Greg Suzuki



It's 11:45 a.m. on a recent Friday at the Jaguar Land Rover Anaheim Hills dealership – and Greg Suzuki is being pulled in four different directions.

Literally.

His phone is ringing – a woman from Santa Monica is on the line. She wants to buy a Land Rover and it's come down to buying it from Greg or another dealer in Los Angeles.

"Let me see what I can do," he says as he jots down a series of notes and numbers. "I'll call you right back."

Just as he finishes speaking, one of his colleagues walks into his office.

"Greg, I need your help with these customers," Jason Nhim says. "I'm having trouble closing them."

Suzuki to the rescue. He heads over to Jason's office to make sure the deal gets done.

"He's amazing," Jason says. "That's why I wanted to bring him in to close the sale. My first week here, I shadowed Greg and I decided then that I wanted to emulate him. He's as good as it gets. He knows how to deal with people – and every situation -- extremely well. He has a calm, professional personality that customers like."

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Meanwhile, 25 feet away from where Greg and Jason are closing their deal, caterers are setting up

for the dealership's special monthly awards luncheon – and guess who is scheduled to receive one of the day's biggest award?

Suzuki, of course – recipient of the coveted Journey to Excellence Award from Jaguar Land Rover.

"Greg — come on over and join us," general manager Sven Larson asks.

Not so quick Sven. He has to finish the deal first.

And while all this is going on – two deals in the works and a special lunch -- a reporter is waiting to interview Suzuki for this article.

Finally, two hours later, after the deal was sealed, Suzuki flops down in the chair in his office.

"Whew, what a day," he says. "What a crazy day."

And it's only half over.

When Larson was tapped to become the dealership's general manager – after the Rusnak Auto Group rescued it from bankruptcy following a successful court administered buy/sell with the previous dealer principal – he had to put together a new sales team nearly from scratch.

Suzuki had left the dealership during the darkest days under the management of the previous auto group. He defected to the Jaguar Land Rover store in Newport Beach. It was a trek from his Corona, California home, but he was elated to be selling the automobile he loves so much.

When Larson was trying to figure out what to do next in building his sales team, the dealership's controller, Sandy Holguin, told him, "Greg is someone you should try to get back."

Funny that she would say that: Every time Larson looked at one of the plaques on the wall of the dealership, one name jumped out at him: Greg Suzuki.

"I went on a mission to get him back here," Larson says.

After several months of conversations, Suzuki agreed to return — and the staff celebrated.

Suzuki is not your "typical" automobile sales person. He actually shatters the generalization – or "reputation" -- of the archetypal sales person. While some individuals may want to run away from some sales people, others gravitate toward Suzuki and want to stay and chat with him. He's just that type of guy.

"Greg is the consummate professional – *the consummate professional*," Larson says. "People love working with him. He's straight forward, honest, very responsible and extremely knowledgeable about our product. He has a very high level of integrity and is a person you know you can trust. You know he's not going to steer you wrong. He's methodical in everything he does -- and is a tireless worker. He loves what he does and it shows. You can't function without loving what you do."

When customers come in for service at the dealership, they usually head right over to grab gourmet coffee and pastries and work on their laptops or iPads in the customer waiting area.

Not Suzuki's customers. They head right over to his office to say hello, give him a hug and chat with

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him.

"It's incredible how often that happens," Larson says. "I'm amazed. I'm standing there watching people roll up into service and then they immediately head over to see Greg. It's uncanny. That says a lot about him."



Suzuki, a Japanese-American, was born in Los Angeles and raised in Orange, California. He learned about respect, working hard and helping people early in life – from his parents. He was the type of young boy who never steered up trouble or problems. He was just a kind, thoughtful young man who cared about others.

"A heart of gold," says one of Suzuki's closest friends, Tom McNerney. "He was raised the right way. He has excellent manners and integrity."

After graduating from California State University at Fullerton with a marketing degree (with an emphasis in communications and advertising), Greg worked in advertising but got the itch to start his own antique and vintage clothing business.

He and his wife Victoria have established several businesses of this nature throughout Orange County, including Victoriana & Company (named after their oldest daughter) and All Dolled Up.

Once the businesses began running smoothly and Victoria was able to handle the daily chores herself, Greg decided to make another career move in 2001. One of his closest friends is in marketing for Land Rover and suggested to Greg that he go into sales. Why not, he thought: he could sell and he loved Land Rovers.

It could not have worked out better.

"I wouldn't be in this business if I wasn't selling Land Rovers," he says. "I love everything about the car – the safety of it, the look, the off-road capabilities. There's nothing like it. It's a very fun car to drive."

Suzuki is considered one of the most knowledgeable people on Land Rovers, Range Rovers and Jaguars. He lives and breathes the automobiles, their features, capabilities and quality.

When Larson dispatched several employees to the training for the

new 2014 Range Rover Sport, everyone had concerns because the manufacturer was switching from a V8-375 horsepower engine to a supercharged V6-340HP. Not Suzuki.

"When he came back, he was ecstatic," Larson says. "He said the vehicle was even better than before."

The reason is because the new model weighs 800 pounds less due to an all new high-strength aluminum unibody architecture. The new model is not only stiffer and stronger, it performs comparably to the V8 at 375HP and with improved fuel consumption (it's gone from 15-16 mpg to 19-20).

"No one knows more about Land Rovers and Jaguars than Greg," McNerney says. "He's a sales person, technician and engineer rolled into one when it comes to these vehicles. He's what a sales person should be like."

Suzuki also knows the Land Rover-Jaguar customer is unlike others. They're sophisticated, savvy, intelligent. They know what they're looking for. They're not like someone shopping for a traditional domestic car, which can be found on every major street in every city throughout the county, unlike Rovers and Jags.

But most important, it's Suzuki's persona that makes him unique and special.

"He is the kindest, warmest gentleman you can ever meet or work with," says Annie Kang of Jaguar Land Rover Newport Beach.

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— Annie Kang, Jaguar Land Rover Newport Beach

"He's the kind of person who puts other people before himself. He is so unselfish. He is 200% about integrity and salesmanship and sets a platform for what is expected from a steward of Land Rover way."

Kang was working at a high-end car dealership in the fleet division when she was hired by Newport Beach Land Rover as an Internet Sales Manager.

"I was very nervous and didn't have much confidence," she says. "It was like I was being thrown to the wolves. But Greg took me under his wing and coached me. He held my hand through the entire learning process. He's so endearing. He showed me and taught me everything. That's why I'm as successful as I am."

In the frantic, wild and crazy world of automobile sales, Suzuki is a model of patience, tolerance, character, steadiness and consistency.

"He's every employers dream," Kang says. "For Greg, it's not about the money – it's about the experience. And he makes the experience memorable for everyone – family, friends, colleagues, and customers. You could never meet a better person in your life than Greg Suzuki."

— Rick Weinberg, Editor, California Business Journal

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