



ACCELERATE!



CAR BUYERS AND CARMAKERS STEP ON THE GAS

Faster to market, quicker to adapt—and speeding industry progress along the way.

You see it in the gleaming new cars on the road, in driveways and across shopping malls and dealership lots—even cars on the move with no one driving. You read it in headlines, hear it on the news. If you're a car freak or just in the market for new wheels, you talk about it with friends, with everyone. Cars are back! Cars are cool again. In fact, they're not just cars anymore, they're entire experiences and ecosystems—linking you to friends, to the roads you're riding on, to signs, tolls and even other cars. Wow ... >>>>



age number of models launched per year between 1990 and 2013, underscoring that competition in the industry is heating up once again," the study reports.

"There are many factors contributing to the acceleration in product, including [manufacturers'] rush to enter new vehicle segments (CUVs, hybrids, ultra-luxury, youth, etc.) and an aggressive push by some [carmakers] to expand product lineups, as well as the relative richness and size of the U.S. vehicle market," the study concludes. Westcott sums it up: "The products in the market are what consumers want."

DRIVING FORCES

While some reports say millennials aren't driving (or buying) cars anymore—consumed as they are by social and mobile socializing, and by alternative transportation options (bikes, Uber, Zipcar)—the reality is millennials are driving cars. They're driving the way cars are being reimagined today, driving technology and interconnected device integration and driving innovation, design and the drive for efficiency. The youngest may be living back home again—but thank your millennials for driving the creative rebirth of cars, rooted in the tech devices we all now can't live without.

Want proof? In his 2013 "Who Makes the Car" study, Murphy has this to say: "Consumer demand for greater levels of electronics in vehicles, along with enhanced safety/touch-point elements and improved fuel economy, will support future content growth." And dealers are living this shift in

Yes, today's car buyers and car dealers are amped—as the automotive marketplace accelerates like never before. From innovation to incentives, from product lines to service and sales, from efficiency to connectedness, everything in the car industry is moving faster, adapting more quickly and speeding progress.

Remember "Cash for Clunkers"—the 2009 government program aimed at driving us to trade in old gas-guzzlers for newer, greener, better models and, at the same time, boost auto sales? Well, you don't need the Beltway steering you into showrooms anymore. In late summer, the National Automobile Dealers Association (NADA) reported that generous automaker incentives and high trade-in values would keep new-vehicle sales momentum going throughout the third quarter. "This is the time of year when auto manufacturers increase incentives on outgoing vehicles to make room for the new models," says Jonathan Banks, executive automotive analyst for the *NADA Official Used Car Guide*, adding, however, that 2013 figures may be affected by the government shutdown.

BREAKNECK SPEED

Car sales are a bellwether not just for the automobile industry, but also for the economy as a whole. "Our industry is accelerating at breakneck speed. From the lows of 9 million units sold a few years ago, it has been steadily increasing to hopefully over 15 million in 2013," says David Westcott, NADA chairman. "This year," he adds, "we are excited about the pace of the market and our industry. The way we advertise and the way customers sell and buy vehicles is moving and changing at a very fast pace."

"The high level of pent-up demand, coupled with extraordinary new products, historically low interest rates and competitive financing terms have combined to accelerate the recovery in the automobile industry," says Jacksonville, N.C., auto dealer Mike Alford, the winner of the 2013 national TIME Dealer of the Year Award.

Across the horizon, the amazing new offerings rolling off automaker assembly lines are set to hit a record pace. According to Bank of America Merrill Lynch auto research analyst John Murphy, who produces the annual "Car Wars" report, the most authoritative analysis of what's coming to market, new model launch activity is expected to accelerate significantly. Across model years 2014-2017, the report forecasts 175 new models, for an average of 44 per year. "This rate is about 17% above the aver-



*Some people
who Go Further
never stop.*



It's funny. Seems that people who know how to run a successful business don't stop there. At least that's the case with our Ford Dealers. They are the backbone of our business and the leaders in their communities, working to make a difference in people's lives every day. Congratulations to all of the 2013 TIME Dealer of the Year nominees. Thank you for helping make the world a better place.



Go Further

ACCELERATE YOUR AUTO FINANCING KNOW-HOW

OK, you know what car you want or need. Fuel-efficient, the full suite of tech innovation, the right color, styling and safety features. Think the hard part is over? Uh-uh. It's just begun. Because the truth is, you need to spend as much time shopping for financing as you spend looking for the perfect car—a process that highlights one of the best tools out there to help you demystify auto financing: www.autofinancing101.org, the website produced by Americans Well-informed on Automobile Retailing Economics (AWARE).

A few years ago, eyeing the need for better consumer education in auto financing, industry leaders created AWARE, a collaborative effort to provide car shoppers with the best tools, insight and trusted resources. “Financing is a critical part of the car-buying experience for many,” says AWARE spokesman Eric Hoffman. “Consumers help themselves by learning the facts about the process.” AWARE members include associations and companies dedicated to consumer education around financing, including NADA and Ally Financial, which partners with TIME on its annual TIME Dealer of the Year Award program.

The AWARE site (in English and Spanish) features an excellent primer dubbed the Auto Financing Road Trip, as well as a Learning Suite bursting with calculators, interactive tools, downloadable worksheets, articles, brochures and resources tailored for young adults, teachers and first-time car buyers, plus a host of valuable resources and vital links. One link, to the Federal Reserve’s Keys to Vehicle Leasing page, www.federalreserve.gov/pubs/leasing/#difference, offers shoppers an expert guide to the distinctions between and respective benefits of leasing and buying. “Under the federal Consumer Leasing Act, you, the consumer, have a right to information about the costs and terms of a vehicle lease,” says the Fed. “This information will help you compare lease offers and negotiate a lease that best fits your needs, budget and driving patterns.”

demand on a daily basis. “The quality and technological enhancements of our product portfolio in the last five years are extraordinary,” says Alford. “Today, our customers, through enhancements in information technology and bandwidth, are very well informed, thus the selling experience is much more efficient and refined. We spend more time ensuring that our customers’ wants and needs are aligned.”

