



Daniel Rivera

EDITORS' NOTE In 2014, Danny Rivera was appointed President of Meineke Car Care Centers from the position he had held since November 2012 as Chief Information Officer with Meineke's parent company, Driven Brands, Inc. Prior to his time at Driven Brands, Inc. he had a strong career at AutoNation where he held the role of Senior Director of Application Development, Business Intelligence, Infrastructure, and Security. Earlier, Rivera also worked for General Electric, Motorola, and Burger King Corporation. He holds two degrees from Florida International University earning a Bachelor of Science in computer engineering with a cum laude distinction and a Juris Doctorate from the College of Law graduating fourth in his class.

COMPANY BRIEF Since 1972, Meineke (meineke.com) has been the go-to option for people in need of complete car care. Since its inception, the company has expanded, largely due to franchise owners and extended service offerings. Meineke was ranked by Entrepreneur magazine as the number 53 overall best franchise for the year 2015.

How has Meineke evolved since its inception in order to remain relevant?

Meineke, in many respects, is an American story. Our great entrepreneurial founder, Sam Meineke, started the business in 1972 in Houston, Texas. The business back then was simple. We focused on exhaust and mufflers, which were over 90 percent of the business. We provided a quality product and workmanship at a fair price. We fixed cars right the first time and the business grew very successfully thanks to the simple model, Sam's ingenuity, and our wonderful franchisee owners.

Our industry has since gone through many changes, much of it having to do with technology. Along the way, there was the advent of stainless steel, which should have extinguished the business. Mufflers today don't rust quite like they did in the 1970s, so the business had to evolve to remain the go-to source for complete vehicle maintenance and repair.

An American Story

An Interview with Daniel Rivera,
President, Meineke Car Care Centers



The exterior of a Meineke Car Care Center

Now Meineke is a division of Driven Brands, the leading automotive after-market franchisor in the world. We have sister companies like Maaco, and more than 900 centers throughout the country who service just over three million vehicles per year. Mufflers and exhaust remain a part of our service offerings but we're also proud to be able to repair or replace brakes, tires, shocks, and struts, and perform factory-scheduled maintenance, like oil changes. Bottom line: If there is anything wrong with a car, we can fix it, do it right, at an affordable price and get the customer back on the road safely.

With the growth, how do you make sure your service levels and the customer relationship stays consistent?

Consistency is key – that's the cornerstone for any reputable national brand. Through our services and product offerings we continuously strive to provide remarkable customer service, in a fair and transparent manner.

Our biggest competitive advantage is that we're franchise-based. In our industry, not everybody is. Our franchisees are owner-operators. They have invested their time, money, and sweat into their business. Our franchisees love to delight their customers, and that passion is difficult to duplicate with a corporate-owned model.

As far as support, we provide every franchisee with a playbook called "The Meineke Way." It is a resource and guide for all owners, showing them everything from how we welcome a guest to follow up after the services are performed.

All of our processes are built to help ensure our customers are delighted with great service and can get back their lives safely.

How do you offer quality service at a good price?

Our mission is to provide quality service at affordable prices while delighting our customers. Therefore, everything we do from how we staff our centers and where our centers are located to a franchisee-owner model is designed to ensure we can deliver on this mission.

It is widely known that dealerships can fix a car. However, the customer is going to pay a pretty penny for it. At Meineke, we can provide the same level of quality and service that a dealership provides at a fraction of the cost.

How much of a focus has the international part of the business been for you and is there growth both abroad and in the U.S.?

There is growth in both areas. We have had strategic growth internationally where it makes sense. We have operations in Mexico, Panama, China, and

other countries throughout the world, but there is a lot of room for growth in the U.S. and Canada, so we're intently focused there.

How strong is the U.S. automotive industry today and is it surprising to see how those companies have adapted?

With more than 250 million cars on the road today, and the average age of cars on the road at about 11.5 years, the automotive industry remains very strong. I'm not surprised. As Americans, we're known for perseverance and ingenuity, and what we're seeing is an example of that. When Americans have our backs to the wall, we persevere and push forward.

The Meineke story is similar. We started as a simple business model. As time marched forward, evolutions in technology and the industry at large put our backs against the wall. We persevered and pushed forward. We successfully positioned the brand for complete car care with over 900 locations throughout North America. Because of our affordable model, convenient locations, and reliable service, customers began to view us as a strong alternative to expensive dealerships.

Does new technology make the job easier to service?

It makes it more complex. As more technology is implemented in vehicles, cars ultimately are more complicated and sometimes more difficult to diagnose and repair.

Over time, I imagine independent shops will find it difficult to stay abreast of technology trends and equipment. The technology and training necessary to properly diagnose and repair new complicated vehicles demands significant investment, not to mention the costs to implement the type of technology that consumers have come to expect in their retail experiences. This is where a national brand like Meineke plays to its strengths. We have the means to invest so that we can continue to delight our customers for years to come.

What concerns you when things are going this well?

My biggest concern is the impact we're making on consumers' lives. Meineke has fantastic brand recognition. It is continuing to put that story out there so the average consumer says, "I know Meineke, they can take care of all of my car care needs so that I can get back to living my life." We want our customers to be able to focus on what's important to them and we're dedicated to taking care of their vehicles so it's one less thing for them to worry about. ●