

Find the Key to Success in Niche Markets – Page 3

# FORD PRO

The Official Magazine of the National Truck Club

Volume 1, Issue 1

## National Truck Club Explodes!

Page 6



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## WINTER CHILL

Make Your Cold Calls HOT! Page 8



Custom House Publishers, 6797 N. High St., #213, Worthington, OH 43085

# Welcome to the National Truck Club!

Welcome to the first edition of *Ford Pro*, the official magazine of the National Truck Club! The magazine will serve as the primary voice for the club, featuring interesting articles about sales, product specifications and club events and notes.

When we started the Northwest Ford Truck Club in April 2003, we wondered, "What might go wrong?" Would the old-timers shun it? Perceive it as a threat? Would vendors get behind it and promote it? Would people be willing to travel an hour or more just to come to a meeting? We were nervous, but quickly realized the potential of such an organization.

Today, nearly every dealership within 75 miles of Seattle has sent a representative to our meetings. In fact, at least two dealerships from Portland (160 miles) and one from Spokane (280 miles) regularly attend.

If you ask people why they make the drive, they will likely tell you that they come to learn, for the camaraderie and for some, it's an excuse once a year to play golf! All are valid reasons, but the primary goal is for us to share the best practices and learn from one another; I think that mission has been accomplished.

Ford's corporate commercial-truck folks have been very willing to attend to give us their perspectives on the truck business. Vendors visit to share the latest news on their products, along with an occasional spiff. And, usually over dinner, we get better acquainted, and share challenges and victories.

If you don't belong to a club, or simply don't attend the meetings, you're missing out on a great opportunity to "sharpen the sword."

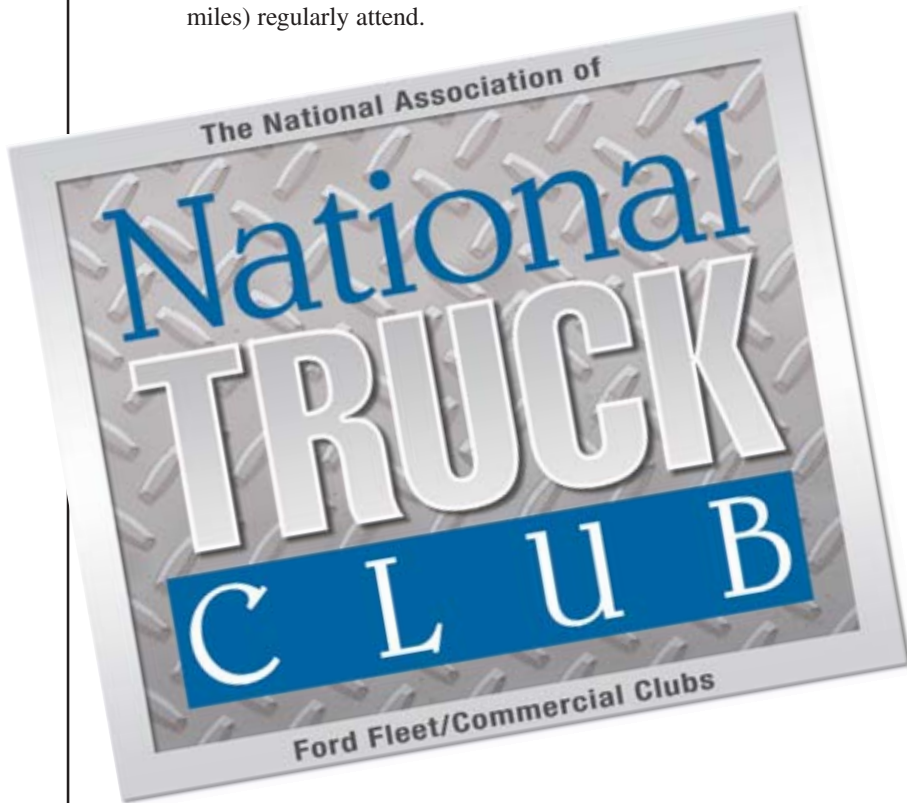
Because, you see, we are not competitors—we're on the same team! No matter where you are, there's simply no excuse for you not to attend. If you are too far away to be active in an area truck club, an Internet Truck Club is being assembled that will give you a forum to discuss and build your business through virtual interaction with peers.

That's what the club is all about: team building and a sense of belonging to something that's big and getting bigger. Welcome to The Club.

**Joe Hughes**

Scarff Ford Fleet Manager  
Founding member of the Northwest Truck Club  
and the National Truck Club

*We'd like to thank Custom House Publishers, Inc., our National Truck Club title sponsor, for making the Truck Club and Ford Pro magazine a reality. Custom House produces personalized publications for many of our member dealerships, each of which has gotten fantastic results. I hope you will take the time to visit Custom House's Web site at [www.drivinghome.com](http://www.drivinghome.com) and consider using the company's services. – JH*



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**ON THE COVER: The 2008 Ford Superduty**

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# Get Ahead with Niche Markets

by Joe Hughes

The opportunities in fleet/commercial sales are everywhere. In fact, there are so many opportunities, it's difficult to focus energy on just one. Where do you start? Where do you begin to focus on the best opportunities?

