



TITLE: The Cost of Weak Dealer Onboarding

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About the Author:

Russ Ziegler is the Founder of Connect Sales, Coaching and Consulting, focused on helping OEMs and dealers strengthen performance through education, operational alignment, and measurable accountability. With more than fifteen years in the dealer distribution space, he has trained hundreds of professionals and supported dealerships across the United States in improving sales, profitability, and whole-dealer health.

Signing a new dealer is an exciting milestone. It often comes with fanfare — a new market captured, new product on the floor, and new customers to serve. But for too many OEMs, the celebration stops there. Dealers are handed a catalog, a price sheet, and a territory — and told to get moving.

Without a deliberate onboarding process, that momentum is quickly lost.

Why Weak Onboarding Hurts

When a dealer is left to “figure it out,” the results are predictable:

- **Delayed Revenue:** Months pass before the dealer has trained staff, ordered inventory, or launched effective local marketing.
- **Frustrated Territory Managers:** TMs spend time troubleshooting instead of coaching, spreading themselves thin.
- **Early Attrition:** Dealers who never gain traction often drift away, leaving gaps in coverage.

The cost is not just lost sales. It is damaged customer confidence and wasted investment in a market that may take years to recover.



The Connect Channel

What Strong Onboarding Looks Like

The most successful OEMs treat onboarding as a 90-day sprint, not an open-ended process. A structured approach includes:

- **Training and Certification:** Getting sales, service, and parts staff equipped from day one.
- **Systems Setup:** CRM, warranty, and reporting tools properly installed and tested.
- **Marketing Kickoff:** Coordinated campaigns to announce the new dealer to the market.
- **Regular Milestones:** Weekly or monthly check-ins to ensure progress is visible and measurable.

Why It Matters for OEMs

An effective onboarding process accelerates revenue, reduces TM burnout, and strengthens dealer retention. It is far cheaper to get a dealer started right than to replace them later.

The Bottom Line

Dealer onboarding should never be left to chance. If you are serious about network growth, you must be serious about how new partners are launched. A weak start is expensive. A strong start pays dividends for years.

Build stronger OEM–Dealer results through clarity, alignment, and measurable performance.
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