



**Who Ever Said,**  
**“The Rental Transaction Has To Be**  
**Fast!”**

.....

Here we are in the age of  
instant satisfaction and gratification.

By Jim Schalberg

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I am as much to blame as anyone else. I know that if I hurry up at the barbeque, a grilled hamburger, cooking time, toasting the bun adding my special sauce, lettuce, cheese, pickles and onions...(sounds like a commercial)...takes at least 15 minutes. That is if I really hurry! Yet when I go to my favorite drive through I am annoyed when I am asked to pull ahead and they will bring one to my car in 2 minutes!

At the rental counter we hurry up the transaction to the point of frenzy because we have to get the customer on his way as soon as humanly possible. I even had a client of mine boast that with his new rental software he can have a customer on the road in less than 3 minutes from start to finish!!! WHY?

From their television commercials, we all know that if you are a preferred customer at Humongous Car Rental you do not even have to stop at the counter. You just stay on the bus...telepathically let the rental desk know that you are taking their \$25,000 car out into the streets and not to worry as there will be no chance that anything will happen to the car or any other person, place or thing in your way!...

That may be the way Humongous Car Rental operates, but is that the best for you? Is that the best for your Fleet? Better yet, is that really the best for your customer? Look to your business. Is speed at the counter really your thing? Now, I am not advocating that we turn the rental process into a major project, but I am posing the Big Question. WHY?

When you are doing a rental car transaction today you are in reality loaning the car, the asset, or the CASH EQUIVILANT to the customer based on his ID and his credit card and a few perfunctory questions. Industry and consumer pressure says you should do this transaction in a few short minutes; after all, it is only a rental car. Try and walk into Wells Fargo, hand the teller your American Express and Drivers License, tell him you need \$19,000 in cash for two days and that you are going to take it two states over. Also tell him not to worry that will pay him 40 for each day, when you get back!... Oh , and tell him you need to do this in less than 5 minutes!



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### **Is That The Best For You?**

First let's talk about risk? In the event of an accident, Humongous Car Rental can spread the losses over X thousands of cars. You do not have that many cars and if you did, is speed worth the missed steps or forgotten questions that could have avoided an accident? Qualifying your customers takes time. We are in an era of increased liability costs, rising collision costs and surprise...surprise, denial of claims from the renter's insurance company! Now more than ever we need to take the time to verify and make the call.

### **Is It The Best For Your Fleet?**

Scenario...Customer rents brand new Mustang Convertible. Rental agent does the contract in 3.5 minutes flat, charges for the rental up front and gets all the money in cash. Rental agent hands renter the keys then says, "The car is in slot 4b in the back of the building." What the rental agent does not see is the renter hands the keys to his 17 year old son who then pulls out onto the freeway and drops the top at 59 miles per hour, turning the convertible top into the best airbrake that has ever been installed on a Ford product!

Whose fault is that? Did I hear "The Rental Agent"?...no, the owner, for allowing a set of counter procedures that lets things like this to happen. Had the rental agent stressed the no under aged driver, walked around the car with the customers and explained how and when to raise and lower the top, he could have eliminated at least JR driving off the lot. Now, I know you really cannot lower the top on a Mustang when you are moving...or can you?

### **Is It The Best For Your Customer?**

You may remember in a previous article the fact that after being in the car business for 34 years I could not turn on the lights of the latest Japanese import rented to me, in a dark garage, after 11PM and even the guard at the gate had to get his flashlight out to help me find the switch. Granted I am getting older, but the guard was still a youngster!

Not every car rental customer is familiar with all the controls of every car, let alone the casual neighborhood renter. Warming the engine up and showing the customer how the controls work as well as the radio, heater and air conditioning makes the customer more comfortable with a strange car. It is better than his or her adjusting the seat as they pull out into traffic, let alone the thump t' thump music on the radio.

It is also our responsibility to walk around the car with a customer. Making a good rental also means doing a good walk around before as well as after the rental. During the walk around make the customer aware that the car may have a few battle scars on it now, but "...please do not redesign a fender or door while you have it!"

### **What Does It All Mean?**

It means that you need to be sure the basics are done. Qualify your customer properly. Call and verify his insurance. Explain his options for the aftermarket items the right way. Explain his obligations under the contract and do a good walk around before and after the rental. In short, make a good rental.

