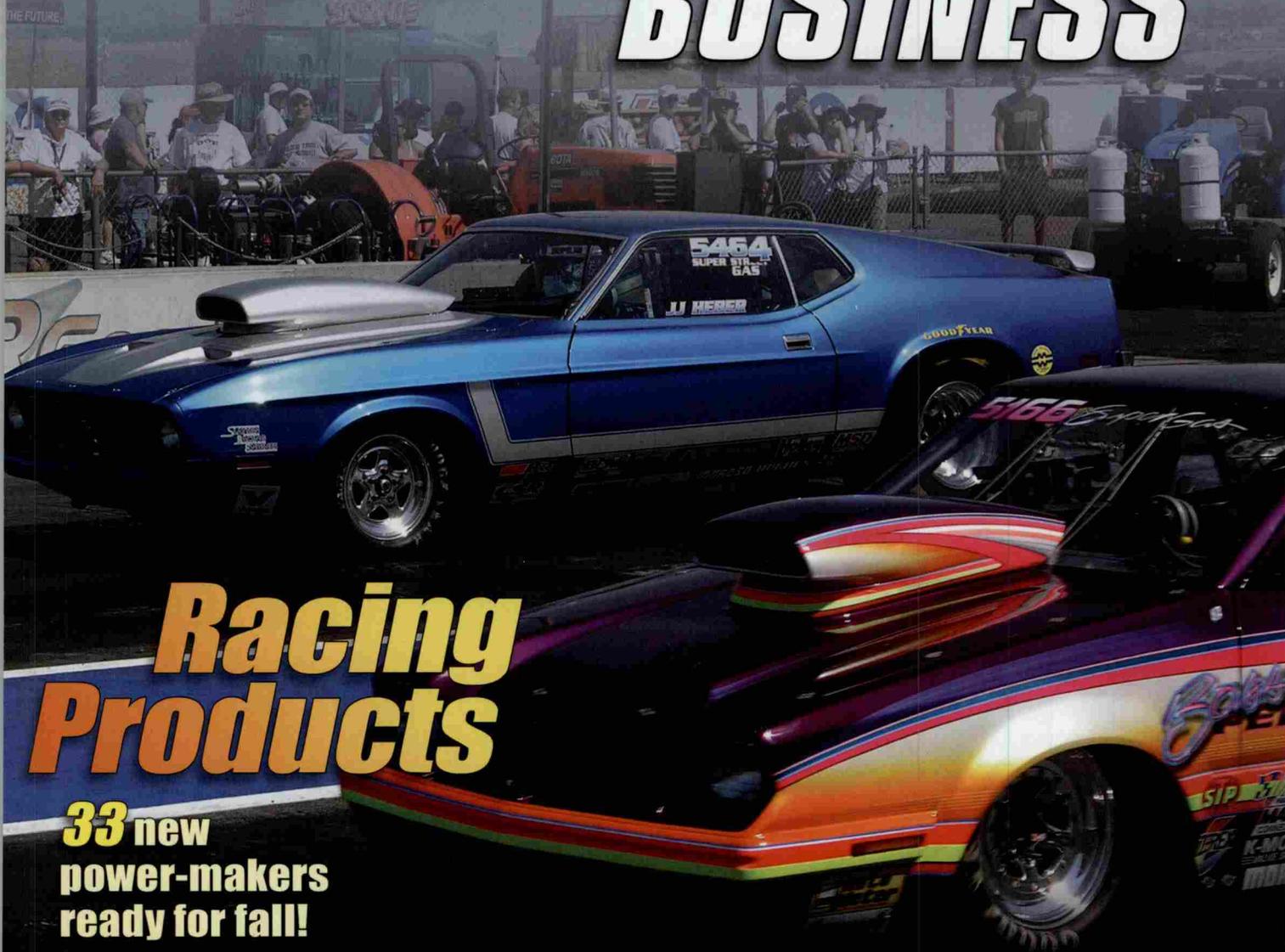


For Performance Retailers, Tuners and Builders

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# PERFORMANCE BUSINESS

September 2009



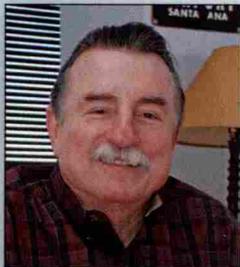
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# MAKING THEIR MARK, PART II

Thoughts and advice from several more women who have forged a path in the performance aftermarket.



