

Dealer POINT

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inside |

SUCCESS STORIES START HERE

Current and former TMQDA winners discuss strategies for success

BY SHARYN ALDEN

When you look at what determines a successful dealership over decades of time, Wisconsin dealers' strategies can be diverse or dramatic, but their core philosophies are plain and simple.

Current and past winners of the prestigious TIME Magazine Quality Dealer Award share some of the important factors that formulated their own success.

CAREFUL PLANNING, GOOD IDEAS

"To be successful in this business, you have to anticipate your customers' changing needs. For example, that's why our service department in West Salem is open from 6 a.m. to midnight Monday through Friday," said Don Brenengen, Wisconsin's Dealer of the Year, as well as this year's TMQDA winner for Wisconsin and one of the top four finalists for the 2009 TMQDA at the convention in New Orleans.

It's amazing what a difference a few years can make. Brenengen and his wife Cheryl bought the West Salem business 18 years ago. "At that time, the dealership had 17 employees and 17 cars for sale, and five (three are his sons) of those 17 employees were family members," he said.

Today, the business has multiplied in size several times over. It operates from a base of five dealerships, a staff of 220 employees and an inventory of approximately 800 vehicles. Brenengen also owns Brenengen Ford-Mercury and Brenengen Chevrolet, Buick, Pontiac in Sparta, and Brenengen KIA in West Salem. The most recent addition to the Brenengen Auto Group is Brenengen Chrysler-Ford in Tomah.

Brenengen is reminded every day of how far the business has come. On one of the walls at the dealership is the first print ad showcasing the dealership's inventory of 17 cars, and a prized photo of Brenengen's TMQDA award is displayed in the customer showroom.

"There are many things that make a successful dealership," Brenengen said. "Cheryl and I believe it starts with our staff and the training they complete each year so they are better equipped to anticipate and satisfy our customers' ever changing needs. Training also makes a big difference when it comes to a consistent pattern of growth. We're proud that we have been recognized for our training standards."

The TMQDA award may also have



Don Brenengen



Vern Trecek



Craig Ewald



Jerry Holz

given the Brenengen Auto Group that extra push it needed to add a dedicated IT person. "That person will not only maintain the company's five dealership computer network, but they will educate staff in getting the most out of the equipment and technology that they work with every day," said Brenengen.

Since he received the TMQDA award earlier this year, Brenengen said it has spurred new ideas and the entire staff seems more inspired to take on the extreme challenges facing the automotive industry today. "Cheryl and I share this prestigious award with our family and staff as it also represents their work and dedication as well," he said.

TWO-TIME AWARD WINNER

Jerome "Jerry" Holz, owner of Holz Motors, Inc., in Hales Corners and Watertown, has received the TMQDA

award twice, in 1979 and in 2004.

In addition to receiving the distinguished awards twice, they have also reached a landmark status in the annals of Wisconsin auto industry history.

The dealership is the oldest Chevrolet dealer in Wisconsin, and is possibly the oldest dealership in the state that is still owned by the founding family. Holz has been Wisconsin's No. 1 Chevrolet dealer for 23 years in a row.

Holz grew up in the business; his father started the dealership in 1914 with seven cars on the lot.

He's learned a thing or two about what goes into a successful dealership, having owned the dealership for 51 years. He credits his wife Dorothy, who passed away earlier this year, as being an enormous factor in the company's success. The couple would have been

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FROM AROUND THE STATE | Changes

International Autos in Waukesha has opened a Maserati dealership at its Infiniti/Porsche/Mercedes location.

Bergstrom Automotive has discontinued its Saturn operations in Wausau, La Crosse, Fond du Lac, and Eau Claire, effective April 15. Bergstrom plans to continue to operate their Saturn of Appleton and Saturn of Green Bay locations.

Bergstrom Automotive closed its Sturgeon Bay Chrysler-Dodge-Jeep dealership on March 1, and on the same day announced the acquisition in Appleton of the Audi-Volkswagen dealership, the Hyundai-Mitsubishi-Mazda dealership, and the Nissan dealership; and the Buick-Jeep-Chrysler dealership in Kaukauna.

Markquart Buick, Pontiac, Cadillac and GMC of Chippewa

Falls has merged with **Markquart Chevrolet** in Lake Hallie and is now known as Markquart Motors.

Ellious Motors closed its doors after 22 years in the Wisconsin Rapids area, including locations in Biron and Plover. Greg Ellious Sr. attributed the decision to a “combination of the national economic slump and local job loss.” Jodi Ellious said, “It’s sad; it’s a death for our family. It was our life.”

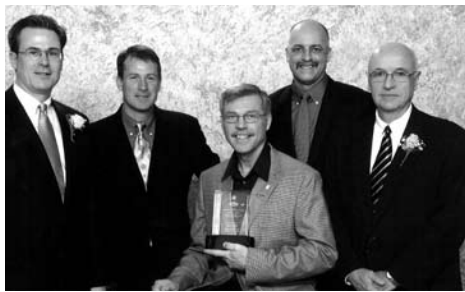
CENTER STAGE | Awards, honors, milestones

Tom Zimbrick, Zimbrick Inc., Madison was named to the 2009 In Business Hall of Fame for making a big impact on corporate climate and the community at large through their work in nonprofits and other organizations.

Zimbrick has been involved in the United Way of Dane county for 16 years, including stints as campaign chair in 1998, chairing a task force in 2000 that laid out the “agenda for change” format that is still being used today. This year he is chairman of the United Way board.

Zimbrick also provides monetary and in-kind support to numerous local organizations, including the scholarship program of The Foundation of WATDA.

