



HOW ONE WOMAN
**FOLLOWED HER
INSTINCTS AND
MADE A NAME FOR
HERSELF AS AN
INDEPENDENT DEALER**

CASE STUDY | MAY 2020*

NEXTGEAR
CAPITAL



CASE STUDY OVERVIEW

DEALERSHIP

Ward Motor Company

TYPE

Independent

MARKET

Amarillo, TX

INVENTORY

25 to 30 vehicles
a month

AVERAGE TURN TIME

50 days

UNITS FLOORED IN THE LAST 90 DAYS

29

FLOOR PLAN PROVIDER

NextGear Capital



BREAKING STEREOTYPES

When Kathy Ward started working in the automotive industry, she was just 19 years old and didn't know it was going to lead to a lifelong career journey. After a few years of working in different areas at her first dealership, she decided to try her hand at selling vehicles, which wasn't without its challenges. "When I started selling cars it was in the 1980's and the only women who worked at dealerships were cashiers. Women didn't sell cars back then," says Ward. "A lot of the men during that time were still old school and didn't want to talk to a woman when they were looking to purchase a vehicle. So, I did a lot of research to make sure that I knew everything I could about the vehicles I was selling. I told them to give me 15 minutes and if I couldn't answer their questions, then I would direct them to one of my male colleagues to work with, but I never had to do that."

"WHEN I STARTED SELLING CARS IT WAS IN THE 1980'S AND THE ONLY WOMEN WHO WORKED AT DEALERSHIPS WERE CASHIERS. WOMEN DIDN'T SELL CARS BACK THEN"

- Kathy Ward, Ward Motor Company

Once Ward got comfortable selling cars, she decided it was time to take the next step and start her own independent dealership. "When I decided to start my own dealership I was still very green and I remember calling the Manheim auction in Dallas and asking them what I needed to do to purchase vehicles there. They told

me that if I didn't have an account that I would need to bring cash. I thought opening an account would be a difficult process and I wasn't sure what to do next. Then one of the Manheim employees named Paula Duell asked me why I didn't have a MAFS account because it would make things so much easier. I just clicked with her immediately and decided to take her advice and from that time on, I've always used a floor plan. Then years later when I found out DSC had

become NextGear Capital and was part of the Cox Automotive family, it added a level of security for me because I had already

worked with Manheim for almost 20 years and I knew I would be well taken care of. I've never had a bad interaction with anyone at NextGear and since I'm a very loyal person, I like to stay with the same people I do business with for as long as I can."

WORKING WITH OTHER LENDERS

Ward says that while she still uses her local bank for some of her business needs, NextGear Capital is her primary floor plan provider. "I still use a line of credit through my local bank to help support my business but NextGear Capital has been my main floor plan provider for many years. I always put everything I buy at the auctions on my NextGear Capital floor plan because it's so easy. In contrast, if I had to put a vehicle I purchased at auction on my account through my local bank I would have to deal with checks, or a bank draft and it would be a very tedious process. Having my floor plan through NextGear has given me more flexibility so that I can expand my inventory. I used to only keep about 10 to 15 vehicles on my lot and now I average between 25 to 30. It's also nice to have the flexibility to change out my inventory because if I sell 2 or 3 vehicles in one week, I can go to the auction the next week and get new vehicles to keep things fresh. I thought that managing a floor plan would be hard to do but it's actually been a really seamless process."

THE NEXTGEAR CAPITAL DIFFERENCE

Even though Ward has been using NextGear Capital as her main floor plan provider for several years, she still gets other companies who try to come in and change her mind. "When other companies come in and try to convince me to open a floor plan with them, I always tell them that there's nothing they can do for me or my business that NextGear Capital doesn't already do. For example, at tax time NextGear Capital gave me a temporary credit line increase so I could stock up and get more inventory. They just did it, I didn't even have to ask for it because they already anticipated what my needs were going to be. I also like when they offer promotions like their Bulk Up Sale so that I can get ready for tax time. No matter what's going on in the world, NextGear Capital has been great about communicating changes so I feel like it truly is a partnership. I can't do what I do without having good people backing me and that includes more than just providing me with additional funding, it's also the relationships I have with everyone at NextGear Capital. From my Performance Manager, Angie Simpson, to the Client Experience team, everybody I work with always makes the process easy. I've called Angie at 9:30 at night before about a problem I'm experiencing, and she always answers my phone call even though she doesn't have to. Everyone there always goes the extra mile."

