



Accessories help clients customize their rides while driving profits for Acura of Peabody



THE PERSONAL TOUCH



UNDER THE HOOD

Walk into Acura of Peabody and one thing you'll notice—besides the cars—is a series of meticulously arranged displays featuring genuine Acura accessories.

One wall of the Massachusetts dealership features neatly stacked running boards and all-season floor mats. Another corner is home to a six-foot-tall display case filled with gleaming wheels.

The arrangements are part of a concerted effort by the dealership to drive accessory sales, which have become a big part of the store's bottom line, says general manager Joel Avery.

"Accessories are a great revenue generator," he says.

The dealership, located 20 miles north of Boston, posted more than \$520,000 in genuine Acura accessory sales last year, or about \$650 for each new vehicle sold. That is an exceptional total; the average for even the most profitable Acura dealers is about \$370,000 annually.

Acura of Peabody is one of many stores that have turned to accessories to boost profits, something that is crucial when margins for new cars are slim. In fact, dealers with a laser-like focus on their accessory business tend to be among the most profitable in the country.

In part, that's because clients love the ability to make an Acura their own, says

Ed Pouster, senior manager of Parts and Service at Acura.

"When we ask clients what would make their experience at Acura better, the response is always, 'Make it personal to me. I'm an individual,'" he says. "Genuine Acura Accessories are the only accessories clients can purchase that meet the same quality standards as the rest of Acura vehicles and are covered by the four year/50K new vehicle warranty when installed by an Acura dealer."

The key to selling accessories is to be systematic, says Avery.

At Acura of Peabody, for example, there is a clear division between the Sales and Parts departments. Associates focus on selling cars and only after a deal has been inked do they broach the subject of accessories. That means there's no temptation to "throw in" accessories to clinch a sale, a practice that Avery says is actually counterproductive for dealers because it eats into profit margins.

Clients often have the misunderstanding that accessories come at no cost, so Avery says it's crucial to outline the process for them. "We explain that Parts sells us the accessories, and because they are a different department within the dealership, Sales must adhere to their pricing."

Another key to selling accessories is having a light touch, says David Jenkins,

dealer manager of Jenkins Acura in Ocala, Fla., which is expecting to make \$230,000 in profits on accessories this year alone.

His sales associates discuss accessories when clients buy a new car or come in for service. But the conversation is always "non-aggressive," he says. "We must be professional and present items without hard selling."

His dealership has a full-time manager devoted to accessories, which Jenkins says has driven up sales of bigger-ticket items, including luggage racks, running boards and accessory wheels.

While client tastes vary from region to region, there are a few practical accessories that tend to perform well across the country, says Pouster. These include all-season floor mats, wheel locks and cargo trays.

"A common theme is protection," he says. "Acura clients are informed and professional, and prefer to protect their investments."

At the end of the day, he says, the ability to customize a car brings clients closer to the brand, and helps reinforce its reputation for Precision Crafted Performance.

"Dealers have a finite amount of products to sell and accessories help the dealership build meaningful gross that clients can touch and feel," he says. ⚙️