**Doug Dwyer**, Executive Vice President of Schiefer Media Inc., has more than 40 years of marketing, brand development, advertising, research and public relations experience. Doug started his career in the automotive industry as shop help for Carroll Shelby at age 14, and progressed into lead marketing positions at some of the most widely recognized companies in the automotive industry.

Doug is also a passionate enthusiast, having raced everything from off-road, Grand-Am sports cars, drag and sprint cars. He can be reached at [doug@schiefermedia.com](mailto:doug@schiefermedia.com).

*Editor's note: The following is the second installment in a two-part series (Part I—Performance Business, May 2009) interviewing women who have forged successful careers in the performance automotive aftermarket, and their advice for others who might like to follow in their footsteps.*

**W**e're back with a few more conversations with women who have made their mark in performance circles—how they got here, their thoughts on being a woman in the automotive aftermarket, and their advice for other women in the industry:

## CAMEE EDELBROCK

Account Manager  
Schiefer Public Relations



**SCHIEFER**  
Public Relations

The Edelbrock family is about as close to being the Royal Family of our industry as you can get. Camee had the option of doing whatever she wanted in life. She chose a career in the performance aftermarket.

She has enjoyed cars and racing since she was old enough to stand at the starting line of a drag race. It's in her blood, so when it came time to decide what she was going to do with her life, she never had a second thought that it would be working for her dad.

Her first summer job in high school was at Edelbrock, and she worked in various capacities around the company like answering the main switchboard and preparing catalogs for bulk mail delivery.

She didn't start there full-time until after completing her degree at USC, but she was there on the next Monday morning at 8 a.m.

sharp—three days after graduation. She got the job because she was Vic's daughter, but kept the job because she worked hard, learned the business and had a strong work ethic that was instilled in her from childhood.

Her first job was in the sales department answering the phone, filing, taking orders and entering them in the computer. A short time later they needed a person in advertising, and she jumped at the chance.

She learned from the ground up, starting with instruction sheets and eventually graduating to full-color catalogs. She did public relations for the company as well, traveling to automotive events around the country.

An avid enthusiast, she also participated in water-ski racing marathons such as the Catalina Ski Race from Long Beach to Catalina Island and back, offshore boat racing and vintage car road racing at places like Watkins Glen, Road America and the Monterey Historics at Laguna Seca Raceway.

Her thoughts on being a woman in the industry: "When I first started traveling and representing the company at events in the early 1980s, guys wouldn't give me a second of their time. They immediately assumed that I didn't know anything about the product line and that I was simply there to pass out decals and brochures. When I asked, 'Can I help you?' they would look at me like I was crazy. I had to practically force them to ask me a question. When I could answer it, they would look at me with total disbelief and still insist on talking to one of the guys. This experience on the road gave me the guts to tackle some of the situations at the office, because in those days it wasn't easy being a female manager in the automotive aftermarket industry. You had to speak your mind and be confident or the guys would eat you alive! Some of the guys were supportive and treated me like a little sister, offering me detailed explanations when I had a question. I'm very grateful for these guys and learned a lot from them. Today, thanks to all of the talented women in racing and the industry, it's a totally different deal. Men are not shocked by a woman who knows about cars and aftermarket parts. They don't hesitate to ask questions, no matter what gender you are."

Advice for women in the industry: "You need to have integrity, strength and confidence, then don't be afraid to go for it. Make sure that you're doing what you enjoy. If it's racing and customizing cars, you're in the right place. This is a great industry with many fun-loving people that will treat you right if you do the same in return. In hindsight, I should have started in the dyno room building engines instead of the sales department talking on the phone. But, the hands-on knowledge that I lacked in the beginning was overcome by the writing and design skills I had obtained in college, along with the on-the-job experience I got from attending events and talking to our customers."



**NORA HEWITT**

Vice President/Sales Manager  
Advanced Power Systems Inc. (Fitch Fuel Catalyst)



Taught at a young age how to change the oil and tires on her car, Hewitt was introduced to all things automotive by her father. His interest in exotic, classic and racing cars rubbed off, and Hewitt has owned motorcycles, Mustangs, Corvettes, Camaros and a twin-turbo Porsche over the years.

