



Raving Fans

The traits of a positive dealership culture

by: Robert C. Goldberg, BTA General Counsel

I had the honor of joining The Patriot Pack for nine days in June during its journey from Scottsdale, Arizona, to Richmond, Virginia. The focus of The Ride is to honor our military and raise awareness for The Jillian Fund. Veterans who served, gave their lives for our freedom and remain missing in action deserve our full support. Please consider posting any open positions you have in the VETech Career Center on the BTA website at www.bta.org/VETech. The Jillian Fund provides support for families with children facing serious health challenges and it deserves our support as well.



One of the most rewarding aspects of The Ride is visiting dealerships along the way. Dealership team members host us daily, provide a rousing send-off and greet us at the conclusion of more than 2,500 miles. The dealerships vary in size, but they have a commonality — each has a unique culture that binds its team members together. Each also demonstrates its commitment to the community and the industry through generous donations to The Jillian Fund.

Dealership culture has been a focus at recent BTA events. Hearing about a company’s culture is one thing, but experiencing and implementing a positive culture is another. Positive culture radiates from the top and extends throughout the team, permeating the organization. The entire team understands the importance of the company’s name, reputation and branding. Everything done is aimed at maintaining high standards and raving customers. People prefer to do business with people they like. A positive culture translates to customer loyalty, overcoming competitive pricing, offers and alternatives. In a company with a positive culture, team members respect each other, customers and suppliers, and treat them like family.

The dealerships we visited had passionate employees who looked forward to coming to work and appeared to be having fun doing so. An important component to a positive culture is employing the right individuals. At Datamax in Little Rock, Arkansas, applicants go through multiple interviews, all of which emphasize the traits of a successful team member. During the final interview with the company’s president, Barry Simon, the applicant is presented with “The Datamax Little Blue Book.” The book lays out the company’s philosophy and the importance of the company principles. “The Datamax Little Blue Book” reflects the company’s culture and commitment to

a unified mission — creating raving fans. It is not satisfactory to simply add end users; the goal is to cultivate raving fans.

Outstanding dealerships invest in their communities. Team members are encouraged to be involved in community organizations, projects and activities. Management recognizes the need for a balance of both work and personal time.

Younger employees expect this balance, rejecting the premise that the “breadwinner” be devoted only to his (or her) job. Compensation and benefits do not determine which position an applicant accepts. Today’s potential employees look to the culture of the business and try to see how they will fit into it. An existing culture that fits the applicant is a perfect match.

Today’s employees also seek recognition for a job well done. As such, frequent company meetings where their devotion to the culture and philosophy of the business are recognized are a valuable benefit for them.

At many of our stops, it was clear by the attendance of top industry executives that successful dealerships partnered with their vendors. Adversarial relationships are contrary to company principles.

Culture words and phrases are repeated often and serve as guides for employees. Some examples of culture words/phrases:

- Honor
- Commitment to philosophy
- Informed
- Solve
- Be gung-ho
- Make decisions
- Have the right to disagree
- Respect
- A positive, united position

The importance of a dealership’s culture cannot be overlooked. Product no longer differentiates a dealership, but culture clearly does. Identify and visit a dealership with a positive team culture to experience the atmosphere. Lead by example and your raving fans will remain loyal and highly satisfied. ■

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