

PLAYBOOK

RV Dealers

Handshake Outreach email sequence, adapted.

Four messages, one sequence. Mail-merge ready.

ADAPTATION 5

Category notes

RV buyers face a specific and well-documented set of dealer practices that have eroded category trust: surprise PDI charges that show up at signing, inflated freight and prep fees, yo-yo financing, junk add-ons (paint protection, nitrogen tires, etching), and the deep-seated industry assumption that buyers won't read the buyer's order line by line. Forums like RV.net and r/rvs are full of buyers who got blindsided. The smartest RV dealers differentiate by being radically transparent on paperwork.

Insider terms used: PDI (Pre-Delivery Inspection), OTD (out-the-door) price, freight & prep, doc fee, due-bill / "We Owe," NRVIA (independent inspector certification), buyer's order, F&I, dealer add-ons, yo-yo financing. These are the words that signal you actually understand the buyer's anxieties.

MESSAGE 1 OF 4 / SEND WITHIN 4-24 HOURS

Message 1: The Honest Hello

Acknowledge the cold contact. Talk PDI like a pro. Give one useful warning.

Subject: A note from [First Name] at [Dealership] – PDI talk, not a pitch

Hi –

You stopped by [Dealership]'s site recently. RV shoppers do their homework – multiple dealers, online forums, owner groups, weeks or months of research. I'm not going to follow that up with daily “limited time” emails. One note, one useful thing.

I'm [Name], [role] at [Dealership]. The single most useful thing I can tell someone shopping an RV is this: get the OTD price in writing before you visit any dealership. Itemized. The line items that matter and that vary wildly are PDI/prep fee, freight, doc fee, and any “dealer-installed” packages. On the same MSRP unit, the OTD spread between dealers can be \$3,000-\$8,000 – and most of that doesn't show up until you're sitting in the F&I office.

If a dealer (including us) won't send you an itemized OTD before you visit, that's information. The OTD is the only number that matters when you're comparing.

I'll send two or three more notes over the next couple of weeks – short, focused on stuff like how to do a real PDI walkthrough, what NRVIA inspections cover, and what a due-bill actually obligates the dealer to do. No sales pitches.

Easy unsubscribe at the bottom.

– [Name]

[Direct line, reply-to]

MESSAGE 2 OF 4 / SEND 3-4 DAYS LATER

Message 2: The Inside Knowledge

The costly signal: explain why a dealer PDI isn't an inspection — then tell them what to do.

Subject: Why a dealer PDI isn't the same as an inspection — and why it matters

[Name],

Following up. If you're shopping for an RV, here's the part of the process that costs people the most pain after the sale: the difference between a dealer PDI and an independent inspection.

A dealer PDI is performed by a tech on the dealer's payroll, usually in 1-3 hours, focused on getting the unit sale-ready. It's not an inspection. It's a checklist before delivery. Most are competent. Some are rushed. None are working for you.

An independent NRVIA-certified inspection is different. It runs 6-8 hours, tests every system under load (propane, 12V/120V, plumbing, slides, generator, roof seals, weight ratings), and produces a written photo-rich report. It costs \$500-\$1,500 depending on the unit. On both new and used RVs, NRVIA inspectors regularly find missing sealant, miswired outlets, water intrusion, and untested generators that the dealer PDI "passed."

Here's what I'd tell you whether or not you ever buy from us: write "purchase contingent upon satisfactory third-party inspection" into your purchase agreement before you put down a deposit. Reputable dealers — us included — will agree. Dealers who refuse are telling you something important. Once you sign for delivery and drive off the lot, every issue becomes a warranty claim, and you go to the back of the line.

Also: any verbal promises from the salesperson — batteries, hoses, an extra propane tank, the slide topper they said they'd add — must be on the due-bill (sometimes called a "We Owe") and signed before you take possession. If it's not on the due-bill, it doesn't exist.

[Dealership]'s pre-purchase checklist and a sample buyer's order with the line items explained are at [link]. No form.

— [Name]

MESSAGE 3 OF 4 / SEND 5-7 DAYS LATER

Message 3: The Story

One customer story with a friction moment. Refusing delivery is a feature.

Subject: The customer who refused delivery (and saved himself \$14,000)

[Name],

Wanted to share a story.

A guy I'll call Steve bought a 38-foot fifth wheel from us about three years ago. He'd been an RV owner before – second unit, knew his way around. We did our PDI. Steve showed up for delivery with his own checklist, an NRVIA inspector he'd hired independently, and a printed copy of his buyer's order.

Six things came up during the inspection. Two were small – a loose underbelly panel, a missing propane regulator cover. One was medium – the awning had a tear we hadn't caught. Three were significant: the hot water heater wouldn't ignite on propane, one of the slides was binding on the seal, and a 12V circuit on the bedroom side was dead.

Steve didn't drive off the lot. He camped at a campground 10 miles down the road for two nights while we fixed everything. The repairs took five days because we had to order a part for the slide. Total cost to Steve: zero. The dealer absorbed all of it because the unit hadn't been delivered yet – it was still our unit, and we were obligated to deliver it in working order.

Here's what Steve told me a year later. Every one of those issues, if he'd taken delivery first and discovered them at his first campsite, would have been a warranty claim. The dealer wait time during peak season is six to eight weeks. He would have lost most of his summer. Instead, he was camping the second weekend.

I'm sharing this because the lesson isn't about us – it's about the leverage you have before you sign for delivery, and the leverage you don't have after. Once the title transfers, you're in the warranty queue. Before it transfers, you have all the power.

If you want to talk through what a real PDI walkthrough looks like, reply to this email or call [number]. I'll send one more note and then leave you alone.

– [Name]

MESSAGE 4 OF 4 / SEND 5-7 DAYS LATER

Message 4: The Clean Close

Three options. The exit is graceful. The questions are theirs to use — with anyone.

Subject: Last note from me

[Name],

Last email unless you want to stay in touch. Three options:

If you want a real OTD on a specific unit: Reply with the stock number or floor plan you're looking at. I'll send back an itemized buyer's order — unit, options, freight & prep, doc fee, sales tax, registration, total — inside one business day. No deposit, no credit pull, no commitment.

If you want to keep researching: [Dealership] sends a once-a-month note — new arrivals, end-of-season pricing, and one piece of practical owner education per email. [link] to subscribe.

If we're not the right dealer for you: Whoever you end up buying from, four things will protect you: (1) get the itemized OTD in writing before you visit, (2) write "subject to third-party inspection" into the purchase agreement, (3) put every verbal promise on the due-bill, (4) refuse delivery until everything on the inspection report is fixed. And get pre-approved for financing at your credit union before you walk in — it stops yo-yo financing cold. The full buyer's checklist is at [link] for anyone, customer or not.

Either way, good luck with the rig.

— [Name]

How to ship this

- **Replace the brackets.** [Dealership], [Name], [role], [number], [link], [unit type] — every placeholder filled, nothing left in template form.
- **Pick a real salesperson or sales manager as the sender.** Not the BDC. Use a direct line and a reply-to that reaches the actual person.
- **Render the body as plain text.** HTML email part, slightly large font (~16-17px), warmer-than-white background. Looks typed. Reads typed. People scan plain text differently.
- **Mind the cadence.** Message 1 within 4-24 hours. Message 2 at day 3-4. Message 3 at day 8-11. Message 4 at day 13-18. Then stop.
- **Honor the promise.** If you said “last email,” it's the last email. Reactance kills the relationship faster than silence.