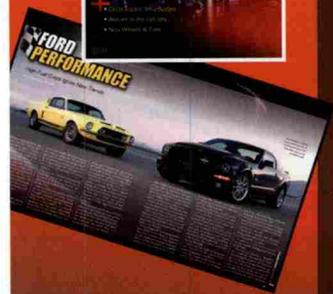
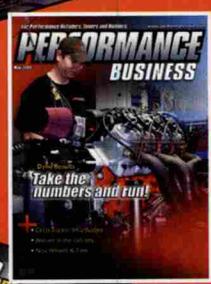
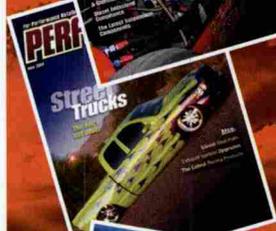
Her current hobby is drag-racing a street-legal Suzuki Hayabusa. She pursued an education in business management, dabbled in the fashion industry and held various sales positions before stumbling on a job that really interested her—an automobile dealership. This eventually led her to where she is today.

Her thoughts on being a woman in the industry: “I like being the minority in a male-dominated industry because I know the business and I can easily hold my own. Although I have gathered most of my experience from the field, the only thing that I would have done differently was acquiring additional schooling in both business and auto mechanics. Due to the chemistry and mechanical background of our product line, I think when the opportunity to meet some of my trade contacts arises, 99 percent of them expect a ‘laboratory geek’ stereotype, not a no-nonsense, 5-foot-8 blonde-spiked-hair, trendy-dressing, motorcycle-drag-racing, Porsche-owning woman. I think the number of women in the automotive industry is expanding and most men in the trade are very complimentary and supportive. I wouldn’t trade working in the automotive industry for any other job, other than maybe a professional career in drag racing.”

Advice for women in the industry: “The biggest challenge any woman in this business faces is credibility and the old-school ‘boys club’ mentality. In an industry of mostly men, a woman has to be at the top of her game to earn respect. Personality, industry experience and a willingness to learn will continue the growth of women in the automotive trade. After all, look at the racing industry 30 years ago when it was almost unheard of for a woman to get behind the wheel of a car. Now we have Danica Patrick and Ashley Force Hood.”

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## TANYA JACQUOT

Public Relations Consultant  
Jacquot Media Services

The beginning of Jacquot's story is similar to Hewitt's in that she grew up with a father who liked to dabble in cars, and there was always a vehicle in various states of build out in the garage.

At one of her first jobs while in college, she had the opportunity to attend the Toyota Grand Prix of Long Beach, which sparked a fire for open-wheel racing. Her career began in publishing, but quickly took a turn toward the automotive industry.



Jacquot Media Services

Around that time, the racing spark turned into a bonfire and she embarked upon a karting "hobby" that led to national shifter kart competitions and a regional championship. Tanya likes to say in her career that she's working her way around the car, starting off with Ronal Wheels, progressing to Energy Suspension, then going to MagnaFlow Ex-

haust before heading to Schiefer Public Relations, where she worked with multiple accounts that produce a variety of parts.

Today she owns and operates her own public relations consulting firm, focusing primarily on helping companies in the automotive aftermarket gain exposure for their products.

Her thoughts on being a woman in the industry: "My goal in my various positions in the industry has always been to get media exposure for the product I represent. Being a woman has made me and my product stand out. I think it also allows me to make friends and form relationships within the industry more easily, because men feel comfortable talking to women. My involvement in racing has been significant because it has opened doors and given me credibility. Men would look at me differently after learning I raced karts—I became one of the boys. I think it gained me a respect I wouldn't have had otherwise."

Advice for women in the industry: "Pursue your automotive-related hobbies. If you love what you do, approach challenges head-on and work hard—you'll fit in just fine."

## JESSI COMBS

Self-Employed  
Former Co-Host of Xtreme 4x4

If you've seen Combs on *Xtreme 4x4*, you can tell she knows her stuff.

