The Connect Channel

Insights for OEM Leaders and Territory Managers

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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.

When to cut a dealer off and when to invest in the partnership.

A dealership in distress is not always a failure — sometimes it is a flag. A warning signal that something deeper in your network is fraying: market coverage, service reputation, brand presence, or even unit availability.

Too often, OEMs default to termination. Cut the dealer loose, reopen the territory, and start over. But that path is expensive, slow, and destabilizing. In many cases, what a struggling dealer needs is not a replacement — it is reinforcement.

Manufacturers should be equipped to step in with clarity: benchmark numbers, best practices, and a structured plan to help get the store back on track. This is not about hand-holding. It is about protecting your brand, your customers, and your future coverage.

You do not need to get this from us — but this is how we do it through the **Connect Dealer Optimization Program**. We begin with data: financials, absorption, staffing, sales trends, and parts and service performance. We identify the root causes, prescribe fixes, and stay involved to support implementation. Just as important, we keep an eye on the numbers to verify improvement and catch hidden issues that often surface once the dust settles.

This part of the dealer life cycle can absolutely be handled in-house — and many strong OEMs do it well. One thing to consider is the structure of your team. Yes, you can own dealer prospecting, onboarding, training, growth, and rescue — but if it all falls on the same territory manager covering multiple states, you are setting them up to choose between urgent and important. As you develop or strengthen your dealer rescue strategy, step back and evaluate how it fits into the broader ecosystem. Coverage without capacity will only take you so far.

Now is the time to build — or formalize — your program to support troubled dealers. The cost of inaction is higher than ever.

Build stronger OEM–Dealer results through clarity, alignment, and measurable performance.
Explore additional Connect Channel insights, field sales tools, and dealer development resources at **www.Connect-CSCC.com**
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