

Testimonial On

TOWLOT.COM

Reported in American Towman



Jon Kupchin, president of Santa Fe Tow Service.

Santa Fe grossed a high of \$34,350 in one online auction this year selling 53 vehicles, averaging \$648.11 per vehicle. Another auction averaged \$760.26 per vehicle.

Using Towlot.com, Santa Fe Tow Service in Lenexa, Kan. sells around 60 salvage vehicles whenever they need to without hiring an auctioneer.

Lightning Round, Online Auctions have been a Revenue Builder

One of the big 21st Century changes Jon Kupchin made recently at Santa Fe was to move his salvage auctions online with Towlot.com. Jon found the whole auction process has gone from headache to moneymaker.

Jon said advantages of using Towlot.com include:

- No more worries about bidders sabotaging cars.
- No more hiring security for the day of the sale.
- No auctioneer's 10 percent, plus cost of fliers, etc.
- No more pilfering in cars not on sale that day.
- No need to rent a portable toilet.
- No inclement weather to drive down attendance.

"When you rely on the weather, snow or rain means no one shows up but the junk buyer, and he gives you \$200 per car for cars that might have gotten \$500-\$600," Jon said.

"With Towlot.com, you don't have the auction at your yard," he said. "You process all your paperwork and go online to upload info and pictures. ... Buyers are allowed to come to the lot a week before the sale to inspect the cars.

Then the buyers bid from home the night of the auction, and many use a pre-bid feature. During the live auction, there is a 10-second extension after each new bid to eliminate eBay-style auction sniping.

"Then you get your sale done, you're sent who bid on the cars and who won," Jon said. "You can see every bidder, and if the winning bidder is a no-show, you can call the next highest bidder and offer him the car at that price.

"Then bidders have three days to come in and get their car, exchange money, keys and paperwork and it's done," Jon said. "I have my Saturdays back."

LenexaJon came up with a plan and pitched to his mom and dad that he take over the tow truck side of the business. But he added the stipulation that it be run his way.

He went to 24/7 service, got mom

to help with taking calls and hit the pavement, when he wasn't towing, to drum up business. (In fact, five of the small repair shops he solicited then are still with Santa Fe today.)

"We had an old Holmes 475 Min-

uteman on a 1978 Ford truck," Jon said. "I sandblasted it and painted it red with a grey stripe," and that was the beginning of a business that now has four locations, 65 employees and dozens of trucks and trailers.

The Lenexa location is the business headquarters, with offices, maintenance shop, dispatch center and secure storage lot. Two dozen trucks are based there. Santa Fe also has a satellite location in Kansas City with 16 trucks to do Insurance Auto Auction work, which they've done since IAA expanded to the area 10 years ago. Their Joplin, Mo., location opened three years ago and has six trucks, and they recently opened a transport business in Dallas, Texas, with plans to move in heavy-duty wreckers by fall of this year.

Santa Fe does "very little" motor club work, limited mostly to Road America, Allstate Mercedes, Allstate Porsche and NSD. They are on 11 municipal location in Kansas City metro, and four in Joplin. They also have commercial accounts with "every major trucking company."

For their 35-plus drivers, Santa Fe does in-house training, as well as TRAA, WreckMaster, Wes Wilburn and some others.

"With training, those are tools you