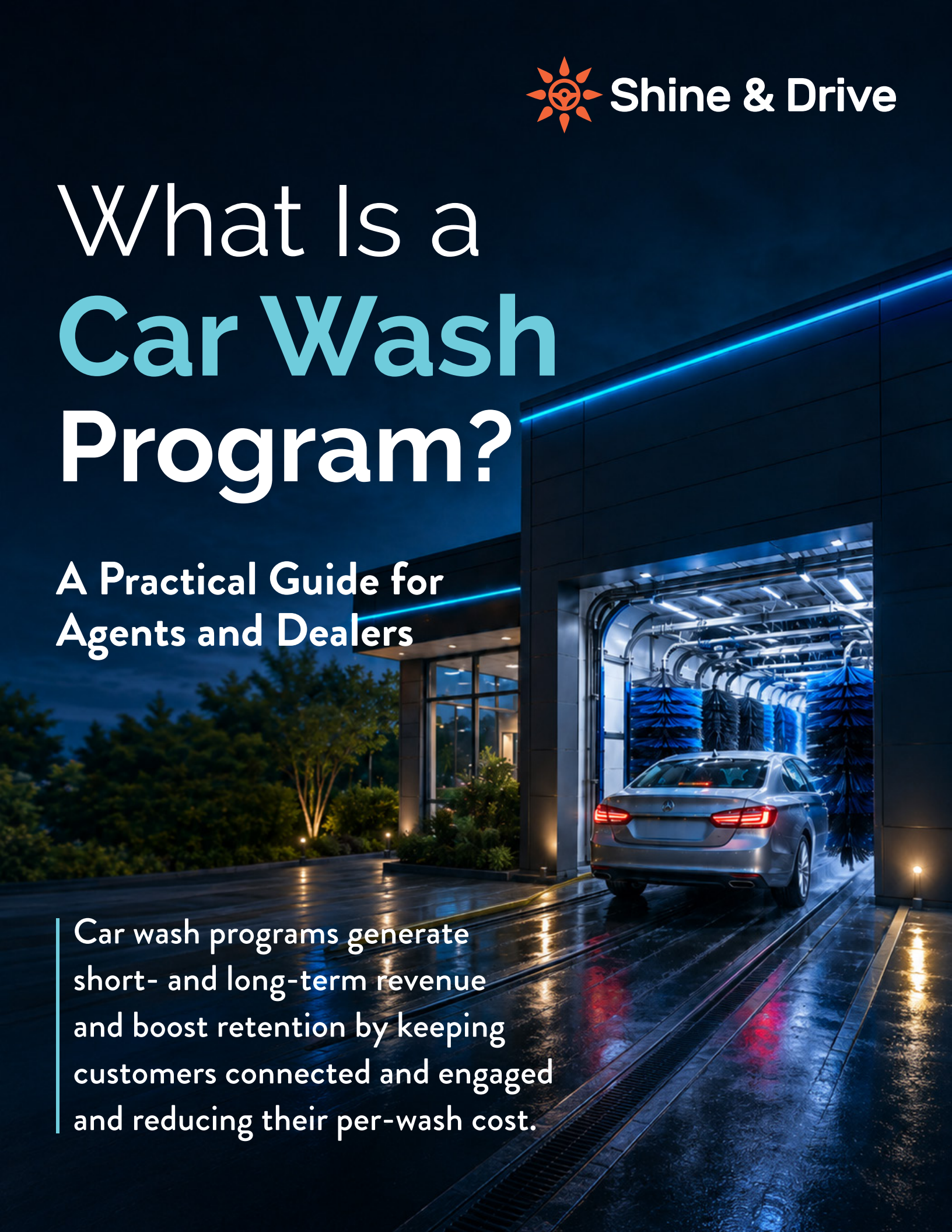


What Is a Car Wash Program?

A Practical Guide for
Agents and Dealers

Car wash programs generate short- and long-term revenue and boost retention by keeping customers connected and engaged and reducing their per-wash cost.



7 Things You Need to Know About Car Wash Programs

Dealers have spent decades refining how they sell and finance vehicles. Today, the opportunity — and the challenge — extends far beyond the transaction.

Dealerships are no longer competing for customers on price alone. Car buyers expect an exceptional experience, real value and ongoing engagement long after they leave the showroom.

That shift has given rise to a new category of F&I-friendly offerings: ownership benefits designed to keep customers connected to the dealership.

Car wash programs are gaining traction because they deliver something every customer understands, uses and appreciates. They also offer agents and dealers a scalable way to improve retention and enhance perceived value without adding operational burden.

Here's what you need to know.



A well-structured car wash program shifts the wash from an occasional dealership expense to a consistent, visible ownership benefit.

01 A Car Wash Program Is Simple by Design.

At its core, a car wash program is exactly what it sounds like: a dealership-provided benefit that gives customers access to car washes over a defined period of time.

But the simplicity is what makes it powerful.

Most programs include:



A set number of washes or a time-based membership.



Access to one or more participating wash locations.



A digital method of activation and redemption.

Unlike traditional “courtesy washes” performed at the dealership, these programs are designed for ongoing, customer-driven use. Customers don’t need to wait for a service visit. They can wash their vehicle when and where it’s convenient.

That distinction matters. A well-structured car wash program shifts the wash from an occasional dealership expense to a consistent, visible ownership benefit.

And because it’s easy to understand, it’s easy to sell.

02

Car Wash Programs Operate on a Simple Cycle.