Everyone dreams of scoring the big 20-truck-per-year account, and at a good gross to boot! Realistically, though, how do you go about getting even the first 20-per-year account? Chances are, a prospect is already satisfied with his or her current supplier. The best chance you have is to let the buyer know you are there, that you are interested and that you are the kind of professional the buyer would like to work with. Then you wait for your opportunity when the prospect's current supplier (or his brand or service department) makes a mistake.

But, again realistically, what are the chances that you are going to gain a client like this today? And what are the chances that you will get enough of these clients to be able to generate a good living from the golf course? Slim. Very slim.

Here are just three of the niches that can help your business grow.

## Specialty Vehicles Niche

While you are looking for standard clients, you also need to develop niche markets. My friend John works in northern California. He looked around the dealerships in his area, and realized that nobody was stocking service bodies on the back of F250/350 pickups, or even on F350 cab/chassis.

John, of course, also noted that there was a sizeable number of businesses that drove these types of tools. So, his dealership brought in one of each, and he became well versed in service bodies. He then drove these units to various businesses in a 20-mile radius of his office, with leave-behinds.

My friend went in unannounced and asked the receptionist the following easy questions:

- "Is there anyone interested in seeing the latest service bodies?"
- "Can I leave some information for the decision-maker for the next time he is in the market for another service body?"
- "What is the name of that person, so I can put it in my file?"
- "Is he the owner, equipment manager, general manager?"

John's final comment was, "Thank you! Here's the information and my card."

John's advantage was that he had both something the customer could see and something his customer could purchase immediately. New contracts generate immediate need, and so do accidents! He had outwitted his competitors by supplying quickly what they could not.

## Mobility Niche

A niche that our dealership developed very early is helping customers with mobility issues. This works well in concert with dealerships because they typically don't want retail people tied up with the time-intensive sales. The dealership is happy to just turn these customers over to me when they come to the dealership.

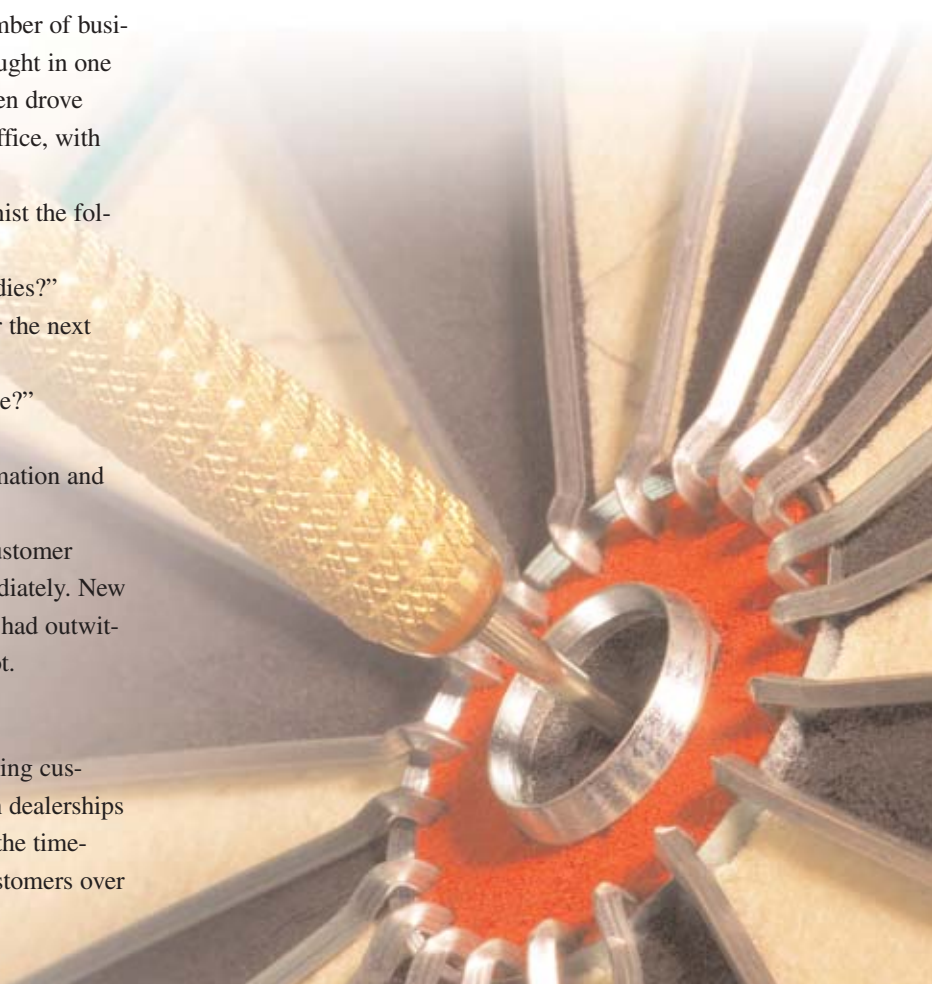
Early on, I took the opportunity to talk to three businesses in our area that install mobility equipment in vehicles. And now, if they have a customer who comes in wanting a Ford, they send them to me because I have demonstrated that I have both the knowledge and the patience to successfully work with their clients.

