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Sub-Par Need Not Apply

Service, Expertise and Reliability are this Seattle Area Expeditor's Cornerstone

By Todd Ramsey

You need only talk to Walt Ottenad for a few minutes to realize that he 'gets it' when it comes to finding opportunity and striving to be the absolute experts at servicing his customers. Ottenad's company, ADC Mobile of Western Washington state, is the premier expeditor in the state, servicing car dealership clients up and down the Puget Sound area from Bellingham to Olympia.

ADC Mobile is a five-man operation with a depth of knowledge and expertise in aftermarket 12-volt electronics that sets it apart from other companies that deal with car dealerships, which may or may not have a retail store too.

"We don't have a brick-and-mortar retail segment to our business. We're completely mobile with four trucks servicing our dealer clients at

their own facilities," explained Ottenad, who also is one of the company's four veteran installation technicians. Rounding out the four technicians is Sales Manager Bryan Zielinski, who makes the rounds regularly to dealer clients, introducing new products and working on personalized sales and marketing programs for each dealer client to offer electronics to their customers other dealerships can't.

The ADC Mobile team: Walt Ottenad, Ben Thompson, Bryan Zielinski, Kirk Roberts, Brian Baba

"Bryan is very engaged in developing return-on-investment analysis and process training with the dealerships so that each can take full advantage of the profit opportunities we bring to them," said Ottenad. In essence, ADC Mobile is very much a partner with the accessory add-on sales in its clients' dealerships and he'd have it no other way.

ADC Mobile offers virtually all product categories including OEM-style Factory Fit head units from Advent and Rosen; rear-seat entertainment; reverse cameras; sensors and other safety products; iPod/iPhone/USB device integration; remote starters; and a host of other product categories.

"There's virtually nothing electronic we can't offer, but I am particularly critical about what brands and models we sell because it has to be the best in class with high reliability," explains Ottenad.

Anyone dealing with car dealerships knows that pricing must be opportune for both parties and the end user, but most importantly is the quality and reliability of the products sold and installed at the dealership.

"We just won't tolerate any low-end products because it's not worth our reputation," added Ottenad. ADC Mobile is a top seller of many key expeditor-focused brands. Ottenad works closely with his vendor partners to offer feedback about how the product installation, user experience or reliability could be improved. Many companies actually appreciate that level of detail in his feedback, so much that he often sees those very suggestions implemented in revisions of products ADC sells and installs regularly.

PROVEN METHODS

Ottenad and his install team of Ben Thompson, Kirk Roberts and Brian Baba (MECP Master Technician) all come from a strong background in 12-volt retailing, each with 20-plus years of industry experience.

"We don't do drama, we just go to work and do the absolute highest-quality work we know how to do," explained Ottenad.

According to Ottenad, the dealerships look to them regularly for bringing in products and add-ons that keep up with technology and customer needs, even if the car manufacturer is late to the game. "They look to us as the experts," added Ottenad.

The ADC Mobile website is perhaps the company's biggest resource. Besides a fully developed 'front end' with detailed product information, training videos of how to use the products and extensive



ADC Mobile owner, Walt Ottenad, demos online training videos on the ADC Mobile website to Toyota salesmen Dinh Mai (left) and Dale Robertson.



Every ADC Mobile truck has a full mobile office, with navigation, rear camera, Internet access, online scheduling and smartphones for instant communication between every installer.

ADC company information, the website also has a 'back end' that allows dealership clients to log in and display their own product mix with retail pricing so they can use the ADC website as a selling tool in the car sales process.

Ottenad explained, "We allow multiple levels of access so that salesmen can view their own dealership's product offerings with their customer right at their desks, in effect working with them to personalize their car as it's in the sales process."

Sales managers and finance personnel at the dealerships can also have separate, higher-level logins that allow them to see their costs and profit margins for each product ADC offers them.

"We literally have a flexibility to about double their profit margins when compared to selling the OEM accessory equipment, often being a better cost in the process overall," said Ottenad. ADC Mobile has worked diligently with the dealership sales managers to understand where their best profit opportunities are and strives to identify electronics and technology packages where the dealership has the ability to make a significantly better net profit. It's working because, according to Ottenad, August 2011 was ADC Mobile's best month ever in its 12-year history.



Brian Baba works in the back of his mobile workshop.

It doesn't stop there. ADC Mobile offers its demonstration videos as podcasts from Apple iTunes and they produce a quarterly e-newsletter that goes out to all of its clients. They outfit their trucks with an awning to provide cover for the cars while they are working on them. They stock a broad range of products and supplies on the trucks to handle scheduled appointments and the occasional unscheduled service needs. They are doing all the things a top-notch service company should be doing.

HOW TO MAKE EXPEDITING WORK

ADC really shines 'training' the salespeople at the dealerships to present the various electronic products and options.

"We developed what we call cheat sheets for the salespeople, which are really nothing more than a quick reference sheet of the vehicles sold at that dealership and the popular electronic options for those vehicles that make the most sense, along with retail pricing," said Ottenad.

By utilizing these informational sheets at one local Chevrolet dealership in particular, ADC Mobile turned their profits around in about 45 days by helping add an additional \$40,000 in gross accessory sales dollars at a net profit margin of about 40% to the dealership.

"This dealership has seven sales people, so when we were able to demonstrate to all of them the value of working the program consistently by showing these

top electronic accessory packages to every single customer, it immediately made a huge difference in their business. We're truly their partner, not just a vendor," explained Ottenad. Stories like that compliment Ottenad's philosophy of 'making it easy' for dealership clients to do business with ADC Mobile.



Bryan Zielinski presents the ADC Mobile 'cheat sheets' to Bob Bridge Toyota General Manager Greg Kessler.

Getting into car dealerships for other retailers and new expeditors is not necessarily the money under-the-table, back stabbing, underhanded game some think it is. In fact, Ottenad claims that more and more of the dealer principals he talks to actually dislike any spiffs from vendors or under-the-table deals.

"We really sell our services, expertise and reliability first," said Ottenad. He said that has been a cornerstone to their success with long-term dealership clients. Of course, presentation and professionalism in that equation is everything. More and more Ottenad feels like the ADC Mobile business philosophies help the aftermarket to appear in a positive light in the eyes of the dealerships they service, a relationship often in the opposite light with many brick-and-mortar retailers or less scrupulous expeditors.

Ottenad encourages anyone in pursuit of doing business with a car dealership to approach them with a business-partner mentality and really work to understand their needs with profit and electronic accessories that make sense for them.

"Often I find we are the ones to introduce them to products and technologies they had no idea they could offer. That's how we are continually validating ourselves as experts."

ADC Mobile is focused on providing what they call Gold Plated Service to their clients and, by the looks of how the company continues to add dealership clients and grow, they are living the philosophy every day.