



# Dealer Profile

Pickering RV Centre  
Pickering, Ontario, Canada

Graham Smith



## Our source:

We talked with Graham Smith, owner of Pickering RV Centre – a recipient of the 2006 Circle of Excellence Award and the 20/20 Vision Award this year.

## Dealership history:

Pickering RV Centre was originally founded as Pickering Motorhomes in 1978. Graham purchased the dealership in 2004. "I first got to know this dealership as a consumer buying my first RV here about five years ago.

"I liked the friendly disposition of the staff and knew the dealership had a very good reputation. The dealership had, however, become somewhat stagnant in recent years. My challenge was to leverage the reputation of the dealership, while modernizing its operation and expanding its clientele.

"Being relatively new to the business, I've sometimes faced a steep learning curve, however, I have tried to bring a creative approach to the business every day which I believe has contributed to our early success."

## Dealership features:

"Pickering RV is a 'boutique dealership' located on a three-acre paved property just outside the greater Toronto area. We have 10 full-time staff members along with additional seasonal help. We offer only motor homes with Winnebago being our prime product offering.

"We offer 10 full-size service bays with plans for expansion on the site within the next six months. Along with our 20/20 award, we have also won local awards for service. As our dealership is somewhat out of the way,

providing superior service is an integral offering to attracting and keeping customers."

## What makes your dealership special?

"First, we offer personalized service by giving our customers the best of care before AND after the sale by being courteous, listening intently and giving of our time selflessly. People remember how they are treated and even if they aren't ready to buy on the first visit they should have a positive impression of the dealership and be willing to come back another day.

"Our other focus is on giving great attention to detail especially during the delivery process. When they arrive, there is a sign by their coach with their name on it congratulating them on their purchase. While we do the walk through, each of my staff members, from sales to service, make an effort to stop by and welcome the new owners by name. It adds that extra touch of personalized attention."

## Advertising strategies:

"We have used a combination of approaches including direct mail, print and radio advertising, but I would consider our Web site our most important advertising tool."

## Most successful promotion:

"As an owner of a small dealership, I spend a lot of time outside the dealership trying to increase public awareness. We exhibit our units in a variety of events where there is a large gathering of people.

"I find these venues allow me to create a dialogue with people who may not have been exposed to RVing before. I feel this type of public

exposure helps build dealership recognition and drives more customers to our lot. (2464)

"We have also partnered with Go RVing Canada for sporting events in the area."

## Which shows do you attend?

"This past year we exhibited at the Toronto RV Show held in January put on by the Ontario RV Dealers Association (ORVDA). As a small dealer, it is a significant investment, especially in the middle of the off-season. But with the amount of qualified traffic it has generated, there has been a tremendous return on the investment. As a dealership that hadn't exhibited in a show for years, it has created a whole new clientele base.

"We will also be exhibiting at ORVDA's first Toronto RV Fall Show being held this October."

## What is the best way to work an RV show?

"We like to have a variety of TV's throughout our display continually running videos. I like to have the rolling lifestyle video playing inside and around outside the units. Customers really enjoy watching videos such as "A Closer Look" to see how the motor homes are made. I feel it indulges the senses and the imagery is especially inviting in the middle of winter!"

## One "tip" or piece of advice you'd like to share with other dealers:

"Get the right people working for you. People who share your vision, are open minded, are team players, who enjoy people, and who enjoy working in the RV industry as a career. You need staff that believes that 'customer first' is not a cliché."