## X-Plan Niche

Take the initiative to go online and get a printout of fleet accounts that have branch offices in your area. While the company's home office might order its business vehicles from the dealer located nearest the home office, its employees can purchase on the X-Plan! Go to the office with a vehicle that has great programs currently in place with Ford. Work up an X-Plan price for the vehicle you've brought with the rebates reflected and a payment amount (OAC) with 10 percent down.

Leave a brochure and the work-up stapled inside it, along with your business card. Explain that this is just an example of the opportunities for employees on the X-Plan: that the plan is available on virtually every Ford product! Who do you think they'll call? And if they are empowered to buy their own vehicles in the field, again, whom do you think they will call?

Use niche marketing to build your business while you also wait for bigger business to come around. And while you're waiting to catch that trophy bass, remember there are plenty of small fish out there to keep you well fed! ■



# Bold Moves Come to Grassroots —Bet on it!

by Joe Hughes

At the grassroots of Ford sales, we have the opportunity to make our businesses grow at a phenomenal rate in light of the great leadership that Ford Trucks exert in the marketplace. In spite of what the national media expresses, we veterans know a few things.

## Built Ford Tough and Here to Stay

Ford Motor Company is more than 100 years old. That doesn't mean that it acts like the 100-year-old who Willard Scott acknowledges on the "TODAY Show!" Of course, anyone (or any company) who manages to stay viable in this great country for that long has done a lot of things right! But, a seasoned company as actively viable and one that has kept up with change as well as Ford is very rare. You can bet on Ford!

Years ago, when I was new to the Seattle area, someone anonymously put up a billboard, saying "Will the last person leaving Seattle please turn out the lights?" It was 1970, and Boeing had just laid off tens of thousands of workers, and the entire economy in the Pacific Northwest was bleak. But they've turned it around.

Last year was another banner year in Boeing aircraft sales. The company met the challenge of Airbus, an importer to the U.S. economy, and is now also taking back market share of other U.S. businesses, which are no longer in the commercial-airline industry. Seattle's economy is as robust as ever, and, now, no one is betting against Boeing!

In 2006, Ford hired Alan Mulally, Boeing's former Commercial Aircraft president, to take the helm. Mulally has the great experience of knowing that a company's economy ebbs and flows, but that the opportunity for growth is profound. The lights are on and the future is bright. I'm betting on Ford.

## Driving the Industry

U.S. Ford dealerships sell the finest light- and medium-duty pickups and trucks in the world, and have for more than 30 years, with no signs of letting up. Foreign manufacturers have introduced light-duty pickups with mixed results. We'll see how reliable these are after 10 years of abuse by American drivers. You can bet on Ford!

A few years ago, a national competitor introduced a new diesel (actually an import) to varied reviews. The competitor installed a famous-brand transmission (same name, lighter version). We'll see how reliable these are after 10 years of abuse by American drivers. Bet on Ford.

The other major national competitor announced its re-entry into the class-three market at the National Truck Equipment Association show in March 2006. The message was, to paraphrase, "We're back as the leader [their words] in the cab/chassis market." This was after it had pulled out of the market for a few years because, well, the product just didn't sell. The competitor didn't have, nor does it presently have, a class-four, class-five or greater cab/chassis. No matter how hard competitors have tried in the past 30 years, Ford remains the leader. I'm betting on Ford.

If I were handicapping the field, I think I'd throw my money behind the industry's only real leader. And here are a few reasons why.

## A Unique Position = A Tight Grip

A significant portion of the commercial-truck business flows through the dealer network, one, two and three at a time. In light of all the pricing information that is available on the Internet, Ford work trucks enjoy a unique position when price is the issue. The cab/chassis is an incomplete truck, so the specialist (you, the fleet and commercial specialist) is needed to help the end-user get the exact vehicle to meet his unique demands.

## Fleet and Commercial-Sales Specialists

Our business is somewhat removed from the rest of the dealership. We are specialists. And, we are the pulse of the business at our dealership, and across the country.

## Value Advantage

With the rare exception, when a customer opts for a different brand, it is based on price, not value. It's not that the other brand will do more, carry more or last longer: it is cheaper. The customer fails to see the value that is in the marrow of Ford trucks. There will always be something out there cheaper, but rarely anything better (given the last 20- to 25-year history).

## Where the Rubber Meets the Road

Fleet and commercial-sales specialists are unique enough that we need each other to help us build our business. For the most part, we are not competitors.

