

The Influential Ones

Significant News, Events, and Developments of the Past Week for Automotive Industry Executives

Interview with Sidney Haider

March 17, 2009

Tell us a little bit about Add.On.Auto and what you have to offer?

Add.On.Auto's main goal is to provide a service to the car buyers. To the end user, that means being able to buy accessories at their favorite location in the most visually effective way; all while keeping their purchase financially viable, thereby helping them to make an easier decision. Of course, we also offer dealerships an additional opportunity for profit. By selling accessories they can actually end up having healthier sales departments as profit margins have been dwindling. Accessories offer a third source of revenue besides what the dealerships have normally been used to, which is the front end or the back end. Now accessories offer a third source of revenue for a new car dealer. It also helps the fixed op department to increase their parts sales.

How does Add.On.Auto make it easier for the customers to add the price of those accessories onto the price of a new or used vehicle?

Several ways. First, as most customers finance their vehicles, it is easier for them to make a decision on a product when they see exactly what that product is going to cost them on a monthly basis. Even though it is important to know the overall price of a product, it becomes important to know the monthly price for that accessory. Also, since most of us are emotionally attached to our vehicles, how they look and feel is very important to us. So if a customer is interested in adding an accessory, it becomes even more important as how that accessory is going to look on the car. What we provide is the actual image of the vehicle the customer is buying, and then we provide visuals of the selected accessories on that car so customers can make a better determination when they are choosing a product.

You spoke about emotions. Talk more about the emotion of the purchase for the buyer of that vehicle, and what dealers can do to really sort of capitalize upon the emotion at purchase time.

Absolutely. If anybody had a chance to go to SEMA, they would see that we are a country where cars are still a source of passion. For a lot of us, the car is basically a canvas that we want to paint with our imagination. America has always been the leader when it comes to accessories. We take pride in our cars. For us, a car is not just a commute, it is a statement of who we are. As cars started to look more and more the same, more choices have become available customers want to customize. Because we use our cars for so many different reasons, functionality is a big issue. I may be buying a base trim car, an LE Camry for example, but decide that navigation is important to me. So I want to see what navigation options are available for that car. That's why Add.On.Auto offers a tool that can show you these various options, compare them with other options, and see what they will cost you. If you're financing the vehicle you can see what the payment will be for the accessory. All of which makes it much easier for the buyer to decide to go with accessories that interest them.

Could you give me some success stories for Add.On.Auto?

Absolutely. We have dealerships that are using AOA and are averaging close to \$600 plus per copy. We have a dealership up in Boston, Lundgren Honda, and they have a very solid process in place. They are using Add.On.Auto as a presentation tool in the process. Of course, at the end of the day, the success of a dealership is not going to depend on the tool only, no matter how good the tool is. It ultimately depends on its people – so we help in implementing a good process. The dealerships that do a good job of implementing a strong process are the ones that actually succeed. We are there to help, both as a tool provider and as process trainer. In other words, we provide training to sales people, sales managers, F&I managers, to service managers – almost everybody in the dealership involved in an accessory process, whether it would be sales or installation. When a dealer is properly trained and they buy into the concept of accessory sales, they succeed quite well.

What about visuals, and some of the various product features?

We actually provide about 175 to 200 parts per vehicle, including OEM and aftermarket accessories. We also allow dealers to offer their own packages. Customers are able to see visuals of almost any accessory. Visuals are offered for both exterior and interior products ... we provide



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Sidney Haider is an automotive management professional with over 17 years of experience in retail, marketing, and business development. He is an imaginative and innovative individual with proven management, sales and marketing, and advertising as well as new business development skills. Haider possesses broad based experience in retail automotive Internet sales, telemarketing, and business development. Before coming aboard izmocars, Sidney was the GSM of Keyes Honda, the e-commerce director of Galpin Motors, Inc., the CEO of H-Entertainment, Inc., and President of SoftNet Venture Capital, Inc.

three different angles, a front exterior, a rear exterior and an interior shot of the vehicle. We show all kinds of parts designed for a vehicle, even body kits. So if someone is looking to buy a Honda Civic and they are looking to add a full body kit on it, we show the entire kit and how that car is going to look with that kit.

We provide an administration tool for the dealers so they can easily manipulate and use the software within their environment. As a company, our business model is to provide the best process-driven tool. At the same time, there are some extremely strong features of Add.On.Auto that separate it from everybody else in the market. One of them is strong visuals and imagery of vehicles and parts. Because of our proprietary visual software, we are able to offer 150 to 175 parts visually on the vehicle, right down to trim level. In other words, there isn't anybody else who is able to do this yet. If a customer is buying a Camry, there could be five or six different trims. It could be an LE, a base Camry, an SE Camry or a hybrid Camry. Every car trim looks a little different. We provide exactly the same image as that of the trim so the experience of buying accessories becomes as real as possible.

Secondly, we provide interior imagery and accessories that nobody else has been able to match yet. One reason why we are able to do a lot of this is because we have our own studios. We have a 25,000-square-foot facility in Long Beach. We also have a studio in Detroit. Just recently we opened a studio in Brussels in Europe for the European market. Since we take imagery of all of the vehicles that is real photography, it makes the images sharper and more real. Then we use our specialty software to manipulate those images to put those on the vehicle.

For interior, we offer images that include navigation units, video, dash kits, etc., and how these parts look on the car. A lot of customers have never been able to see how a dash kit could actually change the entire look of the car. Look at it this way: most of us want to make a statement to others on how our cars look different, which is an exterior thing. However, you may also want an interior environment – inside the car – that you find nice and pleasant. So if I'm able to add a dash kit that makes the interior look completely different than it was, and make it closer to my taste, that dash kit will probably grab my attention. We are able to show such images and graphics, even down to such detail that show even how it lines around the air conditioning vents and the stereo panel.

Additionally, AOA offers a complete product solution as it starts, from setting up the deal – which is retrieved from a dealer's DMS. That's yet another feature we offer that nobody else does, with specific finance already terms set up: somebody may be financing a car for five years, another could be financing for six years, yet another could be leasing a vehicle. Based on their financing terms, the presentation customizes itself to each customer individually. We don't believe in using one stick for everybody.