While program structures vary, most follow a straightforward lifecycle that fits naturally into existing dealership processes:



Enrollment typically happens at the point of sale. The program can be presented in F&I as a standalone benefit or bundled with other products to enhance perceived value.



Activation is usually digital. Customers receive instructions to download an app or access a platform where their membership is stored. This step is critical — it transforms the program from a promise into a usable benefit.



Redemption makes the value tangible. When customers visit a participating car wash, they scan a code or use their membership credentials to redeem a wash.



Ongoing engagement is an often-overlooked advantage. Each redemption reinforces the dealership’s role in the ownership experience. Some programs include reminders, confirmations or dealer-branded messaging that keeps the dealership top of mind.



Program completion creates a reengagement opportunity. Whether through renewal, upgrade or a service visit, the dealership has another reason to reconnect with the customer.

It’s a simple cycle that creates repeated, positive interactions over time.

03

Not All Car Wash Programs Are the Same.

Agents and dealers can take several different approaches to adding a car wash program. Understanding the differences is key to choosing the right fit.



Dealership-operated wash programs

are the traditional model. Washes are performed onsite, usually during service visits. These programs are often limited by capacity, staffing and time constraints.



Local partnership programs

extend access to nearby car washes. These programs offer more flexibility but are geographically constrained, limiting their appeal to local customers.



Network-based programs

represent the most scalable approach. Customers can access a wide network of participating locations, sometimes across multiple regions or even nationwide. This model aligns well with today’s mobile, convenience-driven consumers.

Dealers will also encounter different pricing structures:

- **Prepaid** programs include a fixed number of washes over a defined period.
- **Subscription** models provide ongoing access, typically on a monthly basis.



Both can be effective. The right choice depends on how the program is positioned within the dealership’s broader sales and F&I strategy.

The Value for Dealerships Goes Beyond the Wash.

On the surface, a car wash program is a simple benefit. In practice, it supports several core dealership objectives.

-  **F&I managers** get an easy-to-explain, widely appealing product that can help frame higher-value products in a more accessible way.
-  **Reinsurable programs** add a reliable new component to the dealer’s long-term wealth-building strategy.
-  **Customer retention** is the most immediate impact. Every time a customer uses the program, they are reminded of where it came from. That ongoing visibility helps keep the dealership in consideration for future service and vehicle purchases.
-  **CSI scores** often improve because the benefit is both practical and visible. A clean vehicle is something customers notice — and appreciate — immediately.
-  **Service drive traffic** can also benefit. While customers may redeem washes offsite, the program creates additional touchpoints that can be tied to service reminders or follow-up communication.

Just as importantly, the right car wash program can help protect gross. Instead of discounting price or rate, dealers can add value through a benefit customers will actually use. That combination — simplicity, visibility and utility — is what makes these programs so effective.

Customers See Immediate, Everyday Value.

From the customer’s perspective, the appeal is straightforward.

-  **Convenience:** Customers don’t have to search for deals or manage separate memberships. They will use a dealership-branded mobile app to find locations, redeem washes and get notifications, creating positive touchpoints throughout the year.
-  **Savings:** The cost of regular car washing can add up quickly. A scalable program will always deliver a lower cost per wash than retail.
-  **Maintenance:** Regular washing helps preserve a vehicle’s appearance and, in some cases, its long-term value.

Perhaps most importantly, the experience is seamless. The program is introduced during the purchase process and becomes part of the ownership experience from day one.

It’s not an abstract benefit. It’s something customers will use — often within days of leaving the dealership.

Car wash programs are easy to understand, but successful implementation still requires a deliberate approach.



12

The average driver washes their vehicle 12-13 times per year.

 **Source:** DetailPro



Implementation Requires Thought, Not Complexity.

-  **Sales process adaptation** is critical. Sales and F&I teams need to position the program as part of the ownership experience, not an afterthought.
-  **Technology and fulfillment** should be simple and reliable. Programs that are difficult to activate or redeem will see lower usage — and lower perceived value.
-  **API/DMS integration** automates the “simple cycle” of a car wash program so the dealers doesn’t have to touch it.
-  **Network coverage** matters more than many dealers expect. Customers want flexibility. The broader the network, the more likely they are to use the program consistently.
-  **Communication** is an opportunity. Dealer-branded messages, reminders and confirmations can reinforce the relationship long after the sale.
-  **Scalability** is critical. A program that works for a single rooftop should also be able to support growth across multiple locations or groups.

When these elements are in place, the program becomes not just a feature, but a repeatable part of the dealership’s strategy.

A Growing Market Reflects Changing Expectations.

The car wash industry itself is large and growing, supported by steady consumer demand and the rise of subscription-based services.

At the same time, dealerships are increasingly focused on lifecycle engagement — finding ways to stay connected with customers between major transactions.

Car wash programs sit at the intersection of these trends.

They align with how customers already behave. They fit naturally into dealership processes. And they support broader goals around retention, satisfaction and recurring value.

In that sense, they are less a new idea than a new application of a familiar service.

Car wash programs deliver a clear, everyday benefit that customers understand and use. For dealerships, they provide a low-friction way to extend the relationship beyond the sale, support F&I performance and improve the ownership experience.



Shine & Drive works with agents and dealers to deliver car wash programs redeemable at thousands of locations nationwide.

Contact us today to learn more.



SHINE & DRIVE FOR AGENTS

Help your dealers add a simple, high-value ownership benefit.

LEARN MORE >



SHINE & DRIVE FOR DEALERS

Give customers a benefit they'll use again and again.

LEARN MORE >



shineanddrive.com

©2026 Shine & Drive. All rights reserved.