

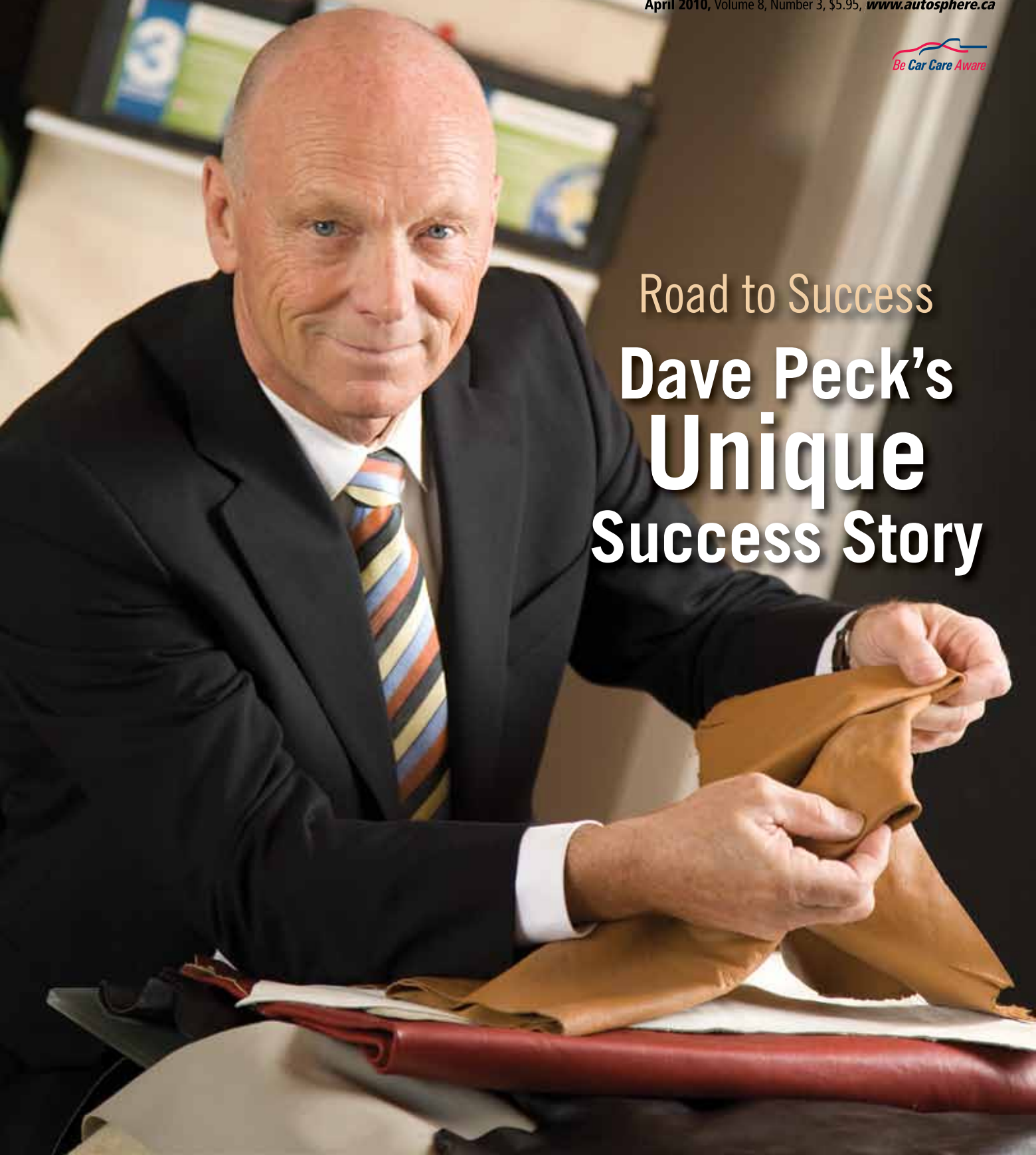
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CARCARE BUSINESS

CANADA'S CAR CARE, REPAIR & MAINTENANCE BUSINESS MAGAZINE

April 2010, Volume 8, Number 3, \$5.95, www.autosphere.ca

Be Car Care Aware



Road to Success
**Dave Peck's
Unique
Success Story**

Leadership

Unconventional Success

Building a successful business is all about ambition and talent, with a strong emphasis on customer service.

Some of history's most successful people began their careers in the most unconventional ways. Bill Gates, for instance, dropped out of Harvard in order to launch Microsoft, while Albert Einstein changed the world, even though he was considered a high school drop out. Without question, both men were very successful, and we can only wonder what life would be like without Microsoft Windows or Einstein's famous theory of relativity.

The name "Dave Peck" could also be added to our list on unconventional success stories. While Peck completed high school, and even continued his education, becoming a licensed technician, his road to success was somewhat unique.