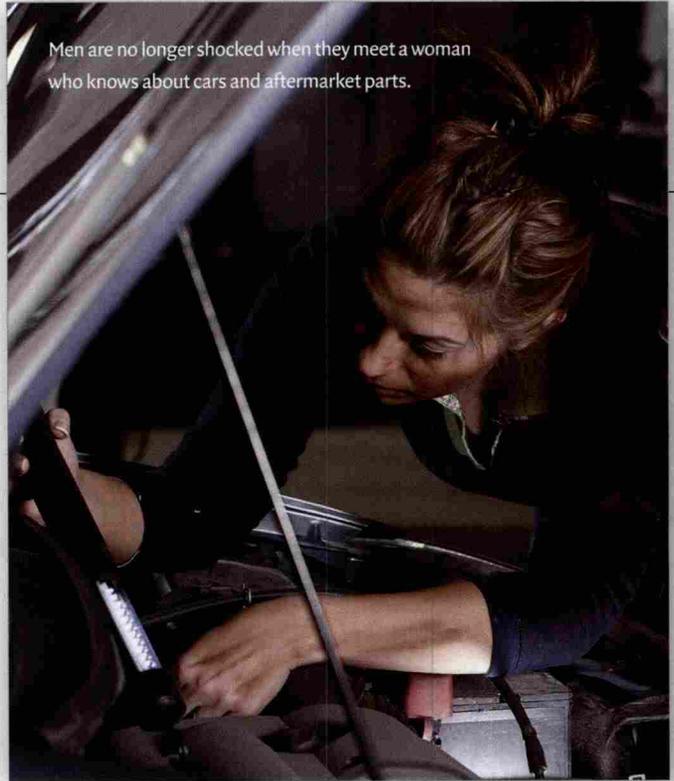
Growing up as a daddy's girl to a mechanical engineer, she shared in her dad's hobbies of building trucks in the garage, taking the long way home through the hills and going to races and car shows.

She's always loved cars, bikes and off-roading. Not having a lot of money, if it broke, she had to fix it, and if she wanted it, she had to make it.

Turning down a scholarship at a prestigious design school, she opted for a career in metal fabrication. Combs discovered that to get hired by a custom shop she would need to get formal training, so she enrolled in WyoTech and moved to Laramie, Wyo. There, her skills were honed, and she was at the top of her class in her areas of study: collision/refinishing, street rod fabrication, chassis fab and high-performance engines. She was immediately hired by WyoTech to build its SEMA car, a 1964 Mercury Cyclone bracket car. That



Men are no longer shocked when they meet a woman who knows about cars and aftermarket parts.



led to guest fabricator appearances on *Overhaulin'*, and eventually her gig with *Xtreme 4x4* on Spike TV. Now she does TV freelance work and side fab jobs while pursuing her dream of opening a custom shop for women.

Her thoughts on being a woman in the industry: "As a woman, you constantly have to prove yourself over and over. Men and women work, think and act differently, so handling certain situations in the workplace can get extremely frustrating coming from the two different mindsets. I want a place where chicks can get comfortable in a shop before stepping into the male-dominated world and getting discouraged—a place where being feminine will thrive and beautiful projects will be produced."

Advice for women in the industry: "There is nothing more rewarding than watching something you built driving down the street, racetrack or rock quarry, whether it's cruisin' the strip, haulin' ass for a championship or conquering the toughest obstacle. Even being able to fix/modify/work on your own vehicles is powerful. You are the only thing holding you back. What's stopping you?"

## CAROL YOHE

Director

Russell Automotive/Edelbrock Corp.



In the industry for almost 30 years, Yohe truly worked her way up from the bottom. Her first job in the industry was as a sales department assistant at Nippondenso, then she was promoted to sales and marketing coordinator for the department before finally becoming its first female sales representative.

After meeting David Russell, she was hired on at Russell Performance as product manager, and spent the next 15 years working her way up to vice president of sales. When Edelbrock purchased Russell in 2000, she became director of Russell sales.

Although she did attend college and thinks her path would have been easier with more education in business, she says the best training came from her parents, who taught her about commitment to doing a good job, taking care of your responsibilities and, most importantly, taking care of customers.

Her dad is an enthusiast and racer, and she had a parade of street rods, go-karts and in-board boats to influence her during those



impressable years. She grew up knowing names like Edelbrock, Isky, Enderle Fuel Injections, Holley, Mickey Thompson, Howard Cams, Mallory and many more.

Her thoughts on being a woman in the industry: "It's been a very interesting journey. In the beginning there was Charlie Van Cleve and myself. We both started in entry-level positions and we were able to achieve positions as vice president. The challenge was in being accepted—some men wouldn't take you seriously or would simply ask to talk to a man. What I found was that men in general wouldn't be rude to you, and they would give you a chance to prove yourself. Women are accepted and respected more now, plus there are a lot of very talented ladies who are enthusiasts, and many own their own companies."

Advice for women in the industry: "The best advice I can give is be true to yourself, keep your word and take care of the customers." 

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