Joshua Johnson, Don Johnson Auto Group, Hayward, wrote letters to the editors of several newspapers in his area to spread the word about the importance of child safety seats. Johnson used information he received from an NADA mailing to stress the matter’s significance. Surprisingly, Johnson got thank you notes from throughout his community, as well as a number of new customers.



Don Brenengen, seated, with Damian Slatterly, Franchise Development Director, TIME Magazine, left, Todd Reardon, chairman, WATDA; Bill Sepic, WATDA president and Eric Brown, Director of Car Dealers and Specialty Markets, the Goodyear Tire & Rubber Company.

Don Brenengen, Brenengen Chevrolet, West Salem, Wisconsin Dealer of the Year, was named one of four regional finalists for the 2009 TIME Magazine Dealer of the Year award. Brenengen was honored at the 92nd Annual National Automobile Dealers Association Convention in New Orleans.

Rick Mohr, Eau Claire Ford Lincoln Mercury, received a Ford Salute to Dealers award for outstanding corporate citizenship. Only six dealer principals in the U.S. and Canada earned the award this year. Mohr’s contributions focus mainly on child safety, the American Red Cross and vocational training for disabled adults and teens.



From left, Keith Pretty Northwood University president, David Lynch, and Northwood student David Arnold.

David Lynch, Lynch GM Superstore, Burlington, was one of nine auto dealers honored by Northwood University with their annual Dealer Education Awards.

Gary Williams was honored with the Northwood University Automotive Trade Executive Award at the Dealer Education Awards breakfast in New Orleans at the NADA Convention.

The citation presented with the award reads (in part); “having founded The Foundation of WATDA in 1991 to support education, research and charitable giving, you also partnered with Snap-On Tools to provide student scholarships to qualified candidates pursuing technical degree programs. You have also given time serving as chair of the AYES National Advisory Board.” Congratulations Gary!

The Everest Herald (serving Schofield, Weston and Rothschild) second annual “Best in Everest” reader poll named Fred Mueller Automotive the Best car dealer.

GMC Zone Manager Scott Mueller recognized Bob Pietroske, Pietroske Chevrolet, Buick, Cadillac, Pontiac, GMC for operating his truck dealership for 25 years.

Andy Lamb and Cory Hawkins, dealership partners at Anderson Ford, Baldwin, have received the Top Dealer Award for the second year in a row. Ford also selected Anderson Ford as 2008 No. 1 Dealer in brand new Ford car and truck sales for Zone W.

From left, Cory Hawkins, Jason Klopp, Andy Lamb and Terry Sullivan of Anderson Ford. Photo by Paul J. Seeling



OBITUARIES |

JACK GARBO

Jack Garbo the front-line guy at Garbo Motors in Racine passed away in January.

He was the second generation of dealer principals in the Garbo family and had done so for years in Racine. He is survived by two brothers, sister, two daughters and a son.

JACK SAFRO

Jack Safro, majority owner of one of the most successful dealership groups in metro Milwaukee, died of a heart attack January 5 at his home on Pine Lake in Waukesha County.

Safro, 72, was with his wife Jeanne at the time of the heart attack, said Jim Tessmer, who is vice president of The Safro Group.

The Jack Safro dealer group began in 1962 when Safro started as a used car dealer in Pewaukee. Safro opened metro Milwaukee’s first Toyota dealership in 1967, and today Jack Safro Toyota consistently ranks among the top area dealerships in terms of new vehicles sold.

The Safro group has grown to five dealerships: Jack Safro Toyota in Brookfield, Jack Safro Ford Lincoln Mercury in Oconomowoc, Lexus of Brookfield, Lexus North Shore in Glendale and Infiniti North Shore in Glendale. The company has about 350 employees.

JAMES ROBERT BLAU

In 2008, our industry lost an innovator with the passing of longtime dealer and friend, Jim Blau. He was 77.

His achievements include a Golden Gloves championship, Air Force duty in the Korean War, auto racing, founding the Butler Auto Body Company, the well-known Tosa Imports dealer-

ship, Silver Spring Self Storage and, not least of all, invention of the Sno-Way Plow, specially designed to work with smaller trucks. Today the Sno-Way clears the way for mil-

lions of worldwide users.

Jim is survived by three daughters, a son, six grandchildren, one great grandchild, two brothers and a sister.



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RAWHIDE PROFILE | Jesse

My name is Jesse, and I am 16 years old. I am from Racine County and have been at Rawhide for three months.

My favorite things to do include playing basketball and football, break dancing, and listening to music. I really enjoy work rotation/community service projects with the job trainers; they're a major encouragement and fun to be around.

Continuing my education to get a degree in criminal justice is part of my future plan. I also hope to join the Marines and, eventually, have a family of my own.

The Smith Home (one of the youth homes at Rawhide) is where I've been living; it's been a great experience. I enjoy going to the gym with Mr. Gary Winston (resident instructor) when we cadets get our weekend privileges. I also like participating in Building Spiritual Muscle with Major Abe Auer. We get to know each other and learn more about God. I gave my life to



Christ on December 16, 2008, at Mr. Winston's Bible study.

Another good feature about Rawhide is the staff, especially resident instructors, houseparents, and Colonel Jeff Stump. They've been a big encouragement in my life. I've never had a father, but Pops Ed Dedmon (housefather in the Smith Home) has been an awesome father figure in my life. He taught me about leadership, discipline, good manners, good self-esteem, and encouragement.

Rawhide is a blessing for all young men who come, and it has changed my life in many ways.

