

DAIMLER FINANCIAL SERVICES THE LARGEST LITTLE COMPANY YOU'VE PROBABLY NEVER HEARD OF

By Michael Salemi

Here's a great business model for you: your unit is part of a highly-regarded and well-known manufacturer that moves product from factory to distributor, from distributor to retailer, and from retailer to customer.

Your company provides a service that earns a profit with each product move. Moreover, the retailers and distributors also need your service (aside from the product they are moving), adding to your business services and bottom line. Now, wrap this in a captive market – locking up most customers, retailers and distributors as your own. Provide your service with the utmost care and concern for quality befitting the high quality of the products.

You've just created Daimler Financial Services – a worldwide operation providing over 93 billion dollars worth of financing for Mercedes-Benz and subsidiaries; its distributors, retailers, and customers worldwide.

When you think of Daimler Financial Services (DFS), you might simply think of a set of papers that the dealer might present you when leasing or financing a new Mercedes-Benz. However, that is only part of their business. From their America's headquarters in Farmington Hills, Michigan, Daimler Financial Ser-

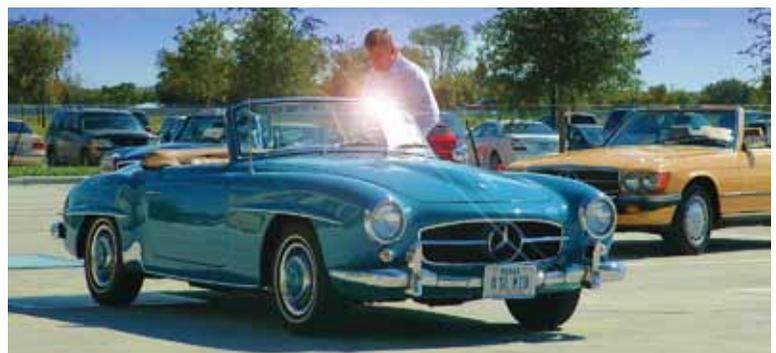


vices operates several business units for operations in North and South America. They service their customers in this region with over 1,750 employees managing a portfolio of nearly \$39 billion. The Mercedes-Benz Financial business unit provides financing in the luxury car market for dealers' inventories and retail customers. The Truck Financial business unit finances commercial vehicles for Daimler

commercial vehicle products such as Freightliner and Western Star.

Management in Michigan had a challenge: they felt that they could improve the already superb services they offer if their employees had more product knowledge. Yes, they understood the financing end of things, but not as much about the cars – and trucks – that represented the physical assets behind the figures. Moreover, many

Top to bottom: International Stars displayed a range of classic Mercedes-Benzenes at the Farmington Hills headquarters. Fort Worth arranged a similar variety of cars at the Business Center in Fort Worth. Daimler staff members admired the cars at headquarters. Weather was sunnier for the show in Fort Worth.



of the professionals at headquarters have tenure dating back to the days of DaimlerChrysler, Chrysler, and even American Motors and Jeep. Few have any in-depth knowledge of the history and heritage of Mercedes-Benz.

The solution? Daimler Days. This was a program organized by DFS event planners and held on October 20-22 at headquarters and their Business Center in Fort Worth, Texas.

They produced the program to attain several goals: First, create product awareness among the professionals at their locations; second, create product ambassadors within the company; and third, educate their employees about the rich heritage of the Mercedes-Benz car and truck brands.

To achieve these goals, planners had a day celebrating the heritage of Mercedes-Benz vehicles; a second day introducing the full line of current Mercedes-Benz cars on site; and lastly, a day introducing the Freightliner heavy trucks. On each day, actual products were on display for employees to see, touch, sit in, and learn about. The program filled the knowledge void and generated excitement in the process...and MBCA was an integral part of the process!

The MBCA national business office and Mercedes-Benz USA called upon the International Stars (Metro Detroit) section and the Fort Worth section to present members' cars representing the heritage of Mercedes-Benz. Over three days, International Stars members displayed a series of vehicles from 1958-1985 at Daimler Financial Services headquarters and stayed with their cars, answering many questions about history, heritage, and restoration. The cars we presented ranged from a 1958 300SL Roadster fresh from a cross-country trip, to more modern sedans of the early 1980s. In Texas, the Fort Worth Section did the same thing in a one-day program at the Business Unit offices.

By every measure, the showcase was a success. DFS employees were excited to see a range of restored and original cars representing the heritage of this marque we all love. Though it was a program for Daimler, not for MBCA, the club attracted additional members from the program, and fostered a cooperative network of business contacts that will be positive for both entities moving forward. Great job, Fort Worth and International Stars!



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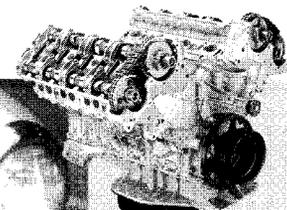
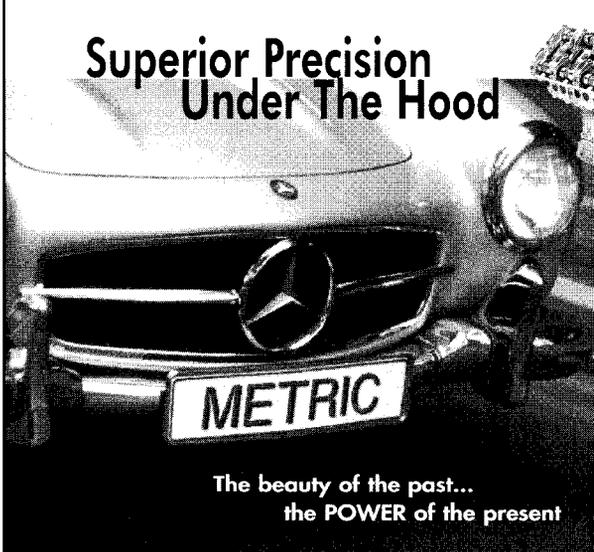
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