

She's the Boss

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Top female executives from around the industry reflect on their experiences and share their secrets for success in a traditionally male-dominated industry.

This summer, we put a call out to our readers for nominations for recognition in this issue. The response we received was immediate and overwhelming. The task of narrowing down the entries to the 25 profiles on these pages took several weeks and countless difficult decisions.

I am never surprised to learn about contributions women have made and are now making to the automotive industry in general or the F&I segment in particular. At every industry event I have attended, I have been joined by countless female executives, business owners, agents, sales professionals and F&I producers.

So if there was ever any novelty in a woman succeeding in a traditionally male-dominated industry, those days have passed. But that doesn't mean women no longer bring a unique perspective to our work. It just means that our value as people and professionals can only be judged by the same standards as everyone else's.

I hope you will agree that the stories that follow prove it. Each of these women earned their spot on our list through hard work and business savvy, and most found their way into the business through the traditional channels: a love of cars, a sales job, a family enterprise. Any business that serves a diverse market benefits from a diverse workforce, and our business is no exception.



Susan Buchholz
Vice President of Event Logistics
American Auto Guardian, Inc.

The logo for American Auto Guardian Inc. (AAGI) features the letters 'AAGI' in a bold, italicized font. The 'A' is red, and the 'G' is black. A small 'TM' trademark symbol is located at the bottom right of the 'I'.

What drew you to the automotive industry?

Honestly, it was Al Ranieri, founder of American Auto Guardian Inc. (AAGI), who lured me into the industry in 2003. He envisioned a company which would grow with the industry, as well as promote industry changes. Once I was hired and learned what aftermarket products were and how they fundamentally impact the industry, I was hooked.

Who has been your greatest mentor and why?

Since joining AAGI, I have had the pleasure of working with two phenomenal mentors: Al Ranieri and Tim Brugh, the current owner and president of AAGI. Al told me I needed to trust those around me to handle their position and responsibilities, allowing me to pursue even more for myself and, in turn, the company. Tim pushed me to aim beyond my limits. The more you drive yourself, the better you will be at conceptualizing change, thereby assisting others in advancing their careers. Both Al and Tim conveyed two essential principles they expected, honesty and ethical behavior, which were values aligned with mine.



Where do you see the industry going in the future?

It's a very exciting time in the automotive industry! As technology takes us in fantastic new directions, each improvement in the car buying process must prioritize the safekeeping of consumer information. Since 2012, AAGI has held the SSAE No. 16, Type 2 designation from an independent audit. SSAE 16 compliance affirms AAGI's commitment to meet the highest industry standards for its administration of automotive aftermarket products. Additionally, with women making up more of the car buying population than ever before, it is my hope that administrators seize the opportunity to increase diversity within their ranks and create more opportunities for women in the near future.

What advice would you give women entering the industry?

Being a woman in business is often challenging, something doubly true in an industry traditionally associated with men. Take time to learn what this industry is about and how great relationships with dealers and agents are formed and maintained. No matter what role a woman takes, confidence, an inquisitive nature and a healthy sense of humor are required.

To read the full article, please visit <http://ae-emagazine.com/industry/shes-the-boss/>.