I've also enjoyed participating in sports at Starr Academy, like basketball and track. Coaches CJ Behnke, Andy Schroeder, Scott Wilson and Natalie Sarazin are all great motivators. They've taught me a lot, both physically and mentally. It's all mental toughness – anything can be achieved as long as you put your mind to it.

I set my standards high and was determined to achieve the rank of Corporal, and I did it! "I can do everything through Him who gives me strength." (Philippians 4:13)

The power of partnerships

BY GARY BEIER
DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR
FOUNDATION OF WATDA

One of the key elements of successful philanthropy is the ability to forge partnerships that work to all involved in the process.

This simple rule has been the guiding force behind everything that we at the Foundation of WATDA attempt to accomplish with our Business Partners program.

We are quite proud of what has been done over the 17 years that this Foundation has been involved in these partnerships. When you look back at this period of time, the results are pretty amazing. Our Business Partners have provided three quarters of a million dollars in project funds and better than \$3 million worth of in-kind student support.

These Business Partners have assisted us to launch many dynamic projects, which have served thousands in industry, education and communities all over Wisconsin. Take a moment to reflect on some of our Business Partnership highlights.

The opening of the world-class Horizon training center in Kenosha.

Thousands of hours of professional training for Wisconsin's transportation teachers.

Professional tools for over 1,000 future technicians.

Career exploration events that have reached over 20,000 participants in the



past 5 years.

Operation of the state's \$3 million dollar training vehicle pool for AYES schools and technical colleges.

High-tech education for students attending one-third of our high-schools.

Industry certification at all of Wisconsin's Technical Colleges.

A tax savings of \$200,000 over the last two years for the AYES school districts.

The collective result, a level of quality that is hard to match – anywhere! Our students know it, our customers appreciate it, and the nation's transportation industry looks to Wisconsin because of the good works you, your Foundation and your Business Partners have accomplished through the years. It is a legacy that will outlive any challenges we have to face. Next time you have the chance, please thank our Business Partners for their unwavering investment. It means an awful lot to many deserving people.

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STAFF PROFILE | Matt Lavold

WATDA’S vice president-controller enjoys rolling up his sleeves and pitching in with new ideas

BY SHARYN ALDEN

Not everyone can say they like to cook, ride a snowmobile, go to fire-house pancake breakfasts, play golf, and take on new challenges, but that’s exactly what describes Matt Lavold, WATDA’s vice president-controller. Before joining WATDA, Lavold worked 11 years in public accounting in the energy and utilities practice group for Virchow Krause. “The main reason for changing career paths was to find a position that would provide me with a new set of challenges and opportunities,” he said.

Since Lavold joined WATDA in April 2008, he has been busy learning about the association, dealership, and insurance businesses.

To get to know Matt Lavold, it’s probably best to start with a little background about his last name. It seems there are a few misconceptions, as well as serendipitous friendships, that have centered on the name “Lavold.”

Norwegians can be counted on to know a Norwegian name when they see one, but that doesn’t mean everyone else sees it that way. Matt said many people think the name ‘Lavold’ is French, but it’s actually Norwegian.

Then there’s the mistaken identity connection. Lavold explained: “Many of the auto and truck dealers in Wisconsin know Dave Lavold, and while we share the same last name, Dave is not my father.” Still, there is more to this story than just two people with the same last name who are known in the same industry.

Lavold actually grew up about 12 houses away from Dave Lavold’s family in DeForest. “It’s quite a coincidence, but it’s true,” said Lavold. “I graduated from high school with Dave’s son, and our two families did many activities with each other when I was growing up. My first car came from Dave.”

KEEPING UP WITH SPORTS

All types of sports play an important part of Lavold’s life. The family is actively involved in so many sporting activities, Lavold said, “You might say we are complete sports nuts.”

Besides regularly attending UW football, basketball, and hockey games, and collecting Badger memorabilia, he and his wife Nicole are fans of high school sporting events. Their sons are becoming big sports fans, too. Drew, 5, and Mason, 2, are both interested in sports.

“Drew is playing t-ball and soccer, and both boys love swim lessons. We also go to parks and on bike rides with the kids,” he said.

In warmer months, he and Nicole enjoy getting out on the links and playing a round of golf. When the snow piles high on the ground, Lavold may be seen riding his snowmobile, although the time he has available seems to shrink each year.

A TIME MACHINE AND BANANA CREAM PIE

Many people fantasize about what it would be like to go back in time, but Lavold knows exactly what he’d like to experience. As the world changed, with the advent of new and more sophisticated technology, he would have liked to have experienced those “aha” moments.

“It must have been amazing to hear the first baseball game on the radio, watch the first television broadcast on a black and white TV, and have electricity or indoor plumbing for the first time,” he said.

And true to his interest in the auto and truck industry, he said, “Can you imagine what it must have been like to drive a car when they were first available on the market? Technology and



inventions change people’s lives. I’m seeing that with my own kids. My son, who is in preschool, is already using a computer and he’s only five. I can only

imagine how technology will continue to change my kids’ lives as they grow up.”

Lavold also enjoys cooking in his spare time, but you might not have guessed that the famous chef, Emeril Lagasse, is someone he’d like to have dinner with.

Why? The answer has to do with banana cream pie.

“If you are ever at one of Emeril’s restaurants, and you see banana cream pie on the menu, stop what you’re doing, and order a slice of pie. It’s that unbelievable,” said Lavold. “If I was ever fortunate enough to have dinner with Emeril, I would hope he would cook the dinner and make his famous pie.”



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Racine-school auto techs shine in national contest

BY BILL NELSON

Wisconsin's regional champion team from Racine didn't end up in the winner's circle in mid-April's 2009 National Automotive Technology Competition in New York City. But the two high school students making up the auto-tech team performed impressively.

