

WORK & wealth

how i did it

TIP-TOP CAR DEALER

LISA M. DUBRIEL ANTIOCH FORD

When car dealers see a woman walk through the door, or so the story goes, they gear up to take her for a ride. But that wasn't the case with 46-year-old Lisa M. Dubriel. She didn't just get keys to a car, she got a dealership. After a career in banking and 18 years of automotive experience, Dubriel bought Antioch Ford in Antioch, California, in August 2000, becoming one of the few African-American women to own a dealership in the automotive industry. Now, with 38 employees, sales of nearly 600 new and used vehicles a year, and revenues firmly in the black, her company has earned Ford's Blue Oval Certification, a distinction given to dealerships that maintain a high standard of customer service. Here's how this driven native of San Jose, California, steered her way to success:

REVVING UP: "While I was working as a loan officer, one of my clients offered me a job in the finance department of his car dealership. I accepted and became excited about the industry. There wasn't a job at the dealership that I didn't do. Knowing the business well, I thought, *If these men can do it, why can't I?* I applied for the Ford-sponsored National Automobile Dealers Association Training Program in McClean, Virginia, and three and a half years after graduating from the 52-week program, Ford helped me purchase my own company. A 10-percent down payment is required; for example, if the dealership is a \$3 million business, you put down \$300,000."

DRIVING SALES: "Operating a dealership is like running five businesses in one. Every area—from parts and service to new- and used-car sales and our full-service auto-detail shop—requires my attention. As a small stand-alone operation that's not on a main artery, we work harder to get customers into the store. But we've thrived. In three years, we've outgrown our lot thanks to increased business in the parts and service department, where revenues have tripled."

STAYING SHARP: "Today's consumers are smarter. They'll tell you what they're willing to pay, and if you refuse, they'll buy elsewhere. There aren't enough African-American women in this industry. With a company like Ford willing to assist you, there are definite rewards and the potential to earn a very comfortable living." (For information on Ford's training program, contact Zenaida Wright at [313] 621-2827 or visit dd.ford.com.)

—SHERRI A. MCGEE ▷

