

An Interview with Tim Brugh

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Tim Brugh got his start in the automotive industry at age 23, selling cars in Logansport, IN, the town where he grew up. After selling cars for a couple of years, Brugh became the F&I manager at a small Ford and Chrysler/Dodge dealership. There, he was given the chance to work the desk, appraise used cars, and even do a bit of service writing. Brugh credits the store with giving him a valuable, first hand look into all of the operations within the dealership.

Eventually, Brugh moved to a company that had its own administration, direct sales force, and owned its own P&C and life insurance company. Brugh says it was his experience there that paved the way to his current career path. "The company's focus was on signing up dealers through a direct sales force and teaching income development in the F&I office. By signing and servicing over 30 stores in the central part of Indiana and Ohio, I learned what a dealership needs to do to be successful when it comes to customer service."

In 1997, Al Ranieri founded American Auto Guardian, Inc. (AAGI). Ranieri gave Brugh "the opportunity of a lifetime" and hired him as a national sales manager. Working for Ranieri, Brugh considers himself fortunate to have learned from the best in the business how to run a successful administration company. "Although I had no experience calling on agents, Al saw something in me that I didn't see in myself." Brugh has been with the company for more than 15 years. In addition to being the company president, Brugh is now an owner of AAGI.

Family Life

Dealing with the daily pressures of running a successful business is not an easy task. Brugh says spending time with his wife and three kids keep him grounded and provides much needed stress relief. His two oldest children are juniors in college and his youngest is a senior in high school. "Watching my children as they grow into young adults; I'm always asking myself the question, 'Are you teaching them the right things?' Watching my children become young adults and learning to be responsible for their actions is my greatest pleasure."

When his two older kids left for college, Brugh decided to have a tailgate trailer built so they could spend Saturdays going to college football games as a family. So far, he says their tailgate frenzy has been a big hit. They split their time between Indiana University and the University of Missouri. "Not only do our children enjoy tailgating, but their friends and friends' families also love it. We take in eight to ten games a year and average 40-60 people a game."

A Higher Standard

"At AAGI" says Brugh, "we pride ourselves on trying to set a higher standard for the administration of all our products, which consists of AutoGuard™ and Wheelz™ brands, as well as, Certified Limited Warranty, GAP, Etch, Excess Wear & Tear and other automotive aftermarket products. We strive to be the industry leader for agents and dealers across the United States. Our goal is to provide personalized service, superior products, and the best tools in the industry for our partners to succeed."

Brugh is excited about the new website AAGI will soon launch for their agents and dealers. He describes it as a more intuitive system that includes single sign on to their online rating system, QR360™. "Agents and dealers sign in just once for both aagi.com and QR360™ using our newly established single sign on concept." adds Brugh, "Our partners will be provided with features and functionality which will improve their efficiency and allow them to grow their business."

In 2012, AAGI successfully completed an independent audit for the SSAE No. 16, Type 2 for the second year. Brugh says, "The SSAE 16 compliance designation affirms AAGI's commitment to meet the highest industry standards for its administration of automotive aftermarket products. Maintaining this designation takes time and commitment from our entire staff and I'm proud of their continued efforts to do so."

Over the years, Brugh says the thing that has served him well is getting up every day with a plan. When he is not sure what to do, he says he just keeps moving. "You will find opportunities are out there if you're constantly moving. The toughest part of any job is becoming a student of the business. First and foremost, you need to make the decision: Is this a career or just a job? If it's a career then learn everything you can about the auto industry, as well as how your company interacts with auto dealerships. Overall, I think the automotive industry is an exciting industry to be in. I am glad to be a part of it."

This article was written by:



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