

DEALERS IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Pohanka Joins NADA Executive Committee

As IT Chairman, Goal is to Improve Efficiency, Reduce Costs

NADA Chairman Alan Starling has appointed Metropolitan Washington NADA Director Geoffrey P. Pohanka as chairman of



Geoff Pohanka

NADA's Information Technology (IT) Committee, a position that puts him on the influential NADA Executive Committee. Pohanka will also continue to serve as vice chairman of the Industry Relations Committee, a post he held last year as well.

"It's an honor to be appointed to chair a committee after only a year as an NADA director. Information technology is an area of increasing importance to all dealerships and a high priority at NADA," said Pohanka, president of the Pohanka Automotive Group, Marlow Heights, Md.

The primary responsibility of the IT Committee is the STAR (Standards for Technology in Automotive Retail) program, a joint venture between dealers, manufacturers, computer vendors and dealership service providers to develop and promote voluntary IT standards that will improve communications between dealers and manufacturers. "The benefit to dealers will be to reduce

our time, effort and costs and make communications more flexible and effective," said Pohanka.

Through The Cobalt Group, NADA helps dealers create or upgrade their Web sites to steer Internet traffic to their dealerships, and invites more dealer input to IT system development decisions. There are also special purchase programs

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McInerney, Smith Take Office at AIADA

AIADA introduced its new president, Marianne McInerney, 2003 Chairman Tim Smith, and a new slate of officers at the association's annual meeting in San Francisco on Feb. 3, 2003.

"This is the beginning of an exciting new time for AIADA," said Jamie Aufferberg, outgoing AIADA Chairman. "We look forward to new leadership that will add even more value to membership in this organization and further enhance opportunities for our dealers."

McInerney has over 17 years experience in managing and directing operations, com-



From left, 2003 AIADA Chairman Tim Smith and new President Marianne McInerney with outgoing Chairman Jamie Aufferberg

munications, development and government affairs programs within nonprofit, corporate and government sectors. Most recently, she served as the execu-

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through Compaq and Gateway computers, NADA's online dealer and inventory locators, and informative resources to guide dealers in selecting IT products and services.

NADA's IT initiatives have already resulted in valuable tips for dealers on topics such as hardware, e-mail, voice and data communications, maintenance and support, training and dealer system providers, with links to IT sites that provide a wealth of information to dealership staff who support IT systems.

The Information Technology Committee encourages dealer input. Comments and questions about NADA's IT activities should be sent to IT@nada.org, or call (703) 821-7270.

2003 NADA Officers

NADA's 2003 officers were installed at the recent NADA Convention in San Francisco. Joining Chairman Alan Starling are: Vice Chairman Charley R. Smith, Watson Truck & Supply Inc., Hobbs, NM; Secretary Raymond J. Ciccolo, Village Automotive Group, Boston, MA; Treasurer Jack Kain, Jack Kain Ford, LM & Nissan, Versailles, KY; Immediate Past Chairman H. Carter Myers III, Colonial Auto Center, Charlottesville, VA.

Other Executive Committee members are John E. Tulley II,

vice chairman, Region I, Tully Buick/Pontiac/GMC/BMW/Mazda/VW, Nashua, NH; Bert Allen, vice chairman, Region II, Bert Allen Pontiac/GMC Truck Inc., Gulfport, MS; William J. Adamson, vice chairman, Region III, Adamson Motors, Inc., Rochester, MI; Richard L. Morrison, vice chairman, Region IV, Eero VW of Anchorage, Alaska and Stuart Hollingshead, American Truck Dealers chairman, BridgeHaven Truck Sales, Milford, CT.

In addition to IT Chairman Pohanka, other committee chairmen on the Executive Committee include: Larry T. Brown, Dealership Operations, Star Toyota, Merrillville, IN; Fritz Hitchcock, Government Relations, Puente Hills Ford, City of Industry, CA; Wesley L. Lutz, Industry Relations, Extreme Dodge/Dodge Trucks, Jackson, MI; W. Carroll Smith, Public Affairs, Monument Chevrolet, Pasadena, Texas; and Dale Willey, NADA/ATAE Committee, Dale Willey Automotive, Lawrence, KN.

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tive director of the National Business Travel Association. Prior to that, McInerney served as director of public and media relations at several national non-profit organizations including the United Way of America. McInerney also served in the Bush Administration as press officer for the

Peace Corps and on the Federal Housing Finance Board.

A graduate of the University of Dayton, McInerney follows Walter Huizenga, who serves as president through March 31, 2003.

A third-generation dealer, Tim Smith is a BMW and Toyota dealer in Canoga Park, CA. A graduate of Santa Clara University, Smith has been an AIADA director since 1995 and currently serves as president of the Greater Los Angeles New Car Dealers Association; He also was chairman of the BMW National Dealer Forum, president of the California Motor Car Dealers Association, and three-time president of the Southern California BMW Dealers Advertising Association.

Smith received the Time Magazine Quality Dealer Award in 1992 and the AIADA All-Star Dealer Award in 1996, which recognizes dealers for their community service and civic volunteerism.

In addition to Smith, AIADA installed the following 2003 executive officers: Chairman-Elect Buzz Rodland, Rodland Toyota/Daewoo in Everett, WA; and Secretary/Treasurer John Hawkins, Great Metro Autogroup in Montclair, CA.

During its annual meeting, AIADA's "Top Gun" award was presented to dealer Mike Dever for his lobbying efforts. Industry veteran Yale Gieszl, vice-chairman and senior adviser of Toyota, received the David H. Gezon Lifetime Achievement Award.