They finished in the Top Five among 29 "best in the nation" regional and state champion teams from throughout the U.S. and one in Canada.

Their reward for a fifth-place finish was a host of college scholarship opportunities (eight were offered to each Racine student, a total of \$50,000 for each, chiefly to private technical colleges). Choosing should be a pleasant challenge.

The young men – Washington Park

High School junior Kieron Kohlman and senior Jonathan Ramczyk – also received Snap-on Tools.

The New York nationals are considered the "World Series" for outstanding high school technicians. Staged at the prestigious New York International Auto Show, the contest attracted several thousand spectators over the two-day span, interested people who took time out from show-going to look in on the competing young technicians.

"We had the largest cheering section there," said Dave Dixon, the Racine instructor. The Wisconsin contingent included parents, grandparents, family members, relatives and friends. "Moms wore t-shirts that read 'Team Lexus From Wisconsin.'"

The Racine duo had been assigned a Lexus ES350 to work on during the



Jonathan Ramczyk and Kieron Kohlmann immediately after they won the state contest judging in February. Also pictured are instructor Dave Dixon, right, Ray Pedersen of The Foundation of WATDA, center, and Steve Herro of ADAMM, left.

two mornings of rigorous testing.

For Lexus, this year's competition proved to be a good show. The first-place finisher, an Agoura High School team sponsored by the Greater Los Angeles New Car Dealers Association, also did its tests using an assigned Lexus.

During the competition, the students' mechanical skills and automotive know-how were measured in a race against the clock. The testing involved both work-station exercises and problem-solving challenges, all to be completed in allotted time spans during the six hours of competition (three hours each day).

One notable headache the Racine boys encountered was finding and fixing a computer-wire malfunction. "Eighty circuits run through one computer connector harness," Dixon said. "It was like looking for a needle in a haystack"

The team's fifth-place ranking marks the fourth time in the last four years that a Wisconsin school has made the Elite Five in the nationals. (A Grafton team finished first in 2006, another team from Grafton took third in 2008,

and a Green Bay area consortium team brought home a first-place trophy in 2007.)

The Washington Park team's fifth-place finish was identical to a Racine team's 2003 finish representing Wisconsin in the nationals. Both were coached by Dixon.

"I am very, very proud of them," Dixon said. "They worked hard and helped each other (throughout the competition). They really wanted to do a good job. I couldn't have coached a nicer set of guys."

Dixon also thanked the Automobile Dealers Association of Mega Milwaukee and the Wisconsin Automobile and Truck Dealers Association for covering the expenses of their Big Apple experience. He also praised the Lexus training center in Chicago for the 10 hours of training help it provided recently.

The Kohlmann/Ramczyk team had won the right to represent the state after taking first place in ADAMM's Wisconsin competition in early February. That victory came at ADAMM's 15th annual Technicians of Tomorrow Automotive Technology Competition.

The Racine pair outperformed student teams from five other Wisconsin high schools to win the state finals, a morning-long exercise involving a written test, and problem-solving and work-station challenges staged at the Oak Creek campus of Milwaukee Area Technical College. The dozen students competing had advanced to the state finals by doing the best of 87 auto-tech students from around the state taking an hour-and-a-half written ASE test in December from the National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence.



Jonathan Ramczyk, left, Kieron Kohlmann work on a brake question during the morning-long competition in February at MATC South.

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Customers find a home-like experience at Ellsworth Ford

BY SHARYN ALDEN

When customers open the doors to Ellsworth Ford in Ellsworth, owned by Barb Anderson and her husband Larry, they often feel like they've visiting a good friend.

Barb has created a touch of home-town friendliness and an inviting mood at the Ellsworth dealership as well as the couple's Baldwin Ford dealership.

Each dealership showcases vehicles in a charming décor that gives people several reasons to stay awhile. "Since I grew up in a small town, it's important to me to make our place of business an inviting and friendly atmosphere," Anderson said.

Many dealerships are warm and personable, but the Ellsworth store's "homey" atmosphere makes people feel like they've stepped into a home away from home. The setting has become synonymous with the dealership's "we-go-the-extra-mile-for-you" message.

"I'm usually at the dealership 10 hours or so a day starting about 7:30 a.m. so I started thinking how much more comfortable it would be if our store reflected a home-like quality," Anderson said. "We are all here enough hours in a day so I wanted our staff to enjoy coming to work and feel good about their workplace."

MINIATURE HOMES, CHURCHES AND CABINS

It's probably fair to say there isn't another dealership around that has displays such as the one at Ellsworth Ford.

We're not talking vehicles—we're talking hand-made miniatures of tiny churches, cabins and homes. Richard Klein, who was with the dealership as a technician for 35 years before retiring, makes these miniatures. His handiwork is featured in glass cases on the showroom floor.

Customers stop and marvel about Klein's talent and how much time it must take to build cabins with stone walls. "They can't believe how much patience Richard has for building roofs covered by small shingles and all the other details he puts in his work," Anderson said. "People are just mesmerized by Richard's tiny houses and buildings. They love looking at these miniature displays when they come in to purchase a vehicle or are here for service."

Other brand builders at the dealership involve color and art. When the Andersons purchased the dealership in 2002, one of the first things Barb did was to paint the walls and add a wallpaper border at the top of high showroom walls to help downplay the height of the room. The wallpaper represents a map of the world and is a stunning addition to the dealership.

"Many people comment on it. They tell us it makes them feel like they're visiting a lovely home," Anderson said.

