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Significant Automotive Industry News for Dealer Principals, General, Sales, & Service Management of Dealer Operations



## Frontline Ready

This Week: Sean Bradley



**Sean Bradley**  
CEO  
Dealer Synergy

[www.dealersynergy.com](http://www.dealersynergy.com)

**Sean V. Bradley** has over 8½ years of automotive experience. He is currently the Founder and CEO of two companies, **AutoCreditApproved.com Inc.**, a Special Finance lead generating company; and **Dealer Synergy Inc.**, an international training and consulting agency, focused on Internet Sales and Business Development.

### What do your dealer clients tell you are their biggest concerns today?

Many are concerned about the economy. Consumers in transition have higher priorities than buying vehicles. Finding a job or a place to live are high up on their list of things to do before considering that new SUV. Problems in the housing markets and election year issues also make people nervous. In reality I do not think it matters who wins the next election, but we just want to get it behind us so we can move forward.

It's this uncertainty that triggers fear in many dealers. They need to see the opportunities that are available to them during these times. This can be a great time to rebuild and fortify the business strategy while investing in dealership employees for the long haul. Now is not the time to cut back on training, education and mentoring programs, but exactly the time to invest heavily so we are all prepared for the

renewal that will be here within the next nine months to a year.

### What do the training programs offered out there look like?

There is no shortage of training solutions available in our industry, and there are certainly the hot "flavors of the day" programs, but the value both short- and long-term of some programs is questionable at best. Just as there are various cultures in dealerships and ways of doing business there are old school training regimens that are still talking about techniques used 20 years ago. They tout controlling the customer, misleading them and tricking them into buying items they do not need and very often can't afford. Lots of other training is available including the manufacturer programs, in-house dealership programs, online "learn-at-your-own-speed" programs, and the onsite multi-day hands on training. They all work to some degree, but for long term results the dealership management team needs to inculcate a daily discipline that insures everyone is responsible and accountable for their activities and results.

### Are dealers buying into that philosophy?

Too often they accept mediocrity. I know a lot of people who don't lift weights because they're heavy. But it's that effort that others are unwilling to do that will make all the difference in someone's success. It takes a dedication and a proactive action plan to achieve great results. I also feel that domestic stores really need to develop some bench strength in their sales efforts and in building the skills of their teams. Their product is improving in quality to compete with European and Asian brands, now they need to work on the customer experience in their stores. Surveys con-

tinue to show that consumers want a smooth, worry-free purchase transaction and that they are not hesitating to leave the stores that do not provide that experience. Having a trained and focused team with a clear way to measure those results will insure steady sales growth and less employee turnover in the dealership.

### What is Dealer Synergy doing to help their dealer clients in this area?

We start by analyzing their current situation and "start with the end result in mind." We completely create a custom program to fit the needs and culture of the dealership. What works in New York City is not going to play in Grapevine, Texas. So we work with our clients to identify their culture, wants, needs, and expectations while taking into account their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT). Our team also helps craft a long-term plan that the dealership can implement to insure everyone stays on track. We help them develop the daily discipline to make sure everyone is working on the items that will provide the most value to the store.

### Can dealerships on a budget still afford a quality training program?

That's the beauty of many solutions today. They often combine in-store training with on-line follow-up courses and videos to reinforce the behaviors and activities shown during training. When a dealership spends \$20,000 on an ad campaign or weekend tent sale then balks about a \$5,000 to \$10,000 training program for their sales and management team, it tells me they are looking to treat the symptoms and not cure the disease. Smart dealerships know how important training is and incorporate a budget for it every year.