ART Study Shows **94% Satisfied with Dealers**

New car dealers can give themselves a pat on the back. A new study finds that a major reason U.S. consumers continue to buy new vehicles at a near-record pace despite tough economic times is a growing satisfaction with automobile dealers and the car buying experience. In fact, high customer satisfaction levels were found to be prevalent across all ethnic and gender categories and especially strong among women buyers.

The new national opinion poll conducted by Wirthlin Worldwide for Automotive Retailing Today (ART), a coalition that includes all major automobile manufacturers and dealer organizations, showed that, overall, 94 percent gave *thumbs up* to the purchase experience.

The survey also showed:

- 95 percent of women are satisfied by their experience, besting men who reported 91 percent positives, disproving the myth that women are intimidated by the buying experience.
- Asians have the highest satisfaction level with their dealership experience (96%), followed by Caucasians and African-Americans (each 94%), and Hispanics (90%).
- Interviews with 100 normally skeptical automotive journalists found 52 percent today believe that consumers would report a positive new car buying or leasing experience – up considerably from 39 percent in 1998, which shows their attitude is improving.
- When asked to list their top “likes” involving the purchase process, most consumers listed the car (24%); sales/service (11%); price (8%); and ease of purchase (6%).

ART's findings track with other recent industry research, including the American Customer Satisfaction Index released in August 2002 by the University of Michigan Business School, which found consumers are more satisfied with their autos than they are with most other major products. J.D. Powers & Associates also found “very, very high levels” of satisfaction with the industry overall, as well as high marks for vehicles and the sales process at dealerships.

The survey included 1,112 interviews with

consumers who have purchased or leased a new vehicle within the last 18 months, including 253 minorities. In addition to consumers who purchased or leased new vehicles recently and the news media, 400 dealership managers were polled to ascertain their views of the process. ART conducted nearly identical surveys in 1998 and 2000, documenting significant improvement in each. For a full report, visit www.autoretailing.com.

AFSAEF, NADA Publish Financing Brochure

As mentioned in last week's Bulletin, dealers will soon be receiving a new brochure to help educate consumers on the basics of vehicle financing. Introduced at the recent NADA convention, “Understanding Vehicle Financing,” is a joint effort by NADA and the American Financial Services Association Education Foundation (AFSAEF), prepared in cooperation with the Federal Trade Commission (FTC). It provides information to help consumers learn about dealership financing and evaluate their own financial situations before financing a new or used vehicle, including:

- A checklist of recommended actions to take before, during and after visiting the dealership;
- A worksheet to determine a monthly payment amount that the borrower can afford;
- A worksheet to allow borrowers to compare terms from up to three creditors;
- A glossary of common financing terms; and
- A list of federal laws regulating dealership financing and leasing.

NADA will distribute copies of the brochure to its 20,000 members later in February. AFSAEF will offer the brochure through personal finance workshops, trade show exhibitions, partnerships with community organizations, links to the Web sites of AFSA's auto finance members and its own Web site. The FTC will include the brochure among a list of consumer resources posted on its Web site (www.ftc.gov).

Consumers and dealers may obtain a free copy of “Understanding Vehicle Financing” by downloading it from AFSAEF's Web site (www.afsaef.org), calling the Foundation's toll free phone number (888-400-2233) or by sending a request to: AFSAEF, 919 18th Street, NW, Dept. UVF, Washington, DC 20006. Organizations interested in bulk orders should contact the Foundation or visit its Web site for pricing infor-

FOOTNOTES:**What if Dealership Guard & Reserve Employees are Called Up?**

With many already being called back to active duty, dealerships with essential employees who are members of the Reserve and National Guard are reminded that they should have a plan in place to work through any potential disruption that may result from a broad call-up to active duty. To assist in those efforts, the U.S. Small Business Administration's Office of Veterans Business Development has created a Web site where small businesses with key employees who are members of the Reserve or National Guard can find relevant information on SBA programs and services aimed at reducing the problems caused by the loss of one of these employees. The Web site is www.sba.gov/reservists/.

Panoz Joins DC's Cadillac Grand Prix, June 27-29

The Panoz Motor Sports Group, promoter of some of the world's most successful professional sports car racing events, has joined with the event organizers for the second annual Cadillac Grand Prix of Washington, D.C. The event, featuring the American Le Mans Series, will be held June 27-29 on a purpose-built racing circuit constructed in the north parking lots adjacent to RFK Stadium. The event will be televised by CBS Sports (live) and Eurosport.

The Panoz Motor Sports Group (PMSG), which includes many of the motorsports holdings of entrepreneur Don Panoz, is best known for promoting The Mobil 1 Twelve Hours of Sebring at Sebring International Raceway and Petit Le Mans at Road Atlanta. PMSG also owns the Sebring and Road Atlanta racing facilities, as well as Mosport International Raceway near Toronto, the Panoz Racing School and the American Le Mans Series.

"The Washington, D.C., event set the standard for other events to follow in its inaugural year," said Panoz. "We look forward to working with the DC Sports and Entertainment Commission and others in the District to add to the success and take the event to even higher levels."

Northwood to Offer Accounting, Financial Statement Courses in March

Northwood University will be offering two classes in March: Automotive Dealership Accounting, March 3-7, 2003, and Financial Statement Analysis, March 13-14. For more information and registration, contact Susan Woodcock, Northwood Continuing Education Department, (800)

Staying Ahead...

As you journey through life take a minute every now and then to give a thought for the other fellow. He could be plotting something.

-- Hagar the Horrible

Enclosure

ASE Tech News

**ASE****Certification Tests**

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