

FROM LEFT: Bill Dauben, general manager; Jerome Pillow, district parts and service manager; Luis Guerra, zone sales manager; Brian Dahms, district sales manager; Mark Akers, zone manager, fixed operations, Parts & Service; and Tom Fogerty, dealer manager

Together, Everyone Achieves More

WHAT
Mungenast St. Louis Acura

WHERE
Manchester, Mo.
[just west of St. Louis]

25-time winner Mungenast St. Louis Acura breaks Precision Team record with its client-centric, family atmosphere approach

Mungenast St. Louis Acura first won Precision Team in 1990, when Dave Mungenast Sr. challenged his son Ray to put together a team and go after the award. Today, that spirit lives on in the dealership's employees, who ask what they can do to get ready for next year's evaluations. "Taking care of clients is always going to be our focus above anything else," says dealer manager Tom Fogerty. "But I've had people from all over the dealership—technicians, parts guys—asking me if we're on track for Precision Team."

It's an indication that while many dealerships call themselves a family, this one truly acts like one, getting everyone to work together in order to do everything well. The proof is in their 25 Precision Team wins, starting with that first one in 1990—the most by any dealer



in the country. “To win Precision Team, you have to do a good job on all sides—there’s more than just selling a lot of cars,” points out assistant zone manager Josh Beckner.

Here’s how the Mungenast team delivers excellence across the board.

FOCUS ON CLIENT SERVICE FROM THE TOP DOWN

Long-time employees still talk about how Dave Mungenast Sr. operated not by the golden rule (treat others as you’d like to be treated) but by what he called the “platinum rule”: treat clients as they would like to be treated. When it comes to making sure everyone has a good experience, “our employees don’t have to get permission to make the client happy,” says Fogerty, who joined Mungenast in 2002 and has been the dealer manager since 2010.

The client-centric approach started with the Mungenasts themselves, who set an example of hard work and dedication. “All of the Mungenast sons have worked in every position in the dealership,” says Fogerty. “They did things like sweeping floors and cleaning toilets alongside some of the people they ended up managing.” Seeing this, employees have taken up the mantle of client service and run with it, creating the kind of dealership where a greeter welcomes every client to the service drive and employees consistently step up to take care of issues themselves. “In our business, we generate a lot of silos between sales and parts and service,” says zone sales manager Luis Guerra. “You don’t see those



at this dealership. No matter where an employee’s job is, if a client comes up to them and has an issue, they’re willing to take care of it.”

CULTIVATE HOMEGROWN TALENT

Experience is not only valued, but celebrated. Team members post their start dates by their tool cabinet or desk; there are so many dates in the ’80s and ’90s that Fogerty, who’s been there for 15 years, jokes that he’s “one of the babies.”

A policy of promoting existing employees “keeps the culture in-house instead of changing it,” says Fogerty. All of the service advisors—and even one of the sales managers—started out washing cars at the dealership. Instead of hiring managers from outside, leadership frequently promotes internal candidates from the service department, not just the sales team. The policy creates an atmosphere in which sales managers

may have service experience, and vice versa, so they can make decisions from a broadly informed perspective.

It also means employees stay even longer at the dealership—some of them have even been there since Dave Mungenast Sr. became one of the first Acura dealers in the U.S. in 1986. “I think their tenure is because there’s an opportunity for growth that a lot of dealers don’t offer,” Fogerty adds. And a happy staff makes for happy clients. “If you enjoy working there, clients really do see that,” explains Guerra.

WORK TOGETHER, STAY TOGETHER

Another advantage of having employees who have worked together for more than 20 years is that “everyone is looking out for each other,” says Fogerty.

“They’ve worked together on the same level in different departments at some point,” he adds.



More importantly, they’re keen to continue working together, leading to more integrated sales and service departments. The dealership, for example, has a dedicated acquisitions manager who sits in the service department, reviews the next day’s service appointments with the sales team and scouts out potential additions to the pre-owned inventory. “They’ve built up a really nice client base over time, and this really helps keep that loyalty going,” says district sales manager Brian Dahms. The setup helps convert service clients to new car sales, and those same service clients’ pre-owned vehicles are easier to sell, since they’ve been serviced at the dealership and come with comprehensive records.

The Acura field teams encourage collaboration with initiatives such as challenging the sales departments to sell more accessories (which helps the parts department move parts), but it’s up to the dealer to execute. “We try to promote the relationships between parts and service and sales,” adds Dahms. “But at Mungenast, it’s not just a one and done. They’ll look for more opportunities to work together in the future.”

