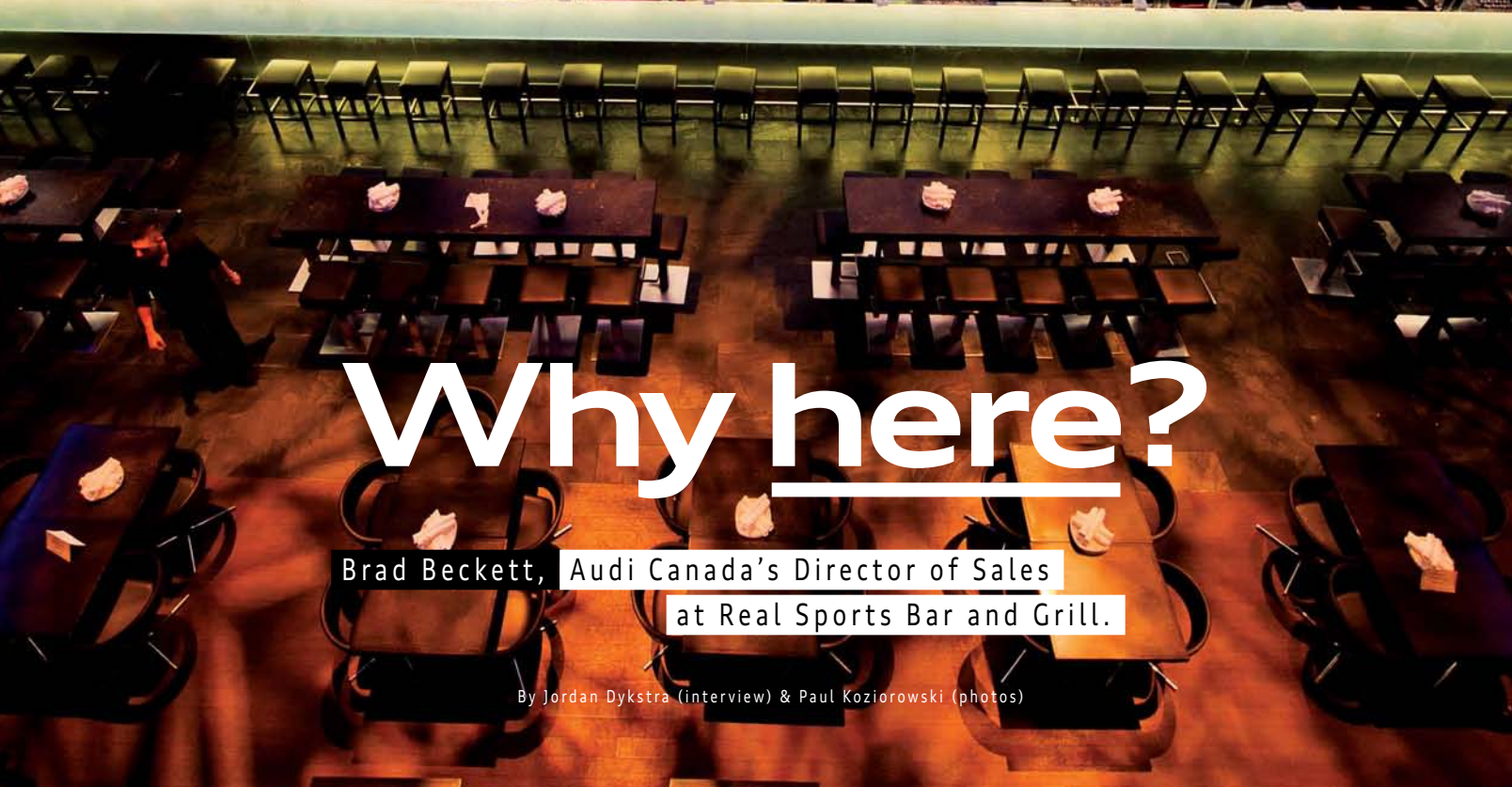


QB Andrew Luck if they had first overall pick in 2011... Cowboys interim coach Jason Garrett sa



Why here?

Brad Beckett, Audi Canada's Director of Sales
at Real Sports Bar and Grill.

By Jordan Dykstra (interview) & Paul Koziorowski (photos)

Audi Magazine sits down with Brad Beckett, Audi Canada's Director of Sales, at Real Sports Bar and Grill, which, in addition to serving some of the best baby back ribs around, is only steps away from three of Toronto's greatest sporting legacies.

Audi magazine: Why Here Mr. Beckett?

Brad Beckett: We're here because this is the hub of Toronto sports. We're steps away from the Air Canada Centre, where the Raptors play, where the Leafs play. We're only a few more steps away from the Rogers Centre, home of the two-time World Champion Toronto Blue Jays—I remember both of those wins and love them. Being a Canadian and growing up in the area, I have a great love for sports in Toronto—which can sometimes be challenging. For me there is a deep connection between sports and the sales business. Look at the Montreal Canadiens in the '70s. They weren't just a great scoring team or a great defensive team, they had the best goalie, the best defensive core, the best offence and the best coach ever. That's what you need to be a dynasty. And I think as a car company we have to be strong in every position to be a dynasty. That's where Audi is trying to get to now.

Did you play a lot of sports as a kid?

