

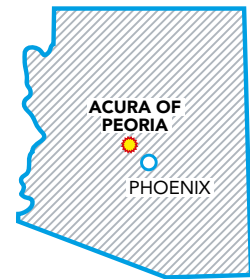
WHAT
Acura of Peoria

WHERE
Peoria, Ariz.

WHO
Brijen Dave, managing
partner and general
manager

Mario Cano, district
sales manager

Game C



Brijen Dave didn't settle for the car-business status quo. And under his leadership, Acura of Peoria has become the number-one volume dealer in Arizona.

Brijen Dave and his team like winning. And they've certainly had a taste of it: Acura of Peoria, where Dave is general manager and managing partner, has been number one in sales volume in the district for the past two years running. It has also won the Precision Team award for the past five years and sells 55 percent of all new and used Acuras registered in Arizona.

The dealership hasn't always been so successful. When Dave joined Acura of Peoria in 2005 as part of the Internet sales department, the dealership had high employee turnover and had never been number one in the district, let alone in the state. He worked his way up to general manager in 2012, and used the opportunity to turn the business around.

Having seen how high-quality long-term employees got to know the product well, developed a loyal client base and made the dealership run more smoothly, "one of the things I kept in the back of my mind was: 'If I ever have the chance to run a dealership, I will do everything in my power to keep my people,'" he says. Here's how Dave built his team—garnering a mention from *Automotive News* as one of the top 100 dealers to work for along the way—and used that team to turn the dealership into a top performer.

Changer



SETTING STANDARDS: Brijen Dave is known for wearing a suit every day, and requires all employees to do so from October to April.



MAKE STAFF FEEL VALUED

Dave is fiercely protective of his employees, and in return, they deliver results. “I think everybody should take it personally when a person quits on them. If you care about your people they will care about your customers,” he says. Not only does the team celebrate anniversaries, birthdays and holidays together, Dave spends days at the hospital when employees or their family members are sick and takes staff calls on his personal number, day or night.

Dave makes a point of promoting from within and rewarding excellence. Acura of Peoria frequently sends its best entry-level lot employees to school for specialized training as lube techs, and promotes standout receptionists to office management staff. Employees who sell 15 vehicles a month for three months are allowed to set their own schedules, and in four years, only two salespeople have fallen off that pace.

District sales manager Mario Cano says this loyal team helps Acura of Peoria get ahead. “Brijen has always had that Warren Buffett and Mike ‘Coach K’ Krzyweski style of leadership, where he wants people to do well and be proud of what they do,” he explains. The workforce doesn’t need to be constantly reminded of Acura of Peoria’s best practices—they know Dave’s expectations and deliver on them. “He really makes his employees feel like they’re an elite team,” agrees zone sales manager Javier Calderon. “And in his market, he’s the number-one Acura dealer.”

ALL SMILES: Jordan Glasper, who works in the parts department at Acura of Peoria, peruses the shelves filled with OEM parts and accessories.

SET STANDARDS WITH LUXURY IN MIND

Dave is known for wearing a suit every day, and requires all employees interacting with clients to do so from October to April. During those months, it may get uncomfortable in the Arizona heat, but it sends a key message to clients looking for luxury. “It’s a small thing, but it’s important,” says Calderon. “For a client who’s going to spend that kind of money, they want somebody to look the part.”

Sales associates also wear name badges and are trained to pick up on small details about their clients’ lives, from checking whether they have child car seats to asking what they do for a living. And they always leave price negotiations to the sales managers. “My salespeople’s main job is to make customers feel like they’re VIPs,” explains Dave. “Most dealerships have salespeople negotiate the car deal. We want the sales manager, who can make a decision about whether to make a deal, to come out right away.”

Their objective-beating sales show that clients respond well, and rave reviews online frequently mention the sales associates by name.

STAY HUMBLE—AND HUNGRY FOR IMPROVEMENT

The Acura of Peoria team isn’t afraid to ask for outside feedback. Three months before the 2016 Acura Experience evaluations, Dave requested a mock evaluation and came up one point short of the foundational level. He asked his team to turn things around, and improved enough in less than 90 days to become the only gold-level dealer in the zone. “They were already a pretty high-performing dealership,” says Calderon. “But there were a few things that needed to be tweaked, and they really took it to heart.”

