

# Automotive News

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## Maryland dealership group boosts used-car inventory with own platform

Koons of Silver Spring repurposed a defunct subscription service into an acquisition company in the mold of Carvana or Vroom.

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Koons of Silver Spring's branding is not attached to Inride's website, above, but customers are made aware of the group's connection in a follow-up email.

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As the severity of the global semiconductor shortage set in early last year, management at Koons of Silver Spring Inc., a Maryland dealership group, realized they would need as much used-vehicle inventory as possible to offset the looming deficit of new cars and trucks.

The problem was, other retailers were coming to the same conclusion, and auction prices were soaring. Owner Alex Perdikis, who operates a Ford-Lincoln and a Mazda store in the Washington suburbs, challenged his staff to find a creative alternative.

They didn't have to look very far.

Before the pandemic, the group, which sells about 4,000 new and used vehicles combined per year, had launched a subscription service called Inride. The business had been growing steadily but was scrapped when demand cratered after COVID-19 hit.

Management decided to revive the Inride brand, this time as a vehicle acquisition platform in the mold of Carvana and Vroom. It's owned by Koons of Silver Spring but has its own dedicated staff and runs local TV ads encouraging customers to visit the website and get a quote for their vehicle — all without any branding or mention of the dealership group it's affiliated with.

#### NEW OPPORTUNITY

Koons of Silver Spring in Maryland repurposed a shuttered subscription service called Inride into a vehicle purchasing platform to boost its used-vehicle inventories and take on challengers such as Carvana and Vroom.

### **Seamless experience**

Inride promises to beat all competing offers and will also buy out a customer's lease. Since launching last June, it has generated about 12,000 leads and purchased about 1,000 vehicles.

"Inride's been a massive game-changer for us," Perdikis said. "We're seeing clients we never saw before."



An Inride customer celebrates the sale of her car. Since launching in June, Inride has acquired 1,000 vehicles.

Customers, he said, are receptive to the simple website prompts and quick quotes for their vehicles. The website and branding were designed to evoke the seamless experiences offered by new digital retailing companies that have promised to improve the traditional car-buying process.

Matthew MacDonald, Inride's director of operations, said a client can go from getting an initial quote to having a check in their hand in under an hour.

"It's all about putting the customer first," he said.

MacDonald was one of Inride's early customers, selling his 2021 Toyota 4Runner for an \$8,000 profit before joining the staff a few months later.

Koons of Silver Spring's branding is not attached to the Inride website or mentioned in commercials. but Perdikis said customers are made aware of the connection in the email they receive after providing their information.

Inride uses an algorithm that looks at retail and wholesale market data as well as days' supply information to come up with a price. If a customer has an offer from a competitor based on an appraisal of the vehicle, Inride promises to beat it or cut the customer a \$500

check. It has yet to write one of those checks.

"It's about building a brand," Perdikis said. "I don't ever want to lose an opportunity over a few hundred dollars. I'd much rather have that car in stock."

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## Room for growth

Inride has purchased everything from Ferraris and Porsches to Toyota Camrys and Ford Transit cargo vans. Perdikis said a number of customers, once finding out about the connection to Koons of Silver Spring, come in to purchase a vehicle after they sell their own.

Perdikis said Inride is profitable and that the dealership group is evaluating potential spinoff opportunities or expansion. He said Inride likely will stick around after inventory levels rise and the chip shortage eases.

"Anytime you can acquire cars — and get nice cars, one-owner cars — I think it's a win," Perdikis said. "It's had an unbelievably positive effect on our traffic and inventory selection."

Inline Play

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