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Consultant Jerome will offer dealer management system

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Sandi Jerome believes the time is right for DealerStar.

Jerome, a longtime dealership technology consultant, has developed the dealership management system, scheduled to be available nationwide in January.

Unlike competing systems, DealerStar has open source code that lets software vendors and dealership users modify the software to add functions.

DealerStar's emergence will send even more waves through a marketplace that has seen more changes in one year than in the past decade.

A year ago, Universal Computer Systems Inc. acquired Reynolds and Reynolds Co. for \$2.8 billion. Then Microsoft Corp. said it was developing a dealership management system.

Next, Oracle Corp. and SAP AG said they were entering the field.

Two dealerships are testing DealerStar. Two more will begin testing in November.

"The market is ready for this type of option," says David Boatman, CEO of Drive Technology Group. The Charlotte, N.C., company provides dealers data extraction and other services.

"The open-source model will promote a healthy, competitive environment for the software and service providers in this industry," he says.

Jerome has more than 30 years in the auto business. Before starting her consulting practice, Sandi Jerome Computer Consulting in Eugene, Ore., she was one of the industry's first



Consultant Sandi Jerome on her new dealership management system: "I saw this big hole, so that's why I brought it out now."

female dealership F&I managers. A certified public accountant, she has been CFO of a large Chevrolet and Dodge dealership.

Dealers know Jerome through her consulting. She has worked for a wide swath of the industry after becoming an expert on 20 dealership management systems.

Jerome began developing her software in 2001. She feels confident releasing it now because dealers are more open than ever to switching systems.

DealerStar includes customer relationship management, sales, F&I, reporting, parts, service, accounting and payroll modules. It also provides one accounting system for all of a dealer's stores. The software license is \$75 a month. DealerStar is targeted at dealers with up to 10 stores, or about 25 percent of the marketplace.

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Some dealers may have the expertise to provide their own support for the system, Jerome says. But smaller stores may want to contract for support with the system's resellers, she says. Jerome thinks that software support could run about \$2,000 a month.

By contrast, dealers typically pay about \$8,000 a month for software and support with the largest system providers, she says. "I saw this big hole, so that's why I brought it out now," Jerome says. "The software programs out there now don't do multiple-company accounting."

Bill Rogers Honda in Albany, Ore., will test DealerStar in November.

"The demo is very nice," says Patrick Smith, the dealership's director of service and business development. "I think it shows professionalism and that DealerStar will fill the needs of many dealers." **AN**

Joining the fray

DealerStar, a new dealership management system software program, claims the following advantages over its rivals.

- Open code, so adding features is simple
- Centralized accounting for multiple dealerships
- Developed by a consultant familiar with other systems' weak points
- Low monthly charges: dealership fee of \$75, plus perhaps \$2,000 for support as needed, vs. \$8,000 for larger companies' offerings

Source: DealerStar

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