast talk. The handshake. The pressure. The guy standing on hot blacktop waiting for the next customer to pull in. But my story did not begin on a car lot. It began in a different America, when kids spent more time outside than staring at screens, a telephone stayed attached to the wall, and if you wanted spending money, you found a way to earn it. There was less convenience and more figuring things out. Adults did not hover over every decision. You learned by doing, getting corrected, trying again, and sometimes getting it wrong in public.

That old-school attitude shaped me. If something broke, you tried to fix it. If you wanted money, you worked. If somebody trusted you with a job, you finished it. Nobody called it entrepreneurship. Nobody handed me a vision board. You simply learned that effort could change what was in your pocket and, eventually, what was possible in your life.

My first job was a paper route. It was not glamorous, which is exactly why it belongs at the beginning of this story. A newspaper had to arrive whether I felt ambitious that day or not. Customers did not care about my mood. They cared about the result. That little route introduced me to a lesson I would meet again in every business I ever touched: the customer experiences your reliability, not your excuses.

From there, my mind kept looking for ways to make a dollar. Small hustles became bigger ideas. Bigger ideas became businesses. Some worked. Some changed with the times. Some taught me more by ending than others taught me by succeeding. Long before I learned the language of gross profit, finance reserve, trade allowance, and closing ratios, I was already fascinated by the same basic question: what makes one person trust another enough to do business with him?

That question followed me from neighborhood work to retail, from The Point to the early Internet, from websites and domains to dealership showrooms. The products kept changing. Human nature did not change nearly as much.

And that is why the 28 Secrets matter. They are not a gimmick attached to the end of my life story. They are one of the reasons I am telling it. Between 2012 and 2017, I sold approximately 1,200 cars. The stories show where I came from. The 28 Secrets show what all those deals taught me - fourteen truths every customer should understand and fourteen truths every salesperson learns from the inside.

I understand the stereotype because I worked inside that world. But nobody arrives on a car lot as a blank page. By the time I sold my first vehicle, I had already spent decades learning people. I had been a kid searching for answers, a young entrepreneur creating ways to make money, a store owner building community around a brand, an early believer in the Internet, and a man who had learned more than once that life can change direction without asking permission.

The dealership did not create my hustle. It gave it a scoreboard.

This book is about the road before the lot, the years on the lot, and what happened inside me while I was chasing numbers on that board. There are funny stories here because the car business is funny. There are hard stories because life does not care whether you are having a good month. There are business lessons because I have spent most of my life watching what makes people say yes, what makes them walk away, and what makes them come back.

I am not writing this as the man who had everything figured out. That man never existed. I am writing it as someone who kept learning, sometimes quickly and sometimes the expensive way.

If you came for dealership stories, you will get them. But I hope you leave with something bigger: proof that a career is only one chapter of a life, that reinvention can become a habit, and that your worst season does not get to write your final page.

The Promise of This Book

Between 2012 and 2017, I sold approximately 1,200 cars. That number did not come from watching the business from a distance. It came from thousands of conversations, test drives, appraisals, negotiations, credit applications, trade-ins, deliveries, follow-up calls, good months, bad months, managers I respected, managers I did not, customers who became friends, and customers I never saw again.

Those years taught me something most buyers never get the chance to see: the dealership has two different realities. There is the side the customer sees, and there is the side the people working the deal see. This book is my life story, but running through that story are twenty-eight secrets I learned from the inside.

I am not giving you twenty-eight tricks for beating a dealership. I am giving you twenty-eight things I wish every customer understood before walking through the door. Some can save you money. Some can save you time. Some can keep you from making an emotional decision you will regret. And some may surprise you because the salesman is not always the villain in the story.

The stories explain how I learned the secrets. The 28 Secrets section puts them all in one place. By the end, you should understand both sides of the desk better than you did when you started.

Chapter 1: The Boy Looking Up

Before I ever learned how to read a customer, I learned how to read a room. I learned it in church pews, in a crowded house, and in the silence left behind when a father was no longer there. Those early years did not teach me sales. They taught me something more basic: how to adapt.

The robe itched against my skin, stiff and starchy like it had been ironed by God Himself. A gold cross hung heavy around my neck, swinging with each nervous breath. I was ten years old, standing in a Catholic church filled with stained glass light and incense smoke, waiting to take my First Communion. Everyone else looked angelic — boys with slicked hair, girls with white dresses and veils, parents smiling proudly from the pews. But inside me, it was chaos.

The priest's Latin chants echoed through the vaulted ceiling, but I wasn't thinking about holy bread or eternal salvation. I was thinking about my father. He wasn't there. He'd left us — four kids and a broken mother — and that absence weighed heavier than the cross on my chest.

When the priest raised the wafer and spoke about the body of Christ, I wanted to believe. I wanted to feel something divine, some spark of connection that would make sense of everything. Instead, I felt hollow. I looked up at the stained glass saints, their faces calm and glowing, and wondered if they ever felt abandoned too.

That day wasn't about God. It was about me, a scared boy searching for a father figure in the rafters of a church. I told myself maybe I'd find Him here, in this building, in this ceremony. But the silence I felt inside was deafening. My