She also used the bare walls to showcase art and photos for her employees and customers' enjoyment. "Some of the pictures are auto-related, but others are photos of 911, and visual stories



Barb Anderson shows the unique home-like decor in her Ellsworth Ford dealership. Anderson has found the image stays with customers long after they leave the showroom. Inset, Richard Klein's hand-made miniatures are a big draw for customers. Klein retired from the dealership after 35 years; his handiwork is now featured in glass cases on the showroom floor.

that symbolize America like American flags, eagles and photos and pictures of our country's devoted fire fighters. A variety of lush plants also help customers feel at home. Customers sometimes surprise Anderson by commenting on how big the plants have grown over the years.

Several plants have been at the dealership since its grand opening in 2002.

"We are thrilled when customers tell us they notice these things," Anderson said. "That shows that even small changes like adding indoor plants at a dealership can help build brands and new relationships. It's a way to stay in your customers' memory for years to come."



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Are you building a better brand experience?

If you have struggled with how to improve your company image or brand, John F. Bergstrom, Chairman & CEO of Bergstrom Automotive offers valuable insight for building a stronger brand.



Bergstrom Automotive, which originated in Neenah in 1982, now operates 25 dealerships in Wisconsin, representing 28 brands. Positive guest experience has played a part in many awards such as being named one of the 10 Best Mercedes-Benz dealers in the U.S., and for the last 8 consecutive years, being recognized by Lexus with their "Elite" Award.

Every day of the week, we make decisions based on the enormous influence that brands have on us. If you haven't been working on strengthening your corporate brand, now's the time to look at different ways of putting your thumbprint on the world.

DealerPoint: The most important question every dealer looking at branding wants to know is this: Since a brand is not just a logo or a tagline or positioning statement, how does branding go beyond selling and advertising a concept?

Bergstrom: Branding is about creating an image – a feel for something when consumers come in contact with your corporate name as well as how they feel about the total experience related to the brand. Your image or

brand should be a single, unforgettable feeling that is a recognizable memory or association that said who you are and what you represent.

DealerPoint: How does your company philosophy play a part in branding?

Bergstrom: First off, our goal is to develop long-term relationships with our customers who we call guests. This was a philosophy that was around me growing up. Our mom kept our home an open, welcoming place where guests felt comfortable. Our Bergstrom team consists of 1,200 people at 25 Wisconsin dealerships. We're connected by sharing the philosophy that if you treat people with respect and give them good value they will come back and treat you in similar fashion.

DealerPoint: How do you specifically give your guests a memorable experience when they come in contact with the Bergstrom company brand (www.bergstromauto.com)?

Bergstrom: Everyone at Bergstrom Automotive operates by 164 Basics &

Standards from the way we answer the phone, to how we build and maintain our bathrooms, to the way we bake fresh cookies daily for our guests. We have children's playrooms at all of our dealerships that are equipped with hi-tech video game systems and a children's theater. Each of these Standards help give our guests a positive experience when they come in contact with our brand.

DealerPoint: How do employees make a difference in building the Bergstrom brand?

Bergstrom: There are many different ways our teammates build positive images with guests. But one thing we do is give them all carte blanche control of problem solving with guests if the issue involves \$100 or less. No matter what the issue, if it involves making a guest happy and it costs \$100 or less, our teammates know they can make problem solving decisions on their own, on the spot. Our instruction to our teammates is simple, "Just do it right." We want guests to feel that we are responsive and that we'll take care of them courteously, fairly and quickly.

We also base part of the monthly compensation of all our teammates on their dealership's customer satisfaction index scores. This way, each teammate understands the importance of, and is rewarded for, outstanding guest service.

DealerPoint: What branding opportunity is sometimes overlooked?

Bergstrom: In one word – bathrooms. We have 82 bathrooms at our dealerships. We want to make sure people feel like guests in all areas of the dealership. We have fresh flowers in both the men's and women's rooms, and black Kohler-designed premium bath fixtures. We chose black fixtures so that we could showcase our commitment to providing a sparkling clean environment. The doors in our service

departments are stainless steel, echoing that clean quality look found throughout our dealerships.

DealerPoint: What is one of the most important things dealers should consider about creating a better brand?

Bergstrom: Consistency is the key. Don't change your look, name or other components of your image every few months. Keep it simple, keep it the same, and make sure it is deliverable.

DealerPoint: What is one of the most important take away messages in brand-building?

Bergstrom: Become part of your community. Our corporate philosophy is to connect with the communities where we operate. Giving back is an important way to let the community know you care, and it also helps you build a positive community brand.

WISCO | John Hackman

With auto and truck sales at the levels we have seen this year, dealers are looking toward their parts department, service department, and body shop to provide a higher percentage of the profit needed in the dealership. They are looking to cut expenses and save money on their purchases. Smart dealers and managers are also looking for programs to drive more back shop business and to increase customer loyalty. To save money they are consolidating vendors and looking to use centralized purchasing. These are all great ways to increase a dealership's profit.

WISCO members already are part owners in a company that was made to help accomplish these things. WISCO is owned by and operated for its members. All profits of WISCO are paid back to the owners/members in direct proportion to their purchases. This is in contrast to some of WISCO's competitors where the profit from your purchases goes to the ownership of a large chain, or possibly to some Wall Street investors who are invested in the company. Being a true cooperative WISCO exists to serve its members not to profit from them. WISCO is in business to bring quality products at a savings to its membership. With few exceptions, WISCO can supply everything a dealership needs except the vehicles. Whether it is equipment, shop supplies, parts, vehicle accessories, etc. check with WISCO to save money.