Given the opportunity, most of us help one another. We help each other figure out, for example, how to communicate with Ford through CONCEPS; how to figure a rational cost of a vehicle to



develop competitive yet profitable pricing; how to source the upfits that meet the needs of our customer, and have them installed efficiently and economically; and how to get it all financed through Ford Credit.

Ford Truck Clubs throughout the country have served to bring fleet and commercial specialists together. The Northwest Ford Truck Club in Seattle was founded in 2003, and regularly has representatives from 30 dealerships attend meetings.

In March 2006, at the NTEA Convention in Atlanta, representatives from 12 regional Ford Truck Clubs met to discuss how to make meetings more effective in educating and connecting Ford fleet and commercial salespeople and the key vendors. Clubs from as far away as Los Angeles, Boston, Seattle and Houston were there! The meeting was such a positive force that this year, the National Truck Club has invited representatives from all 18 known truck clubs to the Mid-America Truck Show in Louisville next month.

The National Truck Club is betting on Ford and Ford trucks in a big way! Together, we are making a big difference in the continued success of this fine company and this great product. Together with Ford Motor Company, we are continuing to lead in providing quality product that American businesses need for a great future. Bet on Ford! ■

# BOLD MOVES

## in Cyberspace

The National Truck Club is addressing areas of the country that do not yet have a club. With the funding from upfitters and supporters of the club's programs, volunteers will be available to help people interested in organizing clubs in markets, such as Minneapolis, St Louis, Kansas City, Cleveland and Cincinnati (the largest markets that do not currently have an active club). Experience of the existing clubs tells us that if there are 25 to 30 dealerships within an hour's travel time to a central location (where they can have a dinner meeting), that a club is a viable possibility.

In addition to helping grow the individual regional clubs, for fleet and commercial specialists who do not live in an area where a club is viable, the Internet Truck Club is being put together. It is still in the formative stages, but will enable all specialists to:

- Have a unique, independent email address (like JoeHughes@FordPros.com).
- Log in and ask questions (and share answers) in a bulletin-board program.
- Host your own Web page to build relationships by telling your clients a bit about yourself.
- Obtain a free copy of "Ford Fleet Manager's Start-up Guide," a 112-page guide written to help the new fleet/commercial specialist.
- Distribute newspapers periodically (such as this one) at a very affordable cost, getting upfitters (and Ford through BPN) to participate.

Eventually, Internet Truck Club members will also be able to:

- See a "walk-around" to familiarize you with unique chassis upfits, such as refrigerated vans. You will then be able to print out a checklist of questions you need answered from your client in order to get a complete estimate from an upfitter, without having to call the customer back and ask one more question, which always makes me feel like I am wasting their time (and makes me look like I don't know what I am talking about!). Also, based on the answers given, you'll be able to get the upfitters input as to any special cab/chassis specs that should be included in the quote.
- Participate in a 20-Group, which will give you the opportunity to open up and talk freely with other professionals who would never be perceived as competitors: no two members of a group will be from the same state or located within 150 miles of one another.
- Talk to a Fleet Coach; ask about anything that helps you understand the business better.



# Truck Club Explodes!

by Kaitlin Kraft

After decades of seclusion, area truck clubs have just begun to communicate between regions. With the introduction of the National Truck Club, members hope that it will be easier for Ford dealership fleet and commercial employees to share information across the country.

“Various areas already had local truck clubs—there were 17 clubs previously started that Ford knew about. Some clubs had even been around for 15 to 20 years, but they were isolated from one another and didn’t have a system for communicating, to help their individual clubs implement ideas that had served members elsewhere,” says Joe Hughes, fleet manager at Scarff Ford (Auburn, Wash.), and acting president of the newly-formed National Truck Club.

Hughes began calling officers of area truck clubs around the country, to see if there was common interest in getting together with other club officers to share ideas that might make their respective clubs more effective.

Last March at the National Truck Equipment Association (NTEA) Convention in Atlanta, truck club members from 12 markets met for the first time. Everyone was assembled for the same reason—first, to discuss ideas for making their clubs better, and then to see a show (the NTEA) that was important to his or her business. Hughes reports the 12 regional clubs indicated an interest in forming an ongoing association dedicated to the common goals discussed.

The new members spent a full day together talking about their clubs, and ended up developing a natural affinity for one another. That same week, a tour was arranged at the Ford Motor Company Plant in Atlanta, where new club members got to know each other—and their field—a little better.

A few months later, Hughes received phone calls from club officers all over the country asking when the next meeting would

be—from there, it looks to be an annual event. “I thought a formal annual meeting would be beneficial. There is a fair number of major metropolitan areas that

Everyone was assembled for the same reason ... to discuss ideas for making their clubs better ...

don’t have clubs yet, and many dealerships could benefit from them. The National will help them, if they ask for it,” Hughes adds.

Today, the National Truck Club’s goals have stayed the same. The members help the existing truck clubs become more effective in serving the needs of their members, and support the development of truck clubs wherever there’s interest in starting one. “It’s important to give others the opportunity to operate within the fleet/commercial industry and form relationships throughout the business.”

