

ADVERTISING FEATURE

Canada Wide is cooking up success

Amandio Correia has a recipe for long-term success at Canada Wide Auto Sales.

Ideally, the recipe calls for equal measures of experienced sales staff, dedicated and ambitious management, and upwardly mobile, youthful enthusiasm. So far, Correia and his team have made all the right moves towards turning their store into a destination of choice for automotive enthusiasts.

"I think we have all the right ingredients," said Correia, an automotive professional with many years of experience himself. "We have many decades of experience here on the sales floor, and an excellent staff capable of taking care of our customers' needs."

Canada Wide Auto Sales is in its sixth month of operation at 10212 - 178 Street, and every month has seen the store's success expand.

"We've had record months every month, and we're working to keep that growth going. Our inventory is improving every day — our inventory went from \$2 million to \$3 million, and we're still purchasing vehicles — and I think that will go a long way towards our long-term success."

"We're definitely not slowing down; we're looking towards the future."

Canada Wide has gone with a specialized inventory model that Correia feels is in line with many west Edmonton customers and with an expanding cross-section of Alberta's driving public. First, the store deals almost exclusively with vehicles that range from one to three years in age with a portion of their factory warranty still in effect. Second, the majority of the vehicles sold here are often classified as "premium" brands.

The location — just a block north of Stony Plain Road and right on a major north-south corridor — is excellent for walk-in traffic, but local west end customers are just the start of Canada Wide's client base.

"There are a lot of luxury dealers in Calgary. In Edmonton, there aren't — and that's what we want to break into."

"We offer free delivery anywhere in Alberta,

and we're actually getting a lot of customers from out of town, especially from up north. If anyone is looking for a BMW or a Lexus or an Acura, they're giving us an opportunity. When they come here and walk through the doors you can tell that we actually cater to that type of vehicle and buyer. We have a Bentley Continental GT — even that is drawing attention, because there is no dealer in Edmonton that has one."

Canada Wide Auto's staff has had to adjust to this specialized inventory and clientele, but the rewards of dealing with top-quality product make it worth the effort.

"It's a lot of work — a lot of research and a lot of looking," said Correia. "We don't rely on wholesalers, we rely on ourselves. We go out and look for inventory, and we hand-pick what we want to offer here. Now we have wholesalers coming to us with the premium vehicles to show us."

"We're doing something unique, and many people think that's the reason we're growing so quickly and successfully. We have people from within the car business and from outside come in and say they've never seen a lot like this one. Everything is clean — we're trying to keep every car as close to perfect as we can."

"We do all the little things to make the customer's experience memorable: we give them a certificate with the sale, we do their first oil change and give them a free auto detail when they come back. It may be a small thing, but it goes a long way with customers. The referrals are coming in every day, and that's a good sign that we're getting it right."

Correia and company are committed to a low-pressure sales and service approach, standing ready to offer assistance, yet giving potential customers the time and space to look and assess on their own. They've been in the business a long time. They're not kids, they're mature staff — they don't want to be chasing folks down in passing cars, and potential customers don't want to be hassled. I think people appreciate that — that's the reason the Internet

is getting to be such a big part of our business. People go on the website and find what they think they want, then they make the contact."

The same low-pressure approach holds true with the company's well-qualified service staff. With two highly certified lead mechanics and a group of up-and-coming apprentices, there's little that this group can't handle, regardless of the make or model.

"There's hardly a ticket you can get that these guys don't have," said Correia. "We have one of the lowest labour rates in the city, and we don't try to upsell. If someone comes in for a brake job, that's what we give them. If we notice other problems, we'll let them know about it, but there's no pressure to have it done with us right away — unless a serious safety concern, of course."

If you decide to check out the showroom, don't be surprised to see workmen and scaffolding. Renovation measures like energy-efficient lighting, upgraded bathrooms and a second showroom area were first on the list, with service area upgrades underway and more cosmetic enhancements still to come.

"We've been doing renovations since we opened, and they're ongoing," said Correia. "We've done lots, but we're still less than half-way completed. Every month, we're doing something else — weather permitting."

These are all moves a group makes when it plans to be around for a good, long while. And Correia has hired with the future in mind, hiring people like Jeff Nette and Brittany Burlaka to provide some of the fire and ambition every good store boasts.

"We hired Jeff to be an apprentice mechanic," said Correia. "He wants a career, he's a young guy and he's eager to work. He's going to grow with us and stay here — and that's what we want. If everything works out, he could end up staying here for the rest of his career."

Burlaka, who started at the store in the wash bay preparing cars, is another example.

"She's shown so much dedication and so much hard work, we've moved her up. She's



Brittany Burlaka, service advisor.

now in Parts and Service as service advisor. She's still learning, but it's a career path she can follow and grow into for the future, instead of washing cars for the rest of her life.

"If they want to grow, we want them to grow with us."

Just as Canada Wide wants the comfort level to grow with clients.

"The average in this niche for ownership is 28-30 months," said Correia. "Then, the customer gets bored with it and wants something new. After those 30 months, we want those customers to come in and see the same faces they saw last time. Lots of places see a huge turnover every year — but I like it when you go into a store and recognize the people you dealt with last time. It creates a good rapport and real customer loyalty."

"The best part about selling a car is when that customer comes back two or three years down the road and remembers you and wants to deal with you again. That's what we're shooting for."

And that's one well-documented recipe for long-term success.



Jeff Nette is one of the young guns in Service.



Amandio Correia (right) and Canada Wide Auto Sales' veteran sales staff are committed to low-pressure, high-quality service.