

Women Auto Dealers Seek Support from Peers

Dallas TX – As women have broken barriers to enter traditionally male-dominated fields, they have rewritten a page from the “old boys’ network,” practicing structured peer coaching to build their own careers and help other women aspiring to dealer ownership and top management.

Gerry Myers, a pioneer in marketing and selling to women, focused on the automotive industry in the early nineties, working with manufacturers and dealers to appreciate how the needs and buying patterns of women customers and employees differed from those of men.

“Most professional meetings were at least 95% men,” recalls Myers, president and cofounder of Advisory Link, a consulting firm specializing in recruiting, retaining and marketing to women. “Women in the industry needed a forum where they could share experiences and challenges with like-minded colleagues.”

As a result, Myers created a Women’s Automotive Dealer Exec-U-Link drawn from her extensive network of women dealers. The meetings link owners who are involved in the day-to-day operations of the business together to share advice, experiences, expertise and best practices in a venue they can find nowhere else. The group is comprised of up to 12 carefully selected women who are geographically diverse, but who represent all major automotive manufacturers.

“Women Automotive Dealers’ Exec-U-Link is the first venue of its kind, and the only forum for women dealers to work together and exchange ideas,” said Jeanne Brewer, one of the original members and owner of Acura of Glendale and Crown Motor City in Pasadena. “In an industry still dominated by men, it’s helpful to share my ideas with the other women who are involved in the day-to-day operations of their dealerships.”

Brewer said she values the feedback and fresh perspectives she gains from having honest, non-judgmental conversations with peers. “It has been inspiring to hear how other women dealers solve business challenges.”

Often dealerships are family-owned businesses which face unique management and succession issues, as well as the normal challenges of running a profitable business. “A discussion about transitioning the business to our children was especially helpful,” said Owner principal, Carmen Moses, of Ed Moses Dodge dealership in Scottsdale, AZ. “I think everyone in the group took away some new ideas from a brainstorming sessions about customer retention in the service department and an incentive pay plan for service advisors.”

After a hiatus in 2005, the group is resuming their confidential problem-solving sessions and professional camaraderie. The first of three meetings in 2006 will convene in Dallas, Texas, on April 19 and 20.

Myers said the group will add two female General Managers as well as other women owners. By adding additional dealers and general managers the group will gain a slightly different perspective and expand their relationships, as well as enhancing their businesses. More information for female dealers/owners and General Managers on how to participate in the Women’s Automotive Dealers Exec-U-Link is available online at <http://www.advisorylink-dfw.com/womenautodealers.html>.

Networking with women in the industry is just one of the benefits of the Women' Dealers Exec-U-Link groups. Recently quoted in the *New York Times'* article "To Sell a Car That Women Love, It Helps if Women Sell It," Myers referred the journalist to a list of women dealers from her network. According to Brewer, one of her saleswomen who spoke to the *Times* reporter sold a car to a woman who found her as a direct result of the article.

About Advisory Link

Advisory Link (www.advisorylink-dfw.com) provides its clients with customized Women's Advisory Boards and Exec-U-Link peer-coaching groups to solve their marketing, recruitment, retention and succession challenges. The company recognizes the value women bring to the economy and individual businesses as both talented employees and savvy consumers.

Gerry Myers, CEO, president, and co-founder of Advisory Link, has spent years working with corporations on successfully marketing to women. Active in community and civic organizations, Myers is past president of NAWBO and the Automotive Women Network in Dallas/Fort Worth. She has served on the advisory boards of Women's Leadership Exchange, Women's Resource Center of the Dallas Metropolitan YWCA, Women's Link, Girls Inc., and University of North Texas's Department of Marketing & Logistics, to name a few. In addition, she is a graduate of both Leadership America and Leadership Dallas.

Myers is a regular contributor to Dealer Magazine and has written articles and been featured or quoted in numerous national publications including The New York Times, American Demographics, The Financial Post, The Dallas Business Journal, Honolulu Weekly, Toronto Star and Marketing News. In addition, she is the author of *Targeting the New Professional Woman: How to Market and Sell to Today's 57 Million Working Women*.

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