

The car agents - without a license to bargain

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Many car manufacturers are currently turning their dealers into "agents. However, they don't walk around with a gun under their dinner jacket, but with a smartphone and a business card. Car manufacturers such as Mercedes, BMW, VW, Skoda and Opel want to use the agency model to put an end to the discount battles between their dealership partners. The agent has lost his license to act. He is now only a representative of the brand. The customer must accept the price as it is. Hagglng is no more.

At the 24th industry summit at the Institute of Automotive Management (IfA) at Nürtingen University, it became clear: In the future, most new cars in Germany will no longer be sold by independent car dealers, but by agents. 600 students, car managers and dealers discussed the sales of the future. "We need a new division of labor between manufacturers and dealers," said Skoda CEO Klaus Zellmer, explaining the move to an agency system. Like VW, Skoda initially began selling its electric models through agency sales.

To meet their sales targets and retain customers, dealers often pass on a significant portion of their margin to the customer. The agency model is also intended to prevent competition between car dealerships of the same brand. Dealers are nevertheless not enthusiastic. After all, an agency gets a commission, but it is significantly lower than the margin in the past. And they see themselves robbed of their entrepreneurial freedom to calculate prices themselves. In the future, the manufacturer will set the sales price.

"The agency model will not work for volume brands," says Markus Siebrecht, head of Renault Germany. Renault will therefore stick to its dealer model. The Renault subsidiary brand Dacia shows that excessive discounts can be avoided in other ways. Its dealers tend to hold back on price reductions.

Hyundai also wants to do without agents. The 500 dealers of the South Korean brand will remain independent entrepreneurs. Opel, on the other hand, also plans to work with agents in the long term: In Germany, Opel plans to switch in 2026. (aum/gr)

Images for article



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