Alongside staff friendships, many employees have cultivated lasting relationships with clients for 20 years or more. The personal touch drives repeat business to the service drive, boosting revenue and, eventually, sales to repeat buyers. It’s especially effective in a market like St. Louis, which Fogerty describes as a “big small town” where neighbors are friendly and everyone roots for the home teams.

GET BUY-IN FROM ALL EMPLOYEES

It may have been Dave Sr.’s idea to first try for Precision Team. Today, however, the impetus comes from the employees themselves, who make a point of delivering excellence in everything from interactions with clients to their own appearance. “There’s not a huge difference between parts and service and sales,” says Mark Akers, zone manager, fixed operations, Parts & Service. “Everyone is



FROM LEFT: The Build Your NSX console at the dealership; Tom Fogerty, dealer manager, left, and Bill Dauben, general manager, with the 2016 Precision Team Award

Awards and accolades

25x
Precision Team winner

#1
Dealer by volume
in St. Louis

Top 16%
Of dealers nationwide
in ACE scores

100%
increase in
pre-owned sales
in 2017

dressed professionally for whatever role they have.”

This means that even though the dealership has hired personnel to keep up with changing times and client needs—for example, additional salespeople who are comfortable interacting with clients on social media or service techs to replace someone who’s been promoted—the values remain the same. “It’s a really consistent culture of a total commitment to excellence,” Akers adds. “When you look at their past return and client excellence scores, they don’t have peaks and valleys.”

The dealership is also consistent in sales, coming out of what were challenging circumstances for many in 2016 with a two percent increase in new-car sales and a 100 percent increase in pre-owned sales in 2017.

SEE SETBACKS AS AN OPPORTUNITY

Mungenast St. Louis Acura may have won Precision Team more than any other dealer in the country, but they haven’t won every year—and when they missed out, Fogerty admits that it hurt.

They started a new winning streak by falling back on a process pioneered by

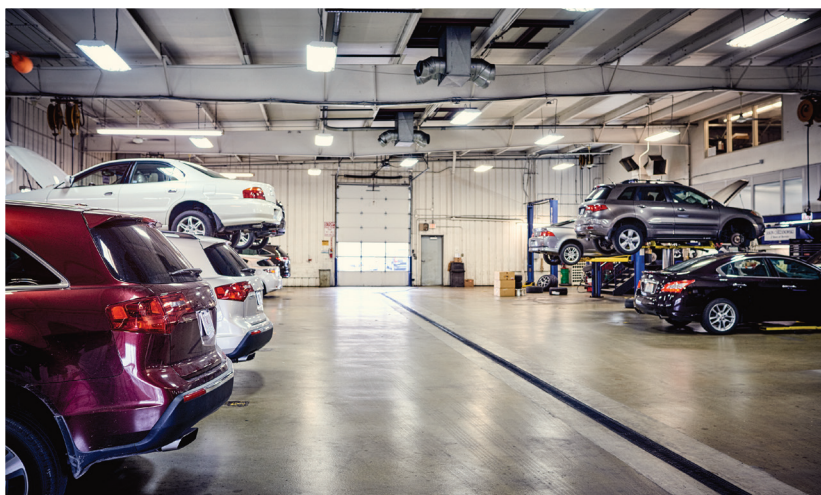
Dave Sr. in the 1990s: client surveys. In addition to sending manufacturer surveys, Mungenast St. Louis Acura follows up with every client within 24 hours of a purchase or service to make sure they’re satisfied. After the Precision Team loss, Fogerty started holding weekly meetings, attended by everyone from department managers to service technicians, to review the surveys. “It’s really working because we get to see trends,” he says, “and any issues we’re seeing, it nips them in the bud.” Quarterly walk-throughs help ensure any concerns raised are being addressed.

In fact, Fogerty credits the dealership’s processes not just with helping them win Precision Team once again, but with seeing the team through recalls, recessions and other challenges. “The key thing is that everything has a process—everything belongs in a certain place,” he says. “And if we’re going to make major changes to the process, we take a lot of time. We get everybody from the kid in the back washing cars to the owners to sit down and talk about things.”

Together, as a family, they’ve built an award-winning business, and together, they’ll continue to pursue excellence. ✨



CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP: Experience is celebrated, which is why team members post their start dates by their work station; the service bay at the dealership; the 2018 TLX on display at Mungenast St. Louis Acura



PHOTOGRAPHY BY MATT KILE