I wasn't very good at sports, but I have a great love for sports. I'm a sports junkie. I love sports because I love competition. I love winning and losing and battling. I love statistics, too, and I think that's why I'm a big baseball geek. The thing I love about stats is taking them and finding the facts in them. It's great to have a thousand stats, but can you really define a ball player's skill and talent by his on-base percentage or his batting average? It's the same thing on the sales side of business. We have thousands of pieces of data, but we have to find that nugget, that fact, that will help us improve our business.

So how do you do that?

It's trial and error, testing and failing. It's always asking the question, "Why? Why is that?" You just have to keep looking at things from different angles. I don't think it ever stops. And the minute someone else has figured out a different way of looking at it, you've got to be moving ahead as well.

What are some of the challenges of running your own team at Audi?

The hardest thing is to put the right person in the right job, and matching their set of skills to what they do. Even if you do that well, you still have to keep them motivated because some of them might be fantastic at forecasting sales volume today, but six months later, they could be bored to death doing it. Everybody has a place they want to be: some people want to have one job over a lifetime and be comfortable, and some people want to be president and CEO of the company. You have to keep each one motivated.

So how do you balance that?

Constant communication. You constantly have to say to people, "How do you like your job? How do you feel? Are you being tested? Do you want to do more?" I think that a lot

of companies are scared to ask those questions because they may get answered. I've had employees say, "I want more, give me more to do." And I say, "Wow, fantastic. Let's challenge you." I also think that people need movement. There are a lot of people out there who have been at their job way too long.

It's very easy to become complacent.

Oh yeah. For me it's the same. I had to change jobs because I was getting complacent. I was getting bored and I wanted a new challenge. Sometimes you get what you ask for. My wife always tells me, "If you're bored, you're not going to be happy." I always have to be challenged—and I definitely am now.

So what about your personal life, what kind of goals do you have now?

It's really about my kids. I have two daughters, eight and four, and everything I do in my professional life has to be so they can have a better life. And that was one of the reasons we moved here. So the goal for me is to give them what they need to be successful in their lives.

Which is?

Great self-esteem. You have to have self-esteem to be confident and to go on and be successful in this life. Everything else will come—education, investors, money—but you've got to be confident in yourself. There also needs to be a constant feeling of safety, that there's a place that you can go as a child where you are completely safe—and that's home. And then there's the material side of it, where hopefully you're able to supply some of the things that they would like.





“For me, it’s having that every-30-day rush of hitting your numbers and beating somebody, and realizing that we’re now the third biggest luxury car company in Canada.”

You grew up in Oakville, Ontario, but you started your career in Vancouver. What took you out there?

It’s always been one of those things that I can’t put a reason behind. It just felt like the right thing to do. I think with the Expo and the good economy, it was just a really popular place in the early ’90s.

Were you disappointed when you got out there?

No, the minute I got there it was home. I remember driving from Whistler, and as you’re coming along that highway you see all of Vancouver, and I thought, “Wow, that’s home.” It felt like home from the minute I arrived to the minute I left. I’m an outdoors person, and within an hour of our house, we could be in the middle of the wilderness. You could go out every weekend and find something different that you hadn’t seen before.

So what led you into sales?

I moved to Vancouver and at the time I just wanted to find a job. I started at an Enterprise Rent-A-Car, which had just opened up out west. It was a great opportunity to join a business at the ground level. It’s where I started developing my competitive nature, and I really enjoyed that. They gave me a great opportunity to succeed there. Within a year, I was running a branch, within a year and a half, I was running the largest branch in B.C. It was just a great environment to learn the business.

How did you go from there to Audi?

I was the district sales manager with Acura for a few years, so that’s what got me into the luxury side of the business, which I really love. And then I was lucky enough to get a call from Audi, who was looking for a zone manager for Western Canada. It was the perfect time and the right place, the right job and the right company. After about four years in the field doing sales, I was really looking for a new challenge. I was offered the job as Network Development Manager for Audi in Ajax, Ontario. That was a significant change—to go from working in the field and seeing dealers every day to working in the corporate environment.



How do you like being back in sales?

It’s great to be back in sales, to be back in that competitive environment. For me, it’s having that every-30-day rush of hitting your numbers and beating somebody, and realizing that we’re now the third biggest luxury car company in Canada. It’s exciting and fun. It’s also incredibly challenging, probably more so than I was ever respectful enough to think.

But you’ve found yourself up to it.

I like to think so (laughs). I’ve always been a big believer in that you go ahead and make mistakes. There are a lot of people out there that just want to do what has been done. But I say, “Let’s go make mistakes; let’s go try something that hasn’t been tried or do something in a different way.” And if it flops, so be it, and then we’ll learn and try something else.

So how did Audi become number three in Canada?

I think we have a situation where the guys in Germany are rolling out some of the best products on the market—from a technological, performance and styling point of view. I think we’ve also got a great set of dealers. They really understand the brand and they’re motivated by it. They’ve gone through some challenging times with the brand and now they’re seeing the reward for all of their hard work. When I joined the company in 2004, which wasn’t that long ago, we basically had four car lines and we were selling about 7,000 cars in Canada. We’re going to sell over 14,000 cars this year, and we’re up to 10 car lines. It’s been an incredible evolution, but it’s only the start. Now we need to take it to the next level and get up to being the number one premium brand in Canada. That’s the conversation we’re having with our dealers, and they’re seeing what’s happening and they’re excited about it, as are our partners in Germany. We’re saying: “Let’s go for it.”

