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Q : Dealers and builders across the country say that a lack of financing options for their clients is hurting their business. What is still available?

Much has changed over the past several years with pool and spa dealer financing. Nearly all of the big banks that most dealers were familiar with and the direct channels of home-improvement financial products have gone away. What used to be a pretty simple process has gotten infinitely more complicated. There are still options available, though. You just need to know where to look.

Many dealers understand the impact of having a financing partner and its positive effect on their bottom line. Others think that leaving it up to customers to find their own financing or just relying on cash deals is a good enough strategy. But they should ask themselves, "What would selling two to three more pools per month do to your annual sales and your net profit?"

Market studies about home-improvement financing point to greater sales when financing is offered. In addition, you cannot underestimate the concept of upselling when 100 percent financing is an option. I can tell you from firsthand experience that the dealers who offer and control the financing aspect of their deals and offer their customers financing through a third party, as well as advertise and promote financing on their website, sell more pools. Having a "financing available" tab or link on your website may also make your site stickier than your competition, meaning that customers may be less likely to keep surfing to the next company in their Google search if they see that you offer financing. ~