Sure, cruise control has existed for decades, but autonomous driving? With super-connected, high-tech cars boasting augmented-reality (AR) navigation and more? And here’s one for you: One automaker just announced it will employ AR to service its cars.

Today’s in-car connectivity empowers safety systems, diagnostics and infotainment, with modems and sensors wirelessly linking vehicles to infrastructure, other vehicles and systems. But fuel efficiency is a driver. “Vehicle owners are continually aware of rising fuel costs and the need for better fuel economy,” says Mike VanNieuwkuyk, executive director of global automotive at J.D. Power and Associates. “As they have come to understand the benefits of new automotive technology, they are increasingly interested in those that allow them to manage their fuel consumption with

So, as you shop for that perfect vehicle, accelerate the research for the best financing options for your wallet—with the help of AWARE. Here are a few examples to guide you along the auto financing road trip:

Before visiting the dealership:

»»» Based on your needs and budget, determine a realistic price range for the auto you are thinking of buying.

»»» Know the difference between buying and leasing an auto.

»»» Know your credit record, and that it may affect the finance rate you are able to secure.

»»» Compare annual percentage rates and financing terms from multiple sources such as banks, finance companies and credit unions.

When shopping for an auto at the dealership:

»»» Stay within the price range you can afford.

»»» Negotiate your finance arrangements and terms.

»»» Understand the value and price of optional products such as extended service contracts, credit insurance or guaranteed auto protection. If you don’t want these products, don’t sign for them.

»»» Read the contract carefully before you sign it.

After completing the auto purchase or lease:

»»» Make your payments on time. Late or missed payments incur late fees and appear on your credit report, which can impact your ability to get credit in the future.

greater efficiency and help better manage cost at the pump.”

Murphy’s “Who Makes the Car” study dubs the increasing level of automotive electronic content as “the dawn of the cyborg,” with new technologies transforming cars into advanced interactive machines. “Perhaps the most far-reaching

example of this trend is the development of hybrid electric/fully electric drivetrains,” he reports. “The general influx of electronics and electrical components into other core functional areas of the vehicle has been notable and impressive. In fact, electronics are key to nearly every aspect of operating the modern vehicle, from steering, to suspension, to active/passive occupant safety systems.”

Truly smart cars loaded with efficient, reliable hyperconnected technology are poised to save us time, energy and, even, our lives. That’s the kind of cyborg we can all embrace. ►



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Mike Alford, 2013 TIME Dealer of the Year, at a community forum (left) and with his father, John (right).

ALWAYS FAITHFUL—TO THE COMMUNITY

Mike Alford, president of Marine Chevrolet Cadillac in Jacksonville, N.C., was named winner of the 2013 national TIME Dealer of the Year Award at the annual NADA Convention & Expo in February. Over the years the UNC grad has worked tirelessly in and around Jacksonville to make a difference. One of his proudest efforts is tied to nearby Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune: Six years ago, Alford created the Military Growth Task Force, assembling leaders to address social and infrastructure

needs following a Marine Corps expansion that led to 83,000 new residents in the region. Says Alford: "This col-

laborative effort of federal, state and local governments, as well as civic, military and business leaders, was a first."

TIME's dealer competition is presented in association with Ally Financial, which presents the national winner with a \$10,000 contribution to a nonprofit of his

or her choice. "The Ally funds," says Alford, "have been used in Onslow County to support Girls on the Run and Stride, parallel gender-specific prevention programs that encourage preteen girls and boys to develop self-respect and healthy lifestyles through running.

These programs aren't just about finishing a race. They're about developing a lifetime of healthy habits and healthy living."

According to a recent study by Ally Financial and NADA, Alford's altruism is a common trait among dealers nationwide. The 2013 Dealer Charitable Survey, which polled dealer principals across the U.S., found that nearly 65% of dealers surveyed increased charitable contributions this year compared with 2012, and that roughly 39% expect to increase contributions again in 2014. The survey also found that nearly 45% of dealership employees volunteer more than 50 hours per year and that more than 55% of dealers donated \$25,000 or more in 2012. ●

WIN-WIN FOUNDATION

Since 2002, former new-car dealer Richard Strauss and his family have directed grants from the NADA Foundation to greater Richmond organizations like Meals On Wheels, International Hospital for Children, Central Virginia Food Bank, YMCA Bright Beginnings and the Boys & Girls Clubs of Metro Richmond. "Having members of my family associated with the NADA Foundation allows them to experience the great feeling of pride that comes from making a meaningful contribution in our community," says Strauss.

The National Automobile Dealers Charitable Foundation, established in 1975, is the philanthropic arm of the National Automobile Dealers Association. Funds contributed by new-car and -truck dealers and friends of the industry provide financial support to schools, private colleges and universities, emergency disaster relief and community service programs. "NADA's charitable endeavors demonstrate that dealers are caring and charitable people," Strauss says. "This program is a win-win." For more, visit nada.org/charitablefoundation.

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In the last five years, summer days have brought about a transformation for nearly 10,000 inner city kids at a special destination called Camp Hope. There, natural wonders have been discovered, art has come alive and a belief in a better world has been created. All of us at Ally applaud auto dealer Judith Schumacher-Tilton, who ensures the adventures continue through her passion and generous spirit.

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