

# Ascent Dealer Services Expands Offerings for Independent Dealers

## New Support Model Targets Growth for Small Operators

Ascent Dealer Services has introduced an expanded suite of operational support tools aimed at independent dealers across the United States. The company announced the move this week, positioning the new offerings as a response to growing demand from small and mid-sized dealerships that lack the resources of large franchise networks. The announcement follows months of pilot testing with a select group of dealers, who reported measurable improvements in inventory turnover and customer retention during the trial period.

The independent dealer market has faced increasing pressure in recent years. Consolidation among manufacturers, shifting consumer buying habits, and tighter margins have made it harder for smaller operators to compete. Ascent Dealer Services said its new package is designed to address these challenges by bundling technology tools, training modules, and supply chain coordination under a single subscription model. The company declined to disclose pricing but said the structure is intended to be accessible for dealerships with annual revenues below \$10 million.

For dealers who sign up, the program includes a cloud-based inventory management system that syncs with major point-of-sale platforms. It also provides access to a shared logistics network that the company says can reduce delivery times by an average of two days. Dealers can opt into a customer relationship management module that automates follow-up communications and service reminders. The training component covers digital marketing, staff management, and compliance updates, delivered through a mix of live webinars and on-demand video.

## Why Independent Dealers Are Turning to Third-Party Support

The decision to launch a broader service offering comes at a time when many independent dealers are reconsidering how they operate. Rising rents, labor shortages, and the complexity of e-commerce integration have pushed some owners to explore outsourcing non-core functions. Industry analysts note that third-party service providers have grown in popularity across retail categories, and the dealer segment appears to be following that trend.

[Ascent Dealer Services](#) positions itself as a single point of contact for dealers who would otherwise need to contract with multiple vendors. The company consolidates services that historically required separate agreements with software firms, training academies, and

logistics providers. That consolidation is intended to simplify budgeting and reduce administrative overhead for dealer principals who often handle those tasks themselves.

One dealer who participated in the pilot said the main benefit was time saved on back-office tasks. The dealer reported cutting weekly administrative work by roughly six hours after adopting the system. That time was redirected toward sales floor activity and customer engagement. The company said such outcomes were consistent across the pilot group, though it did not release aggregate data.

## **Market Context and Competitive Landscape**

The market for dealer support services has become more crowded in the past three years. Several national firms now offer software suites tailored to automotive, marine, and powersports dealers. Ascent Dealer Services differentiates itself by emphasizing integration across categories that other providers treat separately. The company's approach combines software with human-led training and logistics coordination, a blend that some competitors lack.

Another factor working in the company's favor is the growing willingness among small business owners to pay for managed services. A 2024 survey by a national small business association found that 43 percent of independent retailers now use at least one subscription-based operational service, up from 28 percent in 2021. The shift reflects a broader move away from owning software licenses and toward paying for outcomes. Ascent Dealer Services appears to be tapping that same trend.

The company said it plans to add a financing module later this year that would help dealers offer in-house payment plans to customers. That module would integrate with the existing CRM system, allowing dealers to manage credit applications and payment schedules from the same dashboard used for inventory and customer communications. The company did not provide a launch date but said development is in its final stages.

## **How the Program Works in Practice**

Dealers who enroll in the expanded program begin with an onboarding phase that includes data migration from existing systems, staff training sessions, and configuration of the inventory management tool. The company assigns a dedicated account manager to each dealer, a role that serves as the primary point of contact for technical support and service coordination. That account manager conducts quarterly business reviews to identify areas for adjustment.

The logistics component works through a network of regional distribution hubs that the company has contracted with over the past two years. Dealers can route incoming shipments

through these hubs, which consolidate freight and coordinate last-mile delivery. The company says this setup reduces shipping costs for dealers who order from multiple suppliers, since freight can be combined rather than sent in separate partial loads.

Training content is refreshed monthly, with modules based on industry trends and regulatory changes. Recent additions include sessions on electric vehicle service requirements and updated safety protocols for handling lithium-ion batteries. The company said it sources training material from industry associations and regulatory bodies, though it did not name specific partners.

## **Reception and Early Indicators**

Early feedback from dealers who have adopted the new package has been generally positive. Several cited the inventory management tool as the most valuable component, noting that it reduced instances of overstock and stockout. Others pointed to the CRM automation as a major time saver, particularly for dealers who had been using manual spreadsheets to track customer interactions.

One dealer in the Midwest said the system helped identify slow-moving inventory that had been sitting on the lot for months. By marking those units for promotion and adjusting reorder points, the dealer cleared the aged stock within six weeks. The company said such outcomes are common when dealers use the full suite of tools rather than picking individual modules.

Ascent Dealer Services has indicated that it will continue to add features based on dealer requests. A feedback loop built into the platform allows users to suggest improvements and vote on proposed features. The company said the most requested addition so far has been integration with QuickBooks and other accounting software. That integration is currently in development.

## **Outlook for the Independent Dealer Channel**

The independent dealer channel remains a significant part of the retail economy, particularly in rural and suburban areas where big-box stores are less common. Manufacturers often rely on these dealers to reach customers in markets that would otherwise be underserved. By helping those dealers operate more efficiently, service providers like Ascent Dealer Services may play a role in keeping the channel viable.

At the same time, the barriers to entry for new service providers are relatively low. The company will need to continue innovating to maintain its position. The addition of the financing module and accounting integration suggests the company is aware of that pressure and is moving to build a wider moat around its customer base.

For now, the company appears focused on execution. The pilot results, while limited in scope, offer a plausible case for broader adoption. If the company can maintain its service quality as it scales, the new package may become a standard tool for independent dealers looking to professionalize their operations without taking on the overhead of a full corporate staff.