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Audi taps veterans' skills to reach US sales goals

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By ERIN SHEA

Audi of America is helping those who served in the United States military by launching a new program for skilled technicians to work in its dealerships.

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Luxury Daily

The new “Veterans to Technicians” program aids veterans in finding employment and allows the German automaker to maintain its high quality of craftsmanship. Since Audi is looking to break its record sales in the U.S. this year, the automaker is looking for the best employees to help get it there.

“We are forecasting strong growth of Audi vehicles in operation based on the positive gains the Audi brand is achieving the U.S. market,” said Reinhard Fischer, director of strategy at [Audi of America](#), Herndon, VA. “To deliver the service quality and the timeliness of booking appointments that our customers expect, we need to increase the number of technicians in our dealership.

“Audi is not alone with this challenge, as the overall auto industry is forecasting a shortage in technicians,” he said. “But we decided to seek a special, out-of-the-box concept to address this need.

“Further this also supports our duty as a company operating in the U.S. to give back to the

communities that are our home. It is a benefit for all involved parties and it is the right thing to do.”

Veterans to Technicians

Audi reported record sales last year and is expecting to break that record this year. The automaker intends to sell 200,000 new cars per year before 2020.

Since Audi plans to be increasing the number of cars sold in the U.S., it estimates that the demand for skilled technicians will also increase.

Therefore, Audi is recruiting veterans who have automotive knowledge, leadership skills and uncompromising values. However, those with power generation, aviation, welding, electronics, hydraulic systems and maritime systems experience will be considered as well.

This program supports the Veterans Opportunity to Work to Hire Heroes Act, which provides federal support for veterans leaving the military and for employers.

The automaker created this program with the help of CALIBRE, a management and technology service company that helps the U.S. Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs create support programs for service members leaving the military. CALIBRE will help connect veterans to Audi dealerships.

After a background check and screening process, those veterans chosen by Audi will undergo the FastTrack two-week training program to learn about Audi products and technologies to become certified technicians.

To spread the word, Audi created a Web site that gives the details of the Veterans to Technicians program. The site can be accessed at <http://www.audivets.com>.



Veterans to Technicians Web site

Since finding quality technicians can be difficult for luxury automakers, Audi is tapping a strong group of skilled potential employees.

“Finding qualified technicians is one of the most challenging tasks facing an independent dealer,” Mr. Fischer said. “It is one of the tasks where the manufacturer and

dealers need to work together to find good quality candidates that bring the right skills, the right attitude and train them together on all things Audi.

“The dealer benefits by receiving strong candidates who have been prescreened and the dealers can then focus on finding the right fit into the culture and specific needs of the store,” he said.

“It also benefits the dealer since Audi has a predefined training program for the new technicians, which is optimized for delivering Audi product and cultural knowledge in a compact format.”

Ahead of the competition

Audi is focusing on its U.S. goals of becoming the No. 1 luxury auto brand and has already made some improvements to its U.S. strategy.

For instance, Audi is investing \$5 billion in three years to expand and update its showrooms to help boost the brand’s presence in North America.

The automaker recently opened a new flagship showroom in New York with its sister brand Volkswagen, which is the largest real estate investment by the Volkswagen Group. Audi is aiming for the showroom and dealership updates to increase its exposure in New York and the U.S. ([see story](#)).

Also, the automaker is making the most of its placement in the Iron Man 3 movie which debuts May 3.

Audi announced that it will again be featured throughout the entire third installment in the Iron Man series, after having a prominent place in the first two. A placement like this in a large feature film could give Audi an additional boost in a highly competitive luxury auto market ([see story](#)).

In addition to helping Audi reach its sales goals and helping veterans find employment, this initiative also increases Audi’s customer service.

“Customer delight is one of the core missions of Audi and is heavily influenced by the ownership experience,” Mr. Fischer said.

“By having highly qualified technicians in our dealerships we can make sure that we can react quickly to the customers need as well guarantee that repairs are done in high quality, which drives the positive image of Audi in the eyes of our customers,” he said. “

“The program also allows us to show that Audi is a good citizen and joins with this program the good cause of supporting our veterans to transition from the military times to a solid civilian job, recognizing them for their personal sacrifice.”

Final take

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