

A woman with long brown hair, smiling, wearing a dark jacket over a light green shirt. She is standing in what appears to be an automotive workshop or dealership, with blurred cars and equipment in the background.

Women in Automotive:

Shaping the Future of Automotive Retail

Female leaders in the automotive industry are hungry for more opportunities to increase women's presence, and are optimistic about new possibilities for women at their dealerships. They've embraced the reality that as the automotive industry continues to evolve, the role of women in the business is becoming more important than ever; and the opportunities offered by a more diverse workforce, with women as an integral part, are on the rise.

CDK GLOBAL®

More Women in The Business Is Good Business

A study conducted in June 2021 by the CDK Research & Insights Team found that female leaders clearly believe that including more women in their workforce is important for their business.

- 49% of female automotive leaders were interested in becoming more involved in increasing female representation.
- 59% were likely to recommend another woman to a career in the automotive retail industry.

This is particularly true for those women working in executive-level roles (e.g. GMs, Dealer Principals, etc.):

- 58% indicated interest in increasing female representation.
- 62% indicated they were likely to recommend another woman to a career in the automotive industry.

Even those in influencer roles (e.g. Sales Director, Service Manager, etc.) have a 40% level of interest in bringing in more women, making it clear that the enthusiasm around increasing the role of females in automotive is definitely growing.

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Recruitment Is a Key Part of the Movement

Effective and relevant recruiting of future female employees is a crucial part of expanding the dealer employee landscape. Some of the key issues facing this effort include:

- How to drive better collaboration with seasoned non-female employees.
- How to develop and motivate a workforce of women who really want to excel.
- Experiences in leading a team of professionals and best hiring practices.

Successfully navigating these issues is just the beginning. After attracting female employees, dealers need to give them a career path.

Demand For More Women in Leadership

When asked about specific initiatives, female leaders indicate they're very interested in advancing the roles women have in automotive — and are most interested in participating in events that focus on building leadership. They are also keenly aware of the importance of advancing career development skills for women.

- 56% of respondents are interested in leadership training for women in automotive
- 54% want career development programs for women

The study confirms a high interest in topics like:

- Seminars on leadership — Women are uniquely suited to make dealerships better by being themselves and not trying to be like men
- Climbing the ladder without intimidation
- Sharing success stories and how-to tips for ways women deal with struggles in a leadership role

In addition, female leaders are clearly looking at other key aspects of furthering the training and career growth for women as executives and managers.

- 50% of respondents are interested in career mapping exercises for women
- 44% are looking for specialized onboarding for women
- 44% seek to form partnerships with women-owned organizations
- 43% believe in hiring policies to increase female representation



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of respondents are interested in career mapping exercises for women

Source: CDK Research and Insights, 2021

Valuable Perspective That Demands Support

The benefits that female leaders bring to the automotive business include a freshness of viewpoint missing from less diverse environments. When asked to describe their approach to managing a dealership, they frequently mention prioritizing core values like:

- Collaboration
- Fairness
- Honesty
- Integrity
- Inclusiveness

These core values may be seen as a direct response to the reservations they have had about the historically male-dominated business. Their concerns generally fall into three primary categories:

- 63% mention challenges to “breaking through the boys’ club”
- Fears of hitting a “glass ceiling”
- Concerns around a healthy work/life balance

For these reasons, female leaders call out the need for further education on how to navigate gender stereotypes, manage relationships with coworkers/employees and taking steps to build gender equality in the workplace. Some specific areas of interest include:

- How to foster a female-friendly environment in a male-dominated industry
- Dealing with gender bias
- Understanding the path to promotion for men vs. women
- How to get ahead in their careers without selling out



Training to Fuel the Movement From CDK Global

Research by CDK Global shows opportunities to embrace the inclusion of women in automotive by:

- Building awareness of CDK-sponsored initiatives to bolster involvement by women in retail events.
- Leveraging customer interest by hosting initiatives that increase female representation in the auto industry.
- Target executive-level roles by marketing career and leadership programs that can later be internally implemented for influencers.

Female leaders also expressed a desire for events that are local to their dealership, especially if led by women who understand their perspective and work environment:

- 40% are interested in women-only local dealership events
- 39% would become involved in a women-led speaker series
- 39% are looking for women-only industry webinars
- 36% would be open to participating in women-led product user group seminars
- 35% are interested in women-only mentorship programs

These responses mesh with CDK's history of conducting local, regional and national events to support our women leaders and retailers. Our commitment has included partnering with other organizations that support women in the automotive industry, and offering several mentoring programs over the years which have included participation by our executive leaders.

The Future of Women in Automotive Retail Is Now

The movement to embrace the value of women in automotive continues to enjoy the growing support of key players throughout the industry. The automotive industry offers many opportunities for women in whatever discipline they choose — whether it's sales, marketing, engineering, accounting, or other areas.

Most female leaders are optimistic about the rise of a female presence in automotive retail. When asked, these leaders said they would recommend that women pursue automotive retail as a career for a number of compelling reasons, including:

- Dealerships offer exciting careers in a wide range of areas
- Excellent opportunity for career advancement and growth
- Women bring a unique perspective long missing from the traditional business model

CDK has been active in our support of women retailers since 2001 and has been advocating on their behalf: We are continually researching the subject, including conducting dealer interviews at NADA, to better understand and address this need. Our MDWR team has been expanded to include a senior leader dedicated to advocating for our women dealers. And we are always adding programs, webinars and customer engagements to drive awareness and support.

As part of our advocacy for women in automotive, we are constantly looking for ways to let their voices be heard. CDK is on a never-ending mission to support and grow the presence of women in the industry, and ensure that they have a strategic partner that they can grow with.



The industry has come a long way for women as we continue the movement toward parity for women in the automotive industry. There are opportunities for women to flourish now in all departments. It's an exciting time for women to shine!

Kathy Gilbert, Senior Director, Minority Dealer Relations and Women in Retail, CDK Global / founding member, Women in Automotive





Women know cars. Women grow up around cars. Women fix cars. Women build cars. It's important to see other women in the business. There are so many opportunities for women in this industry. We just need to step up and find those opportunities and pursue them.

Kathy Gilbert, Senior Director, Minority Dealer Relations and Women in Retail, CDK Global / founding member, Women in Automotive

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