Between annual meetings of the National Truck Club, area club meetings continue throughout the year. Clubs typically have speakers attend the meetings—representatives from Ford Commercial Trucks, Ford Credit, as well as vendors who finish cab/chassis with different beds.

These area clubs often meet monthly, or bimonthly, to stay updated in the industry. It is a setting to learn about the latest products and developments in the business. “I’ve had a great experience with the truck club. It has developed relationships that would otherwise not have grown with vendors, fleet managers and dealers. It has also forged bonds with Ford corporate employees,” says Ken Jablonski, president of the Northwest Truck Club.

Even though the National Truck Club is in its beginning stages, it is spreading fast. Clubs serve a vital purpose. Phillip Salinas, president of the Houston club gives his reason for joining: “When I moved to fleet sales, I had very little sales experience with commercial units. I joined the Houston club so that I could learn from people who had been doing it for

years. Likewise, as club pre ways to make our club more excited about the National

This year, the National take place in Louisville at the Mid-America Trucking Show ([www.truckingshow.com](http://www.truckingshow.com)). Contests and trucking exhibitors will be present. The show in the world, it provides National Truck Club members of the Kentucky Truck Plan More information about the available. Just email JoeHughes@ford.com for details.

The future of truck club are new members joining every year. Members are always looking for business and their club. And new members are always looking for business and their club. And new members are always looking for business and their club.

“We want to develop better relationships between clubs. It’s important to talk about how the other Members of the area clubs can help each other rather than competition, and how we can share ideas and information to make their business more effective.”

For those of you interested in joining a truck club, but have no time to attend a meeting, there will be an Internet option. The National Truck Club, currently being developed, will be a place to ask questions about trucking relationships via the Web. This is our next issue! ■

register now

# the fuse is lit ...

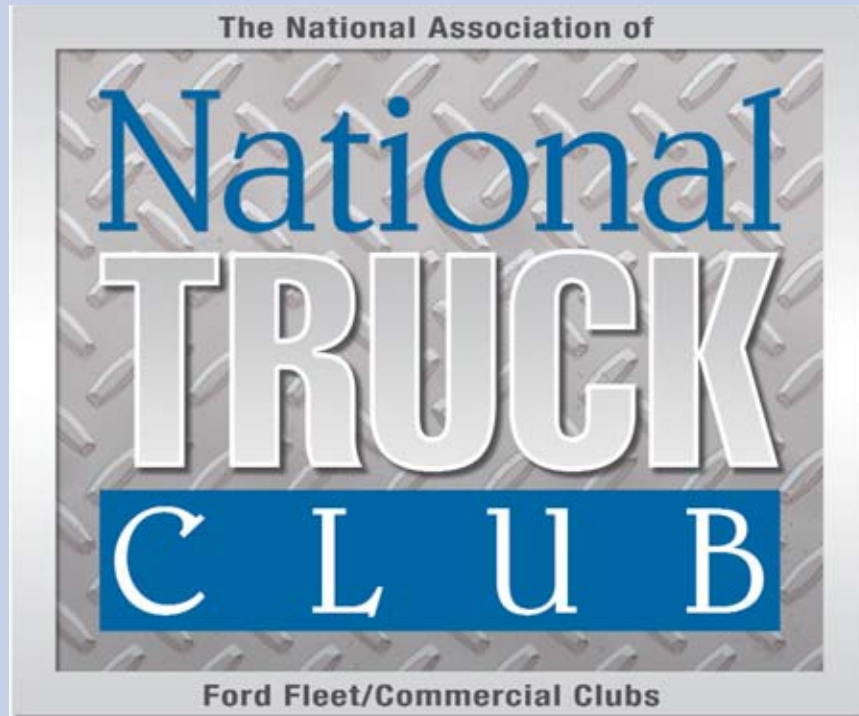
National Ford Truck Club is having its Inaugural Conference Wednesday, March 20 at the Executive West Hotel in Louisville, in conjunction with the Mid-America Trucking Show. Officers and members of truck clubs from across the country are coming to exchange ideas to get more people involved in their clubs, and ideas for existing members to get more out of the meetings.

All Ford fleet and commercial-sales specialists are invited to attend the meeting. Perhaps someone interested in getting a club started in his or her area would like to participate.

Clubs should consider covering the travel expenses of officers coming to the show, as it already costs attendees time away from their business. Also, dealerships that subsidize travel to trade shows, such as the Mid-America Show, should consider sponsorship.

