

EVENTS/CAUSES

Mercedes-Benz Club finds common ground with Airstream

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Image from Mercedes-Benz film

By JOE MCCARTHY

Mercedes-Benz Club of America is teaming up with vehicle manufacturer Airstream to provide members of both organizations enhanced benefits.

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The multi-year partnership will yield the Airstream owner's community, a demographic that overlaps with Mercedes-Benz Club members. Since the club is first and foremost a place to develop friendships and promote camaraderie between fellow drivers, the expanded network will only bolster its mission.

"Our partnership with Airstream Interstate and Autobahn owners gives MBCA the opportunity to expand our community of members with people who are as passionate about the Mercedes-Benz brand as we are," said Lisa A. Juhl, director of marketing at [Mercedes-Benz Club of America](#), Colorado Springs, CO.

"At the end of the day, our Club is as much about the friendships and experiences we share together, on and off the road, as it is about the luxury vehicles we drive," she said.

Camaraderie and German engineering

Following the partnership, Airstream will now buy a one-year membership for every

customer who buys an Airstream Interstate or Autobahn. Both vehicles are based on the Mercedes-Benz Sprinter Chassis.

Qualifying MBCA members will receive a \$500 discount on either of these models from Airstream.



Airstream Autobahn van

MBCA is a grassroots organization in many senses. Although it is endorsed by Mercedes-Benz, it was started by drivers enthralled by the brand.

Ms. Juhl emphasized that the organization remains a center for building relationships.

Airstream has an established relationship with Mercedes that stretches back to 2004. The two brands recently collaborated on the latest Autobahn luxury van that was introduced at the Mercedes-Benz Sprinter national dealer meeting.



Airstream Autobahn van

MBCA is looking toward its next major event in August, the "Legends of Autobahn" that will take place in Monterey, CA, and draws thousands of auto enthusiasts annually. The

event will lead into the Concours d'Elegance in Pebble Beach.

Brand environment

Clubs that bring together luxury consumers and offer exclusive experiences are an effective way for brands to build loyalty. Indeed, as club members build relationships, their connection to the hosting brand will likely increase as that brand will be tied up in the relationships.

Other brands leverage this opportunity.

For instance, Jaguar Land Rover collaborated with private club operator ClubCorp to host a series of events throughout the United States to boost brand awareness among ClubCorp members.

The “A Night of Luxury” events gave ClubCorp members an opportunity to drive the latest Jaguar and Land Rover models while enjoying other activities. Stoking new and old business connections with effusive evenings outside of a typical sales environment is an effective way to raise brand loyalty and boost sales ([see story](#)).

Also, luxury brands are capitalizing on the affluent audience found at CORE:, a private club in New York, to boost sales and build relationships.

Brands such as Audi and Leading Hotels of the World have entered the Member Benefits program to gain exclusive and sustained interaction with high-net-worth consumers. Since word-of-mouth and personal interaction still play a tremendous role in securing sales, tapping the influential environments of private clubs holds clear advantages ([see story](#)).

When combining clubs, it is important to retain the initial sense of exclusivity.

"These are two groups of owners who both really value luxury brands and we thought it would be a great idea to bring them together," Ms. Juhl said.

Final Take

Joe McCarthy, editorial assistant on Luxury Daily, New York

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