"I came out of high school and went straight into the auto business," says Dave Peck, president of Peck Brothers. "I finished high school but didn't make any university decisions at the time because I wasn't sure what I wanted to do in life. I ended up helping out a friend who owned a Shell gas station on Yonge Street in Thornhill, Ontario.

"During that time I developed a relationship with the Shell rep, and when the owner had a riff with Shell Canada, I applied for the location and got it."

Almost overnight, Peck found himself in the aftermarket with a gas station, a 2-bay garage and a single tech working for Peck and his brother Tony, who became a partner in the business. Peck was only

21 years old, but as history would later recall, he was well on the path to success.

A shot at success

Peck managed to leverage his love of cars, his drive, and ambition to come out on top. "I've always had an interest in cars," he says. "Even as a 6-year-old I could pick out makes and models as cars passed by. It seemed to come naturally. When this business opportunity presented itself, it seemed like the perfect direction in life for a young guy who wasn't sure what he really wanted... but was sure that he loved cars."

Most young men would balk at the idea of taking on such a responsibility, but Peck welcomed the challenge. "It was intimidating to a degree, but I was confident I could pull it off," he says. "I was raised in Thornhill and knew the community well. I was reasonably certain that with a lot hard work I had a pretty good shot at success."

Driven by ambition, Peck was level-headed enough to realize that he would need the proper training to run his service station well. That's why he went back to school.

"During the first few years of operation I set up my apprenticeship program, managed to sneak away to school and eventually became licensed as a mechanic," Peck says. "I ran the business, as opposed to working in the bays, but I thought it was in my best interest to know how it all worked."



PHOTO: JACK KAZMIERSKI

"People are holding onto cars longer than either they can't afford a new one or they vehicles are built better and will last longer."

In 1974, Peck Bros. decided to expand their business. Dave and his brother Tony bought a Shell 4-bay gas station in Uxbridge, Ontario where Tony and his family resided. At the same time Dave became a licensed independent dealer in used cars. In 1993, he moved his original shop on Yonge Street to Doncaster Avenue—a bigger location with 8 bays. Currently the company has 15 employees.

Another part of the Peck enterprise is Enco Auto Trim and Glass. "We put the Thornhill Peck Bros. location together with newly acquired Enco Auto Trim and Glass and to this day we are running it under one roof doing automotive trim and glass, complete mechanical repair and service as well as car sales," Peck explains.

Success secrets

Building a successful business takes ambition, hard work, and talent. But to Peck, it

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Even though the recession is technically over and better times are ahead, Peck believes consumers are still hesitant to spend money when they absolutely don't have to, which means business might not pick up as quickly as we would all hope.

"People are holding onto cars longer than they did in the recent past," Peck explains. "Either they can't afford a new one or they have discovered that today's vehicles are built better and will last longer.

"What that means to us is that we have to listen carefully to the customer, understand and respect their personal situation. Certainly we need to bring all maintenance and repair issues to their attention that need addressing, but we often prioritize those items to fit their budget. This allows the customer to make informed decisions with undue pressure. Eventually, that business will come back to us. We encourage our customers to read and follow their owner's manuals to understand the importance of regular maintenance and to extend the life of their vehicles. The evolution of technology in today's automobiles makes this more important than ever."

With the Right to Repair issue resolved, Peck is looking forward to a brighter and more promising future, but wonders if the aftermarket will be able to keep pace with the way franchised dealerships are doing business.

"Clearly, the manufacturers are very image conscious," he says. "Our image in the aftermarket is equally important, and I've always been a big advocate of that. Professionalism and the way we present ourselves to the consumer, are a very important part of our business. We have to do it right and create an image that competes with the dealers, or we will be left behind." ■

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" – Dave Peck

Peck discusses a project with one of his employees.

all boils down to a common denominator. "It's all about customer service," he says. "There's really no magic. You need to pay close attention to what the customer wants and deliver that with honesty and integrity. As long as you don't lose sight of that, I think you can continue to succeed in this industry. Plus I am very fortunate to have great people working with me that share the same work ethic."

As simple as the notion of customer service might be, Peck has seen others make mistakes that have cost them dearly. "The biggest mistake is not understanding the customer and/or treating them without the respect they deserve," he explains. "It's very easy to not communicate with the customer at their level and help them understand what it is you need to do in order to solve their problem. The minute you talk down to your customers, you've lost them."

Keeping up with change

The world is constantly changing, and so is the auto industry. In order to continue prospering, the aftermarket has to understand how things are shifting and adjust business strategies accordingly.

Traditionally, recessions and economic slowdowns have been good for business, but Peck believes that this old adage may no longer ring true. "Clearly that was the case back when cars weren't built as well as they are today and when cars were breaking down more frequently. That's back in the days when you got up in the morning and your car wouldn't start because of a battery or spark plug, or ignition wire or ignition failure. Today cars don't break down like they used to. People are able to live with things like check engine lights without having to service them immediately."