



# Avoiding the F&I Present Bias Trap

by John Tabar

The role of F&I Manager is a dynamic role in the dealership environment. After all, F&I touches every department in the dealership. What causes the F&I Present Bias Trap is when those departments touch back.

Today's F&I Managers face many challenges during their typical work day. They deal with an assortment of responsibilities, processes, situations and priorities that compete for their time.

I was following up by phone with an F&I Manager who had recently participated in a training class. When he answered, I asked if it was a good time to talk he said "yes."

I asked him how it was going? His response was "I'm so busy I can't get anything done." I asked him to explain. He told me that he was having trouble getting some information he needed to finalize a deal, he had a salesman just bring him a deal that was a mess, accounting kept calling him, he had a bank rep that had stopped by, and the Sales Manager just stuck his head in the office and told him to hurry-up because he had two waiting. I told him to call me when he had some time. He said "That's alright, I can talk for a minute" I told him "no you really can't" I told him to call me later and I would explain.

Unfortunately, this is a great example of the Present Bias that can be inherent in F&I.

The Present Bias in F&I refers to the tendency of F&I Managers to give stronger weight or a bias to what is urgent and in front of them right now. This bias gives them a false sense of productivity because they seem to be getting a lot of things done. They feel productive because they are busy and that's gratifying in the short-term.

Unfortunately, busy and productive are not the same thing. Have you ever had one of those days where you were very busy putting out multiple fires and being pulled in many directions, but at days end you realized you really hadn't accomplished anything you wanted to get done. If so, chances are you had a Present Bias for most of the day.

Experienced F&I Manger's will tell you that their highest priority is to deliver the vehicle. Only then can they work to achieve their goals

So, how does taking my call support the F&I Manger's goals? The answer is, it doesn't. Neither does talking to the bank rep, answering that accounting call, tolerating incomplete deals coming into the F&I office or most of the other urgent interruptions F&I Mangers face each day. Ironically, most of the time

many of these interruptions are about someone else's priorities and someone else's goals and usually do nothing to support the F&I Manager's priorities or F&I Managers goals.

The F&I Present Bias is a trap because it keeps F&I Managers from making time for the important tasks that support their long-term goals such as increasing their income through growth and development. Or other important tasks such as self-evaluation, planning, training as well as others. The F&I Present Bias compels F&I Managers to move these important but not urgent tasks down on their priority lists to the "I know it's important, but I'll have to get to it later" category. Unfortunately, in many instances, later doesn't come and F&I Managers don't grow, develop and evolve, they just burnout.

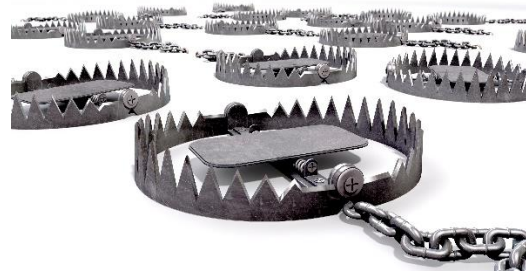
So how can F&I Managers avoid the trap? By learning to recognize what is urgent but not important because it doesn't support their priorities or their goals.

This just takes a little practice but when mastered can make a significant difference in productivity. When interrupted with an urgent request ask yourself how this request supports my top priority of delivering the vehicle and meeting production goals? If it doesn't, it just urgent, not urgent and important.

To help here is the short list of urgent and important tasks that support delivering the vehicle and production goals.

#### **Urgent and Important**

- Introducing and interviewing the customer
- Presenting a menu
- Consultation request from Sales Manager
- Call back on waiting customer



It's a short list. Make these urgent and important tasks your unbreakable priorities. When faced with those urgent interruptions you face every day ask yourself this; "Does this urgent task or request support my goals and my priorities in F&I? If the answer is no, then the task or request should be reprioritized. If the answer is yes, get it done now. You can reprioritize all the other tasks and requests that don't support your goals and your priorities to a time that works for you. What you will find is many of these tasks and requests will stop coming to you. The interesting thing about the F&I Present Bias is that if you don't have it, or refuse to have it, the people that keep interrupting you will find someone who does and get that person to drop what they are doing to help with their priority or their goal.

In my earlier example, the F& Manager I talked to could start to reject the F&I Present Bias by asking accounting to email him instead of calling, by telling the salesperson to get all the information on the deal accurate and to have the desk check it over before coming to you. By informing the bank rep that it would be better to make an appointment to "stop by" during slower times when it works better for you. He could then use the extra time to be sure he has all the information he needed to finalize that deal before the customer left his office. And one more thing, he should let my call go to voicemail.

That way, the F&I Manager in question may find time for those not urgent but important tasks like forecasting, evaluating his log, training, spending time at the sales desk and customer follow-up. The top F&I Managers know the difference between what is just urgent and what is both urgent and important, and that is how they avoid the F&I Present Bias Trap.