Dave often asks friends, family and even his wife’s colleagues to visit the dealership as secret shoppers; they comment honestly on everything from the friendliness of the salespeople to the cleanliness of the windows. “My staff



Photography by Marc Mintz

Awards and accolades

2015

Dave named one of the **Top 40 Under 40** by *Automotive News*

5

Precision Team Winner

2016

Gold winner,
Acura Experience

#1

Dealer by volume
in Arizona

TOP 7

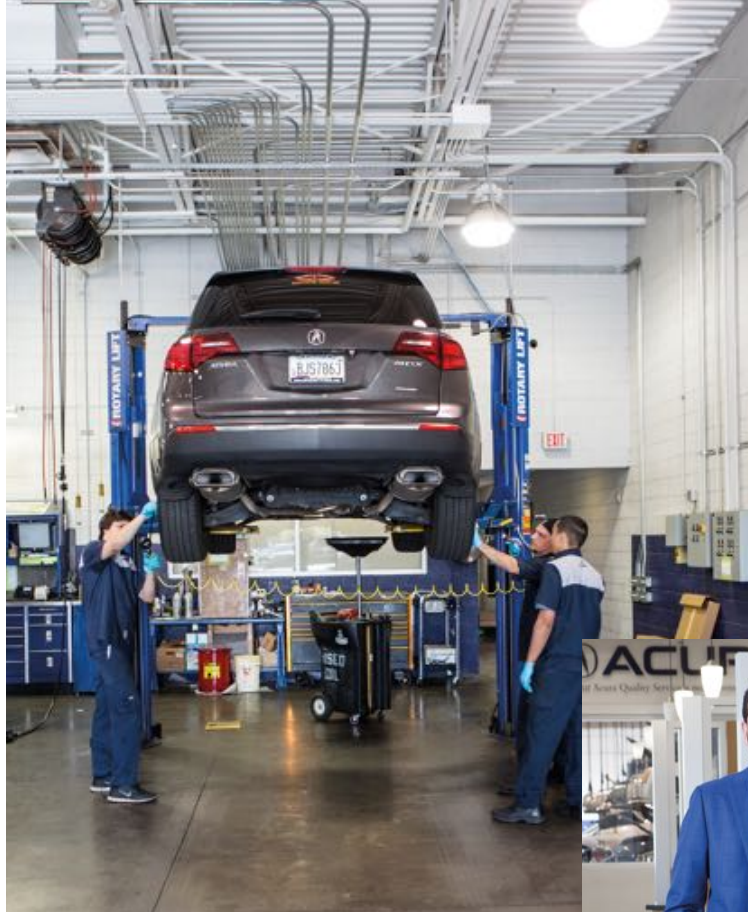
Dealer rank
by net profit

doesn't see these things, because they're here every day," he explains. "So it's really helped us out on how customers see our dealership when they first walk in."

CREATE NEW BUSINESS

"They're a very competitive dealership, and they're always looking at different ways to improve their business," says Cano. "Our industry is not status quo any longer. You've got to find ways to take care of your clients. I can see when I sit down with him that he and his team are thinking, 'OK, what can we do next?'"

A few years ago, the answer was a glass business, so that clients who came to Acura of Peoria for service didn't have to leave to have their windshields replaced. It's boosted revenue, added jobs and made visits more convenient for clients. "We wanted to be a one-stop shop,"



FIVE-STAR SERVICE:

Acura of Peoria has a comprehensive car repair and service center. It features modern precision equipment, state-of-the-art technology and experienced master technicians.



TOP OF THEIR GAME:

Brijen Dave, left, and Gary Callis, service director at Acura of Peoria, are "always looking at different ways to improve their business," says district sales manager Mario Cano. But the team, below left, is close-knit—they celebrate anniversaries, birthdays and holidays together.



explains Dave. "When a client is at your dealership for any automobile needs they have, there's no reason they should have to go to another dealer."

CLIMB THE "NEXT MOUNTAIN"

Dave and his team aren't shy about wanting to be at the top of their district for years to come. "Last December 31, I got a text from two dealer friends of mine who said this year, they're coming after our numbers," Dave recalls. "So I blew up

the texts and posted them in our lounges. Every time employees are eating, they know that once you get on top, people are going to come after you. And right now, they're coming after us. So don't let up!" But they're also looking for an even bigger goal. Dave holds a weekly book club with managers, choosing works of both non-fiction and fiction that talk about building relationships. One recent book compared setting goals to climbing mountains. "So that's our philosophy," he says. "We're on top of this mountain. Where's the next mountain for us to climb?" Together, his team is ready to go higher. 🏔️