**Cost of attendance is \$75 per person\*, which includes both dinner meetings held Wednesday and Thursday. Deadline for reservations is Monday, March 12. Hotel space is at a premium, so be sure to inquire quickly!**

*\*Cost for one meeting is \$40.00*



## Wed. March 20th

8:30 a.m. – 5:30 p.m. Meeting

6:30 p.m. Truck Club Meeting  
Virginia Style

**Hosted by:** Rick Thornton,  
President of the Virginia Truck Club.

**Keynote Speaker:** Kimmer Callahan—Director of marketing for Custom House Publishers, Inc.

## Thur. March 21st

Free to tour the Mid America Trucking Show

6:30 p.m. Truck Club Meeting  
Northwest Style

**Hosted by:** Ken Jablonski,  
President of the Northwest Truck Club.

**Keynote Speaker:** Joe Castelli, Ford  
Director of Commercial Trucks

## Fri. March 22nd

Tour of the Ford Kentucky Truck Plant

### REGISTER TODAY!

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ email: \_\_\_\_\_

Dealership: \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Office Phone(s): \_\_\_\_\_ Cell: \_\_\_\_\_

I will attend the Truck Club meeting on Wed., March 20 at 6:30 p.m. - Cost \$40

I will attend BOTH Truck Club meetings on Wed., & Thurs. - Cost \$75

I will attend the Truck Club meeting on Thurs., March 21 at 6:30 p.m. - Cost \$40

I am interested in learning more about the National Truck Club, please contact me.

Make checks payable to "National Truck Club"

Mail or fax this RSVP and your check to: Ken Jablonski, c/o Ford of Kirkland, 11800 124th Ave. NE, Kirkland, WA 98034

# In the Chill of Winter, Cold Calls Can Still Be HOT!

by Joe Hughes

As the cold air of winter descends upon us, I have a challenge for you. This winter and spring, I challenge you to use all of the resources at your disposal to have unprecedented success as you make cold calls to clients. If you follow the tips outlined in this column, I can almost guarantee you'll feel better about new business by May. In fact, if I'm wrong, call me and I'll send you a \$5 Starbucks card! \*

What is so unique about cold calls this winter and this spring? First of all, you'll be driving a 2008-model Super Duty!

## A Great Truck Will Sell Itself!

Prior to the current Super Duty being introduced to the market, I changed dealerships and was trying to gain some momentum. I had worked in the same area, but had no luck with a particular buyer at a construction company who boasted a sizeable fleet.

As is sometimes the case with hot, new vehicles, I had not yet received brochures, or anything formal from Ford, other than a printout of all the various cab and CA options that would soon be available. Instead of waiting, I took the matter into my own hands and found two color photos on the Internet. With these photos, I designed a simple three-page leave-behind. The first page was on dealership letterhead, announcing the

arrival of the Super Duties, and introducing myself as the man who would be happy to take orders to meet anyone's upcoming needs.

Page two featured black-and-white copies of the photographs that included a photocopy of my business card on the same page. The third page was Ford's chart of available cabs and CAs. Again, the page had my business card photocopied on the page, as I didn't want to take the chance that that my contact information would be lost if the individual pages became separated.

Getting back to my example, the only way this construction client could get a good feel for the new truck was to talk to me while I was on-site with the color pictures in hand (trucks were still two months away). I used this simple strategy to meet someone who, since 1998, has purchased an average of 25 vehicles from me every year since!

### Start with the Right Impression!

First, understand that a great truck will sell itself! It's a truck that anyone will want to see. But, more importantly, you want a customer to see (and talk to) you, so it is important to be prepared. Educate yourself on the unit you are driving, so you can answer any questions, including those related to price and payments. Be sure, however, to concentrate your presentation on the value of the new vehicle; price should, ultimately, be a secondary factor in a buyer's decision.

Focus your sales efforts on current General Motors and Dodge



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users. These businesses are clearly in need of better, more reliable vehicles. And remember to concentrate on the customer: Give the customer information, discuss the customer's business (not yours) and ask questions that help you understand his or her needs.

There are other ways to get in front of decision-makers, as well. First, give your personalized packet to the receptionist, and explain why everyone you have shown it to is so excited. Then, before you leave, ask the receptionist to ask the boss if he or she would like to see the brand-new Super Duty. The receptionist will likely take the packet to the boss immediately, and he might just wander out to take a look!

Even when you have plenty of brochures, prepare a leave-behind consisting of:

- An introductory cover letter, including an invitation to do business that expresses enthusiasm for earning the client's business;
- A black-and-white copy of the Super Duty brochure's cover and at least a couple of relevant inside pages (such as towing capacity, etc.); and
- A copy of your business card photocopied on every page.

Once you've given your initial sales pitch, offer to come back and show the vehicle to anyone else who might want to see it. If the boss asks for a brochure, tell him you will bring one back when you receive them. Don't wait too long though, or he may just drop by a dealership on his own—and it may not be yours. Call him in a couple of days and make an appointment to drop it off to make a second impression!