In 2008, despite a downturn in our industry, WISCO had a record-setting year. For the first time in our history we went over \$30 million of sales. The profits of over \$771,000 are being paid in June to our customers/owners. WISCO is there to help you survive in tough times. Join your fellow WISCO members and look to use WISCO more than ever.



Sometimes your human resources are all too human.

Every dealership owner or manager faces complex personnel issues sooner or later. Employment laws can protect you, but they can also present risks to your business if proper practices are not followed from the outset.

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To get started, visit the Reading Room on our Web site and look for the article, "Reducing Risk and Abuse of FMLA Leave," in the Automotive Services section. Then call us to discuss your needs.

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Switching gears

LINDA POULSEN RETIRES AFTER 25 YEARS WORKING AT WATDA

There's no doubt about it. As an expert communicator at WATDA, Linda Poulsen firmly understood the power of good communication, and how to translate vision into reality. And at the end of the day, people appreciated that she often went out of her way to go the "extra mile" for them.

And so, on a chilly evening in February, many of Poulsen's WATDA colleagues, friends and family members gathered at the Brink Lounge in Madison to celebrate her accomplishments and her new chapter ahead.

Signs that guided guests to the special event pointed out it was an "enlightenment" rather than retirement party. That sense of humor and upbeat message has been synonymous with Poulsen's long career at WATDA.

With a quarter of a century of association work behind her, Poulsen did indeed "enlighten" countless people along the journey that began in a most auspicious way.

TURNING HEADS

Twenty-five years ago, after graduating from the UW-Madison, Poulsen walked into WATDA's office to interview for the position as Automotive Consumer Action Program (AUTOCAP) manager.

"When I was waiting to be interviewed with David and Gary Williams, fellow staff member Mary Pat said I looked familiar. 'Do you sing in a band?' she asked. When I told her I did, I was surprised to learn that she and her husband were fans of our band," said Poulsen.

Gary Williams wasn't looking for a rock and roll singer, but he hired Poulsen the following day. The rest, as they say, is history.

While Poulsen worked in complaint handling when she interned at the DMV Dealer Licensing Section during her senior year at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, her new position was a jump from government to the business side. "It felt good to help dealers and their customers solve problems," she said.

In 1985, Poulsen became *Dealer Point's* first editor. "When we started publishing *Dealer Point*, I was able to write about the association's good news," she said. "That suited me just fine."

Now about that sense of humor ...

When WATDA "adopted" Rawhide Boys Ranch in New London, and dealers helped the public donate cars and trucks, Poulsen was very much involved.

"One of my fondest memories was going up to Rawhide to meet with Bart Starr and John Gillespie, Rawhide's founder. On the return trip I was with our chairman Jerry Long when we pulled up and saw squad cars flashing lights in front of his showroom," she said. "We were shocked to learn a woman had fallen asleep and drove into a staff vehicle owned by my boss,



David Williams."

It was the same car Williams was expecting Poulsen to return to Madison after her trip to Rawhide. "I was apprehensive to call Dave but Jerry coached me. He said tell Dave you have some good news and some bad news. So I told him the good news was WATDA

had established a new vehicle collection program to benefit Rawhide. The bad news was we received the first vehicle donated to the program, and it was his car!"

Looking back on her work with the association, Poulsen said, "WATDA gave me the chance to meet many automobile and truck dealers. These are the most interesting people in the world. I have made many good friends and I will always be grateful for the opportunities I had to create something new and valuable for our members."

Editor's note: Dealers, friends and colleagues can contact Linda at her new email address, ssuhr@sbcglobal.com. Future inquiries for Dealer Point advertising and editorials should be directed to Julie Farmer at WATDA on behalf of WATDA president Bill Sepic, publisher.

Keep Your Valuable Customer Data Secure with Certified Third-party Integration

A dealership's most important asset is its customer data. Keeping this data secure should be a top priority for any dealership. And as more and more processes become electronic, managing data carries greater importance.

Key vendors provide safe, secure access to crucial applications that help improve the dealership experience, and thus need third-party access to Dealer Management Systems (DMS). Applications such as electronic vehicle registration (EVR), CRM, and inventory management, to name a few, help dealerships improve customer satisfaction and increase efficiencies. Unfortunately many third party application providers access the DMS through a hostile interface often through a password provided by a dealership employee.

The dangers of a hostile interface

The pitfalls of opening up a DMS in this way are many:

- Key customer data is now open for access to or download by unauthorized parties
- The dealership is now exposed to non-compliance with state and federal laws
- Users unfamiliar with operating the DMS risk damaging or losing valuable data from the system.



With so much customer information stored in a DMS, and identity theft a major issue, dealerships are learning that having the most secure integration is vital.

The value of certified integration

The way to achieve both dealership goals—securing customer data and providing safe, secure third-party DMS access—is by using only those vendors certified to integrate with the DMS.

Certified integration preserves the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of dealership information systems, software, data, and network. In addition, certified integration:

- Protects data and documents from disclosure to unauthorized individuals
- Maintains the accuracy, timeliness, and completeness of dealership information
- Assures that data is managed only as authorized by appropriate processes and mechanisms
- Reports back to dealers on third-party activities



More, certified integration can also improve the speed and accuracy of certain dealership processes by improving the "flow" of information between the two systems.

Third-party access programs

Third-party access program providers can help protect your dealership by finding vendors certified to work within your DMS. These providers can also help your existing vendors become certified. If your dealership is using uncertified, or hostile access to your dealer management system, talk to your DMS provider about its third-party access program. A number of DMS providers offer Third Party Access programs including ADP and Reynolds and Reynolds. The time to protect the security of your dealership's key data is now.



