

How Sales Managers Can Win in a Flat Market: Mark Gilbert of ATN on Leadership, Coaching, and Closing the Gap

SCOTTSDALE, AZ, UNITED STATES, July 3, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- As U.S. car sales flatten and consumer hesitation increases, dealerships nationwide rely more than ever on their front-line leadership. Mark Gilbert, CEO of Automotive Training Network (ATN), says the key to sustained dealership performance in a slow-growth environment isn't just better marketing or deeper discounts; it's smarter, stronger sales management.

"Sales managers are the engine room of any dealership," says Gilbert. "When traffic slows and margins tighten, it's not the sales pitch that needs to change, it's the leadership at the desk."

In today's environment, managers are navigating slower foot traffic, longer decision cycles, and heightened price sensitivity from buyers. Gilbert notes that many sales teams are well-intentioned but lack the daily coaching and performance feedback necessary to close consistently. That's where ATN comes in.

ATN has seen a sharp increase in demand for performance coaching focused specifically on desk managers, team leads, and GSMs. Rather than relying on outdated motivational tactics, Gilbert emphasizes measurable behaviors: structured one-on-ones, real-time accountability, lead conversion reviews, and closing technique refinement.



He stresses that good sales managers today are not just deal-makers but talent developers. "The best managers build confidence, not pressure. They know how to diagnose why someone isn't closing and coach to the gap. In this market, coaching isn't optional—it's survival."

Gilbert also highlights the growing importance of digital accountability. As more leads enter online channels, desk managers must master CRM tools, follow-up cadence, and data-driven lead prioritization. ATN's training modules integrate digital performance metrics with traditional showroom coaching, ensuring managers can lead hybrid sales environments.

"Flat markets are revealing markets," Gilbert adds. "They show you what kind of leadership culture you've really built. Dealers who invest in management-level coaching now will gain an advantage not just today, but when the cycle turns."

Automotive Training Network continues to work with dealerships nationwide to upgrade sales management practices, helping leadership teams drive results, boost morale, and develop high-performing sales cultures.

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