If this plan, applied to 25 accounts, doesn't generate more

call backs and orders than any other cold-call program you have tried, call me at (253) 709-0001, or email me at [JoeHughes@FordPros.com](mailto:JoeHughes@FordPros.com), and tell me, "Joe, you owe me a Starbucks."\*

*\*OK, so a friend of mine said that if almost 4,000 commercial dealers read this, I better limit my exposure to sending everyone \$5. So here are the rules for getting me to buy you a Starbucks: 1. You take the packets I suggest to 25 accounts and talk to someone there, 2. Send me a copy of the packet you used (mail to: Joe Hughes, P.O. Box 628, Sumner, WA 98390), 3. Be willing to talk to me when I call you, telling me why you think it didn't work as well as or better than another cold-call program, 4. Do it all by May 30. Worst-case scenario? I'll learn the details on somebody else's (your) cold-calling techniques! My attorney friend says I should limit this offer to a number I can back up. So be one of the first 400 to call or write me saying: "Joe, you owe me a Starbucks!" If even 50 folks qualify, I'll donate another \$100 to the National Truck Club. I'll publish details in the next edition (no names). I hope you will concentrate on making my techniques work for you! Good selling! ■*



## on the road ...

### Dale Jarrett Ford

Dale Jarrett Ford's Customer Appreciation Day was Dec. 5. Lunch for more than 250 commercial customers was highlighted with the exclusive unveiling of the 2008 Ford Super Duty. Kirk Stump, Norwood Poole, Johnny Woods and Dale Jarrett, owners of the dealership, were very pleased with the turnout.



Beth Murphy and the Commercial Show Group at the Commercial Show at Joe Myers Ford.

### Houston Truck Club



# The Portable Dealership: Your Business on Wheels



by Bruce A. Higdon

The image of typical auto and truck dealerships has been the same for a number of generations. In my childhood in the 1960s, I remember my dad talking about going down and looking into purchasing a new car for the family. He acted like he was going to a place of great mystery, and also a place he wished he could avoid! The majority of people still feel this way about dealerships. Today, however, we in the industry have a real opportunity to change this negative imagery.

As fleet and commercial-sales managers, we can now take our dealerships directly to the customers. We can work with clients on their own terms, and on their own turf. I have made it a game to see how many vehicles I can deliver to a customer before he or she ever visits my office! I want my customers to have a positive buying experience; and if that means they don't come to my office, then that's OK!

When you travel to the customer to deliver an in-person interview or sales presentation, it is always impressive that you took the time to come to a business, to learn about it and to understand how busy the customer is each day. Plus, no two sales talks will ever be (or should ever be) alike, even though there will always be some common elements in all successful presentations. Follow these pointers to make the most of your next presentation:

## Show Your Enthusiasm

You can only persuade another if you are persuaded. Believe in what you are offering, and communicate confidence with your enthusiasm. Rather than being loud or talking fast, this means having a lively and sincere manner as you make your points and ask your questions.

## Ask Open-ended Questions

Ask the kind of questions that cannot be answered with a yes or a no. Ask questions that start with who, where, why, when and how—all of which require a bit of an explanation. By asking about a customer's business, you gain more insight as to what kind and how many vehicles will best fit his or her needs. The other key here is in the old saying: "People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care!"

## Keep it Simple

Avoid talking in technical terms: Talk on the clients' level. People are not generally impressed favorably with language they don't understand. More often, they will feel confused, intimidated, irritated or bored. Say what you mean as clearly and concisely as possible. Be yourself and use the vocabulary you normally use.

## Keep Checking In

Remember a powerful and successful presentation is interactive. As

you work your way through your presentation, constantly monitor the communication process. "Is this clear so far?" "These are the benefits you want in your next vehicle, is that right?"

## Make Eye Contact

When you meet someone's eye, you are more likely to win his or her confidence and trust. Keep eye contact with everyone involved. You want everyone to feel they have been heard and have received enough information.

## Get in the Customer's Shoes

Make your presentation interesting and informative. Be sensitive to the time you take. Picture yourself on the other side of the table and ask, "What would I want to be hearing and seeing right about now?" Remember, for your customer, there is virtually nothing inherently interesting about you or what you sell. You have to make him care by answering the questions he will be asking himself: "So what?" "What's in it for me?" and "How do I benefit?"

## Rehearse!

Most of us need to go over what we want to say and how we want to say it. Without turning your talk into a canned presentation, carefully run through the items you want to present, and test how they will sound. That will give you more confidence. Try to anticipate questions or issues a prospect might ask and have answers ready in advance.

## Dress for Success

Most of my clients dress informally, and are comfortable that I do not have a suit and tie on. However, when I am talking to certain clients, a suit is exactly the right thing to wear. In all cases, I look clean and with freshly pressed clothes: ready to do business!

## Think Long-term and Referrals

Even in the case of a private entrepreneur, he will be changing vehicles for one reason or another within about 42 months. If his business grows, he will need to address how he gets the next person to a job site. He will need to give thought to buying a vehicle that does a particular segment of his job more efficiently.