Up close with Ken Liesener

BY SHARYN ALDEN

If you've met Ken Liesener, regional vice president of Protective Dealer Sales Group, you already know he is a visionary, strategic thinker, and he knows how to put ideas into action.

But there may be a couple of things you may not know about this auto industry leader.

For starters, he said he can't think of anywhere else he'd rather be during his professional life than standing in the middle of a showroom at an auto dealership.

There's something else that is intriguing about the man who knows something about how mechanical things work. In another life he operated nuclear reactors onboard two different

submarines. For three years, he was also an instructor at Naval Nuclear Power School in the U.S. Navy.

Anyone who has ever been in retail auto sales knows having a top-notch resource that can help you compete better, is like having a windfall. That's particularly crucial today during uncertain economic times.

"At your service" could easily be Ken Liesener's motto. Since he joined the Protective Dealer Sales Group in 2007, he has been working with WATDA to help dealers achieve their finance and insurance goals.

Liesener, known as a visionary and doer, helps WATDA dealerships stay ahead of the pack not just with imagining and planning for the future, but by realizing results through guidance and

well placed strategic ideas.

"One of the most fun and interesting aspects of my job is when I'm interacting with dealers and their staff," he said.

Liesener is quick to point out that while he thoroughly enjoys meeting members of Wisconsin dealerships, these interactions also make his work interesting and challenging.

"Since every dealership is unique, F&I best practices have to be adjusted to achieve maximum F&I performances," he said. "I work with many dif-



ferent dealers and dealership cultures. That combination, of working with a variety of dealerships and modeling F&I best practices to their businesses, makes my work really challenging. It also keeps me on my toes."

STAYING UPBEAT

Liesener is also a "coach" in the sense that he offers encouragement and guidance to those he works with. In today's sluggish economy, with so many consumers behind on home loan payments, and facing mounting credit card debt, and auto dealers inundated with a steady stream of bad economic news and lackluster showroom traffic, Liesener helps keep spirits high.

Standing in the middle of auto showrooms across Wisconsin, Liesener helps dealers and staff members maintain a positive attitude.

He recognizes that it's often challenging for dealers to maintain an upbeat attitude and keep the competitive spirit on fire. But Liesener is a messenger of strong, upbeat images.

"In nearly every interaction I have with a dealer or manager I attempt to convey the idea that to make it to the other side of this downturn, they have to stay positive and maintain the energy in the showroom and service drive. They also need to take advantage of the current climate to hone their skills so that when the eventual turn-around comes they'll be better positioned to take advantage of it," he said.

MONEY CONFERENCES

Last fall, Protective participated in the Money Conferences at Wausau and Appleton.

"We were honored to be invited to participate in the Money Conferences," Liesener said. "We had a great time presenting to the attendees and having an opportunity to provide public education on the process of buying and financing a new or used vehicle."

What was the biggest take-away message from the conferences?

"As I see it, it is the need to continually educate the public about the auto industry," he said. "Many people really fear the process of buying or leasing a vehicle. It's important that we let people know that the high quality dealers we have in WATDA conduct business with honesty and integrity, and they do business that way, every single day."

When Liesener isn't talking to dealers and working in the industry he loves, he can be found spending time with his wife Jennifer. The couple has five children, two in college and three in high school.

Not only does Liesener enjoy working with Wisconsin dealerships, he enjoys a wide range of recreational activities that come with living in Wisconsin.

"I enjoy a wide variety of Wisconsin sports, including hunting, fishing, boating, ATVs and snowmobiling," he said. "Wisconsin is great place to work and play."

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SkillsUSA 2009

The Automotive Service Technology segment of SkillsUSA is one of the most challenging competitions at the event with 43 high school and 17 technical college students participating this year. Over 2,500 students participated in the Expo and various other competitive events offered by other industries.

High school winners were: first – Christopher Zietz, Grafton High School; second – Ian Cummings, Grafton High School; third – John Ramczyk, Washington Park High School. Post-secondary winners were: first – George Heindl, Madison Area Technical College; second – Joshua Steffel, Northeast Wisconsin Technical College; third – Matt Swadley, Madison Area Technical College.

The cumulative time and resources it takes to make the entire SkillsUSA happen can be valued at over \$1 million. The talent gets better each year, largely attributable to progress in raising the bar in technical education in Wisconsin and through the AYES Team Wisconsin initiatives. Next year the SkillsUSA competition will be moving to the Chula Vista Resort in Wisconsin Dells and will be held on April 27-28.



Pictured above are the many volunteers and judges that make this event so successful! We sincerely thank them all for their participation and commitment to students in the auto and truck industry: Marc Alexander, Fred Mueller Automotive; Larry & Karen Ayres, SkillsUSA Co-Chair, Retired Dealer and Foundation Board Member; Bill Balasia, Volunteer; Gary Beier, Foundation Development Director; Bing Bengtson, Volunteer; Ray Bikowski, Snap-on Corporation; Dave Boodle, Motors Service & Supply; Doug Bradley, General Motors Training Center; Jim Capacio, Ford Training Center; David Clarbour, Gateway Horizon Center; Jeff Crooks, Hunter Engineering; Mike Dodson, Fred Mueller Automotive; Chris Douglas, Zimbrick Honda Service Center; Jeff Dowd, Wisconsin AYES Manager; Joe Duane, Auto Wares Bumper-to-Bumper; Paul Elliott, Education Consultant; Bill Fell, Gateway Technical College; Pete Gelhaus, Northcentral Technical College; Mike Heidmann, Fred Mueller Automotive; Ross Hemauer, International Motorwerks; Matt Klug, Northcentral Technical College; Dan Kolasinski, Concours Motors; Craig Kuehl, Ford Training Center; Chryste Madsen, WATDA Membership Services Manager; Julie Olson, Foundation Scholarship Coordinator; Rick Olson, Snap-on Corporation; Dave Payment, Milwaukee Area Technical College; Ray Pedersen, Foundation Executive Director; Ken Phelps, Hunter Engineering; Jessica Rivest, General Motors Training Center; Bob Rudolf, Milwaukee Area Technical College; Ginna Schenk, Education Consultant; Steve Schild, Milwaukee Area Technical College; Tom Schoenmann, Tom's Auto Center; John Silbersack, Milwaukee Area Technical College; Bob & Gale Slane, SkillsUSA Co-Chair and Education Consultant; Ron Smith, Smith's Service Center; Mary Sontag, General Motors; Joe Spitz, Milwaukee Area Technical College; Ursula Szumski, Retired GM; Kevin Torrence, General Motors; Ron Wentzel, Volunteer; Dan Wooster, Education Consultant; and Margie Stewart, Milwaukee Area Technical College.

