

**dealer & designer**

# CREATIVE SOLUTIONS

BY TODD LAWSON



**YOUR  
FOCUS  
IS ON  
MOVING  
METAL.**

**A GOOD RELATIONSHIP WITH  
YOUR CREATIVE TEAM  
WILL HELP YOU SELL MORE.**

**Y**ou have a great dealership. Good deals, too. But something is stopping people from coming through your doors. I'm not talking about a dirty showroom or a bad customer experience; I'm talking about bad marketing creative.

## good creative gets noticed.

Think about it on a grand scale. The leading juried creative awards show in the world, the Cannes Lions has a category dedicated to effectiveness in creative marketing. Judging is based on how well a marketing idea or initiative improves a client's business over three years. Just to enter, a marketing campaign must include very detailed submissions with real data on results—proof that marketing and creative ideas can generate a real return. This year, Volvo won top honors, for the second year in a row, for its series of digital videos detailing the features in its vehicles (such as the now-famous YouTube video of Jean-Claude Van Damme doing the splits). Why did Volvo win? By demonstrating on a sustained basis to have real quantitative and qualitative results. Simply put, Volvo's creative sold a lot of vehicles globally.

Why should you care? Better creative will sell more cars. And dealerships can do small things with their creative team to do the same—without Jean-Claude.

Working with dealers, OEMs and associations for so many years, I know that the priority tends to be too focused on moving metal. Dealers spend little to no time finding their unique voice as a brand, which can be a fatal misstep in a time when more people are looking to online presence and advertising before they even consider if you're the right place for them to visit.

That means working well with and understanding your creative team, whether that's an in-house designer or a vendor. You need to understand their processes, their needs and how they work best to get great work out of them and to help your dealership become the one your backyard competition looks to for inspiration. I spend much of my day helping creative people push harder than they thought they could, think deeper than they have before and try to break through what is often a self-imposed barrier to original thoughts.

## here's why it matters to have a good relationship with your creative:

Creative people are inspired by positive pressure and a sense of freedom. No one likes a backseat driver. As long as they haven't already dropped the ball (more than once), you need to show your trust in those you pay to deliver the goods. You don't shadow your sales team all day long, do you? The best part about being involved early on is you know where the creative is headed. Then, the hardest but often most empowering thing you can do is step back and let them run with it. Designers like direction—but hovering can smother them.

**“INSPIRE US  
BUT DON'T EXPECT THE IMPOSSIBLE  
WITHOUT THE RESOURCES.  
LIKE IN LIFE, THERE'S THE DREAM,  
AND THEN, THERE'S THE REALITY.”**

If you have a good rapport with your team, you can be open about your creative needs. When we are all on the same team and understand each other, we are able and often more willing to put that extra time and effort into delivering greatness. So explain what you're up against. Designers understand deadlines; we know it's a rush job and you need it yesterday, but often, we don't know why. Prioritize your wish list and ask for timelines back so your designer can be held accountable.

Inspire us. But don't expect the impossible without the resources. Like in life, there's the dream, and then, there's the reality. When there is so much out there to compare your creative to, it's easy for dealers to say, “Look what they did. Why can't our stuff look that good?” Inspiration is fantastic; just keep in mind that sometimes you may be comparing apples to a lobster dinner.

A creative person can pull great ideas from your gray matter. However, it can only happen if the conditions are ripe for them to do so. They don't

know everything. And neither do you. You know cars, your business and your marketplace. Designers need your input to create what you want.

In looking for a creative partner, you don't want a follower or a leader. You want both. A good designer can take the reins and resolve your issues, and a good designer can also be a team player and support your vision and the needs of the dealership. You want talent and confidence.

If you find that designer, don't let him or her go. Speak with him regularly and involve him in your business goals before the pendulum shifts and you lose him. You'll be happier you did.



**Todd Lawson** is a seasoned international award winning advertising creative, designer, artist, writer and speaker. Todd is also Chief Creative Officer of Strategy Mob and Powered By Dashboard; an automotive product development company focused on helping dealers hit their targets.

 **@todd\_lawson**