If you walk out of his office with an order, that's great, but that's not the only great outcome that you can have. If you think long-term, then you know that sooner or later the presentation you made will pay off in future business via that customer and his referrals! ■

*Bruce Higdon has an MBA and is a senior business consultant with International Profit Associates, Inc. He served as a Ford fleet/commercial manager for a number of years. He can be reached at bahigdon@msn.com.*

# The Right Prescription

## Understand the Nuances of Commercial Sales

by Bruce A. Higdon

Working inside of the fleet/commercial department of a Ford store is much like working in the pharmacy of a grocery store. Though you may be physically located in the same facility, your department operates in a radically different manner than the retail folks “up front.” Fleet/commercial programs are not always the same ones offered to retail customers. As a result, people in the office need to be aware of the different processes.

From individual-training programs to fleet/commercial success measures, your personal role and the department’s stated goals are substantially different. As a result, it is important for everyone in your dealership to understand how things really work.

Most importantly, you must understand that serious commercial customers know about this difference, and they need to be able to find you easily. If a retail salesperson intercepts them, and your dealership ends up competing for their business with a dealership where they found the commercial salesperson, your dealership will virtually always lose the sale.

Although not all employees of a pharmacy are schooled as pharmacist, they still must understand the operations of the pharmacy and how they differ from the other departments in the grocery store. It’s similarly vital for all members of the fleet team to be aware of their department’s differences, in order to make more effective critical adjustments that will allow them to see real progress.

Being a member of the fleet team can be very fulfilling, but the structure is much different than that of a retail sales team. A fleet salesman can have millions of dollars worth of inventory from which to sell, (remember to include the inventory at your disposal in ship-thru accounts), as well as a ton of flexibility when it comes to in-dealership work hours. Unfortunately, however, without an understanding of the department’s differences, inventory and flexibility can be overwhelming.

Of course, every vehicle on the entire lot has its own personality, uses and options. But, the fleet/commercial product must be understood more intimately because customers know, in more detail, what they are looking for and what usage options they may need (and how to source them on a timely basis). An under-trained fleet salesperson or a salesperson who is impatient and unwilling to develop long-term relationships is often sunk from the start on the commercial side.

In fact, the department’s flexibility can manifest itself in bad habits and inefficient time use for the unsuspecting retail salesman. But for the man or woman who understands the importance of relationship building, and who has the necessary self-determination, the flexibility offers unlimited opportunity to meet and learn about your target customers on their own turf.

In many cases, a pharmacy is managed independently, maintaining a different personality, a different look and a different staff. Fortunately for fleet/commercial dealerships, we have the full support and encouragement of the Ford brand, giving us distinct advantages and benefits.

Our department’s independence, however, sometimes makes us feel like we are on an island, or even another planet.

Truck clubs nationwide celebrate and build understanding of these differences. As a truck club member, you are given useful information to teach people how these differences impact them. Most of us have very similar challenges with office employees, general sales managers and Ford corporate that are still unlike the challenges faced on the consumer side of the dealership.

The goal of individual truck clubs, and now the National Truck Club, is to give you the right prescription for what ails you—best practices and tips that you can implement to make your department better today.

To find the club nearest you, to start a truck club in your area or to access the upcoming National Truck Club Web site, email [JoeHughes@FordPros.com](mailto:JoeHughes@FordPros.com). ■

“It’s vital for all members of the fleet team to be aware of their department’s differences [compared to retail].”

# We Do the Work!

## You Get Sales.

**Commercial Connection** Vol. 2 Issue 4

### Local Business Owner is a Repeat Customer to Scarsdale Ford

by Corinne Gonyea

It's easy to see why so many area service businesses choose Scarsdale Ford for their cargo van needs. With more than 30 years in the automotive industry, Scarsdale Ford is the leading commercial truck and van dealership in the area. Known for quality selection and service, local business owners trust the qualified sales personnel at Scarsdale Ford.

Just ask its Don, of Winchester Lock and Alarm Company, why he is a repeat customer for Scarsdale Ford, and he'll respond that it is because of the service. Opening a locksmith and security business in 1982, Don was cargo vans for his first employees to haul equipment throughout the city and upstate New York. Located at 954 McLean Avenue, in Yonkers, Winchester Lock and Alarm's owner Don and his employees travel hundreds of miles each work to service area homes, adding phone and fire systems, in addition to full-fledged security systems. "Our vans are on the road six days a week," said Don.

Don purchased three Ford Econoline vans from Scarsdale Ford with the help of Rocca Linares, commercial truck manager with Scarsdale Ford. Don then drive installed in Don said that, space for car security systems. Service Scarsdale When

...the service after the sale is what counts. I bring back the vehicles to the people I trust."

Don quickly returns to Scarsdale Ford, "because the service after the sale is what counts. I bring back the vehicles to the people I trust."

Know for its no-hassle approach to commercial sales, Scarsdale Ford is the ultimate choice when you need a truck or van to accommodate your service business. Stop by the dealership today to review the quality selection of cargo vans and service trucks that are used to meet your needs. Call (800) 444-4444 or visit [www.scarsdaleford.com](http://www.scarsdaleford.com)

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