At left, the "cut-away" Corvette provided by Fox Valley Technical College drew a lot of attention as the contest participants wait to start the competition and test their skills.

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Current and former TMQDA winners discuss strategies for success

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

married 60 years this May.

What does he view as being important to his dealership's longevity and success behind winning two TMQDA awards?

"I have a simple philosophy and it involves two basic principles," Holz said. "Tell the truth and take care of your customers."

Holz Motors advertises its products and services on the Internet as well as through more traditional methods. "We've found many people still prefer to come in and kick the tires. Some things never change," he said. "Even though the Internet is an efficient way to do business, people enjoy talking to people, and we've been doing just that – talking to people – since 1914."

Holz is the proud owner of a 1915 Chevrolet which is used for local Fourth of July parades. That public persona is a lasting reason for the company's legendary success.

"People need to look on the bright side," he said. "When we parade out our vintage car, it does just that. It gives people something to smile about."

FORTY-FIVE YEARS STRONG

Since Craig Ewald, president/CEO of Ewald Automotive Group in Milwaukee was recognized as Wisconsin's TMQDA winner in 2001,

the 45-year-old dealership has continued to grow and expand.

For 24 consecutive years, they have also been among Wisconsin's Top 100 privately-owned corporations. In addition, the Milwaukee Business Journal recognized Ewald Automotive Group as the 26th largest privately owned corporation in Milwaukee. It was also recognized as a Top 10 U.S. finalist for superior customer satisfaction by "Good Housekeeping" magazine.

Since Ewald received the TMQDA award, the dealership has not been standing still. "We've continued to expand our business by acquiring dealerships and diversifying in different locations," he said. The company is committed to the transportation industry from A to Z. In addition to featuring sales of new and used automobiles, trucks and vans, Ewald offers automotive repair services, auto body and paint repair, automobile rental and leasing and sales of RVs including the venerable Airstream motor homes and travel trailers.

The way you conduct business can make all the difference when it comes to ongoing success. Ewald credits his company's strong core values as being paramount to the company's longevity and success. "It's really a simple, guiding principal," he said. "We treat everyone the way we would want to be treated if we were in their shoes. That includes our customers, vendors, and

suppliers – everyone we do business with."

Ewald also said they are very committed to the people who work at the dealership – about 400 employees. "They are our most valuable asset," he said. "We recognize our employees have choices, and they chose to work with us. We don't take that for granted."

During today's challenging times, it's more important than ever to positively motivate your employees. Ewald notes in addition to necessary employee training, the dealership believes in a high level of communication. "When you're committed to that, it leads to a better understanding all around," he said. "Our people have put us in a position of strength," he said.

AN INSPIRED ROAD TO SUCCESS

Vern Trecek, dealer/owner of Trecek Automotive of Portage, Inc., said he received the 2004 TMQDA award late in his career. "I had owned the dealership for over 21 years and was 68 years old when I received the award," he said. "While prestigious awards like this one typically inspire people to do even greater things in the auto industry, it's now my son Dennis' turn. As dealer/principal, he is making some remarkable changes here."

While Trecek is still active in the business, he spends several weeks a year away from the dealership. "In

the last five years, since I received the TMQDA award, Dennis has been continually updating the sales and service departments, and implementing state-of-the-art technology. These are important strides that have led to our continued success," he said.

Before Trecek received the TMQDA award five years ago, the business planted a lot of seeds in the community.

"Our employees played a big part in getting the TMQDA award. We had very good people who worked for us in 2004 as well as today," Trecek said. "Prior to receiving the award, we spent many years earning the trust and loyalty of the community." There were other elements that added to the dealership's success. They expanded the dealership by 12,000 square feet in 1997. "The following year we bought out Leahy Motors, which added Pontiac, Buick, GMC and Cadillac to our lineup," said Trecek.

What is a key take-away message in the years since Trecek received the TMQDA for Wisconsin dealers?

"Our business remains profitable, but in today's business climate, we are not selling as many new cars as we did five years ago," he said. "However, our service, body and parts departments are stronger than ever. In fact, they're outperforming what we did back in 2004 when we were honored with the TMQDA special recognition."

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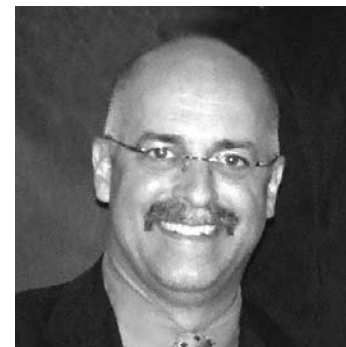
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