

**Stay Engaged
Remarks by
NADA Chairman Ed Tonkin
to the
NADA University Academy Class 161 Graduates
March 12, 2010, McLean, Virginia**

I am really happy to be here today, both as NADA chairman and as a father. I never pass up an opportunity to embarrass one of my children, so let me say first off: Nancy, I am SO proud of you. I'm just as proud of all of you. This is a momentous achievement.

The fact that you attended the Academy during the past year says something about your dealerships, too. John [McEleney] touched a little on the turbulence of the past 18 months. I hope you never have to face another year like that in your careers. Many dealers would have thought sending someone to the Academy during such industry upheaval was an extravagance. But your dealer sponsors saw it as an investment – and rightfully so. So to all of the sponsors who are here today, congratulations! You made a very wise decision. What your NADA University Academy students have learned here will help your dealership thrive.

I want to emphasize something that John touched on in his remarks, and it bears repeating: *stay engaged*. Stay engaged with your customers. They'll let you know what you're doing right ... and what you're not, if you listen to them. Stay engaged with every aspect of your business. Know what every department of the dealership is doing all the time. Get to know all of your employees. Stay engaged with N-A-D-A. Read the emails, use nada.org and NADA University as resources, go to the convention. Stay engaged with the world. Stay on top of current events, in the auto industry and beyond. Get to know all of your elected officials.

NADA makes it easy. For instance, you should already be receiving *NADA Headlines*, our daily e-newsletter. The five or ten minutes it takes to read it each day will go a long way toward helping you stay engaged.

Staying engaged requires your active participation too. In my speech at the convention in Orlando last month, I talked about a new attitude at NADA, that our agenda, our priorities as an association must be built from the bottom up – directly from dealer input and dealer priorities – instead of from the top down. You know what's important to you ... so tell us. Every time you get the chance.

Make sure your dealership completes the Dealer Attitude Surveys, which are so important when we approach any issue with the OEMs. Call or email your members of Congress when we ask you to. There is at least one dealership in every single Congressional district in this country. We employ a million people, we account for 20 percent of sales tax revenue and we are generous supporters of charitable causes in our communities. Believe me, we matter, and they listen to us. Get involved with your state or metro association. You'll be surprised how much you can contribute ... and what you'll get out of it.

John and I are both third-generation dealers. Drew [McEleney] and Nancy are fourth-generation. Some of you may even be fifth generation. But make no mistake about it; as proud as we all are of our heritage and of where we've been, it's the future that counts. And that's you. You are today's young lions. You bring skills and knowledge to this industry that we've never seen before. You are unique.

Our industry is changing so rapidly. We need your energy and your passion for this business. We need your knowledge of cutting-edge technology as we discover new ways to reach and serve our customers. For example, I *get* that social media needs to be an important component of our business, but *you know* how to use it most effectively. When you think about it, social media and other new technologies are other ways to stay engaged. So you're already ahead of the game.

Together, we have been through some tough times over the past several months. We are involved in one of the most dynamic, exciting industries in the world. The future for our industry is so bright. And you'll not only be a part of it ... you'll help create it.

Congratulations ... I wish you all the best!

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