“When other companies come in and try to convince me to open a floor plan with them, I always tell them that there’s nothing they can do for me or my business that NextGear Capital doesn’t already do”

- Kathy Ward, Ward Motor Company



ADAPTING TO CHANGING TIMES

While Ward says that working with NextGear Capital has been an easy process, she admits that she's been hesitant to adopt technology into her daily business processes. "I'm not shy about the fact that I don't like using technology, so it's a big deal that Angie has me doing things inside of Account Portal like clearing my audits and using Rapid Pay to floor my vehicles. I fought kicking and screaming for a long time and even used to FedEx my titles to Angie to process because I didn't feel comfortable doing so on my own. But Angie was patient with me and once I felt comfortable, she taught me how to use Account Portal which is so easy to use and now I do everything I can on my phone. I've also started using Manheim Express to look for inventory."

A TRAILBLAZER

Even though things have changed since the 1980's, Ward says that the automotive industry is still predominately male. "I have a tremendous female following but I still have people who come in and ask if my husband is here and I laugh and tell them 'not unless he quit his day job', so there are still people who are surprised that I'm the one running the dealership. If a female comes into the dealership and hasn't purchased a car on her own before, I make sure that she's comfortable and that I'm speaking to her and answering her questions without talking down to her because that's the last thing that I would want someone to do to me. Women make about 75% of the business decisions in their homes, so I think it's important to treat both women and men with the same level of respect. I'm a one woman show so I do literally everything on my own and I've learned over the years that the key to success is being fearless but also to make sure that you don't grow too quickly, otherwise you're going to get in over your head."



"THE KEY TO SUCCESS IS BEING FEARLESS BUT ALSO TO MAKE SURE THAT YOU DON'T GROW TOO QUICKLY, OTHERWISE YOU'RE GOING TO GET IN OVER YOUR HEAD."

- Kathy Ward, Ward Motor Company



INVESTING IN HER FUTURE

When it comes to planning for the future, Ward says she has a clear plan in mind for what the next few years look like. "My goals over the next few years are to continue to grow but also to have more flexibility so that I can focus on doing things I enjoy like supporting the military, which my son is a part of. Since the lease in the building I've been operating out of for the past nine years is coming to an end, I decided it was time to bring in 2 new partners and move into a new building so that I can still serve the community I've been a part of for so many years. I have customers that I sold their first vehicle to when they were still a kid and now, they're coming in and their kids are buying cars from me. I've built my reputation on the principles of hard work and trustworthiness and I think that's why my customers have been so loyal to me throughout the years."



“I HAVE CUSTOMERS THAT I SOLD THEIR FIRST VEHICLE TO WHEN THEY WERE STILL A KID AND NOW, THEY’RE COMING IN AND THEIR KIDS ARE BUYING CARS FROM ME. I’VE BUILT MY REPUTATION ON THE PRINCIPLES OF HARD WORK AND TRUSTWORTHINESS AND I THINK THAT’S WHY MY CUSTOMERS HAVE BEEN SO LOYAL TO ME THROUGHOUT THE YEARS.”

- Kathy Ward, Ward Motor Company

ABOUT NEXTGEAR CAPITAL

NextGear Capital is the largest independent inventory finance company in North America, providing flexible lines of credit for auto dealers to buy used vehicles from over 1,000 auto and other vehicle sources throughout North America. With a client base of more than 20,000 dealers, NextGear Capital provides comprehensive services and support enabling dealers to buy and sell more inventory through self-service management tools, title services, records management and collateral protection. Headquartered in Carmel, Indiana, NextGear Capital is a Cox Automotive brand.

For more information, visit nextgearcapital.com.

*This case study and testimonial were received via interview, audio and/or video submission. It is based on the dealer's individual experiences, reflecting real life experiences of that NextGear Capital dealer. NextGear Capital does not claim they are typical results that dealers generally will achieve. This dealer's experiences may not be indicative of future performance or success of any other dealers. Some of the testimonials have been shortened so the whole message is not displayed due to length and/or relevance. All advances made in California by NextGear Capital are made pursuant to NextGear Capital's California Finance Lender License #603G505.

NEXTGEAR CAPITAL™

COX AUTOMOTIVE™

© 2020 Cox Automotive. All Rights Reserved.

