

## SUCCESS STORY

# Kunes Country Auto Group grows nine times its size with Auto/Mate®



Kunes Country Auto Group is familiar to nearly everyone in the car business. The Illinois- and Wisconsin-based group recently ranked as a top retailer of used-vehicle sales in Automotive News' annual list, and many of its 35+ retail stores have been featured in Automotive News' "Best Dealerships to Work For" rankings.

But Kunes Country Auto Group wasn't always this big. Ten years ago, Kunes had just four retail locations when it decided to switch from a legacy DMS provider to Auto/Mate DMS. "The main reason was the cost structure," said Tom Fohr, a Regional General Manager who oversees five of Kunes' retail locations in Walworth County, Wisconsin. "We were just starting to grow, and at that scale it was outrageously expensive to be with our previous vendor. Plus, the level of support just wasn't there."

After a thorough review of the "major players" in the DMS space at the time, Kunes Country Auto Group selected Auto/Mate.

## Scalability enables growth

Fast forward and today Auto/Mate DMS is installed in every one of Kunes' stores, as well as two subsidiaries. "The cost is reasonable, the support is phenomenal and we have had the luxury of growing quite fast," Fohr said. "Sometimes that's hard for companies to keep up with, but Auto/Mate has been awesome to work with."

Typically, when an Auto/Mate customer acquires a new dealership, the install teams are scheduled and arrive onsite within days. Growth, and the required scalability of technology that comes with it, can be complicated. "Auto/Mate is definitely robust to handle multiple stores," Fohr said. "I don't know that we could have grown with another DMS provider as quickly as we did with Auto/Mate."



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Regional General Manager  
Kunes Country Auto Group

## User friendly design speeds rollouts

As a software developer, Auto/Mate has always prioritized user experience. Fohr observes that in the last three to four years, the system has become even more user friendly. “I’ve seen every DMS out there, and by far this is the easiest to use,” he said. “We can literally onboard everyone in a store and have everyone trained on how to use the system in two days.”

Unlike other DMS’s that require users to memorize multiple keyboard commands, Auto/Mate uses Windows-style menus that require simple point and click actions. “All you have to do is click your mouse and everything’s intuitive. I’ve trained finance managers and even office personnel in just hours. You can use common sense and figure most things out,” Fohr said.

## Report/Mate aids with store insights

Report/Mate, Auto/Mate’s robust cross-department reporting system, has helped Fohr oversee and compare key metrics of the stores in his region. “In the last two years, the changes we’ve seen in reporting have been huge,” Fohr said. “We can pull pretty much any data from anywhere we want. I know other DMS vendors sometimes restrict access to data, so I appreciate having everything at our fingertips. We can use it for marketing or internal reporting, and it’s incredibly easy and fast to pull.”

In his role as regional manager, Fohr is constantly bouncing between stores to check on sales and numbers. Report/Mate allows him to easily accomplish these tasks without having to log out and log back into several different sessions. Additionally, he has set up a dashboard with customized widgets that track and compare key metrics at all his stores.

Another benefit of Report/Mate is the ability to build customized financial statements. In a large auto group, comparing the financial performance of numerous stores can be challenging, since every manufacturer’s financial statement has its own format. “When you’re comparing a Ford store to a Chrysler or GM store, it’s time consuming to search for data on manufacturer statements,” Fohr said. “The numbers are all located in a different place on every statement.”

Building their own financial statement allows Kunes’ management to easily compare 35 stores against each other. This has made it easier for Fohr and other managers to monitor and manage expenses. “We’ve seen a lot of different things that we probably would have missed before, such as advertising costs going up in one store or different compensation percentages.”



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## Service and parts

In their service departments, Kunes has used Auto/Mate's dispatch system to help streamline operations. "Before dispatch, our techs would have to manually flag jobs and adding all those up at the end of the week for payroll was challenging," Fohr said. "Auto/Mate's dispatch system keeps our techs in their bays. Obviously, a tech's time is valuable so every time they put down their wrench to walk back and forth to a time clock is money wasted."

Kunes' stores have also rolled out Auto/Mate's service scheduling tool to encourage customers to schedule appointments online. "Scheduling is really easy, we use it across all our stores, and we're getting ready to roll forward with the recommended maintenance program," Fohr said.

In 2020, Auto/Mate also rolled out major enhancements to its parts system. "Everything they've done is good. To be able to point and click and search for parts, is so much easier than trying to key things into the older-looking system."

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## Support rules all

Customer support was one of the main reasons why Kunes Country Auto Group switched to Auto/Mate, and customer support is one of the main reasons why the auto group stays loyal.

“To be able to call into a 1-800 number and get a real person right away, and have them document your case and get you to the right person right away, without having to sit on hold for an hour at a time, is just amazing,” Fohr said. “I’ve even called in sometimes and lost the connection without telling them who I am, but they still called me back right away, they knew who I was, and asked me what kind of help I was looking for.”

Auto/Mate has long had a policy to only hire support people who have worked in dealerships. That way when customers call in for help, the support person knows what it is the customer is trying to do, and can help them uncover a solution. “It’s really nice to talk to someone who actually understands the job, versus someone who just works in tech support who has never done the job,” Fohr said.

Additionally, Auto/Mate assigns each case to a customer agent who is responsible to make sure the case is resolved in a timely manner. “If you have an issue that takes several calls, you’re not dealing with a different person every time,” Fohr said. “If you start a case with one person, they help you all the way through.”

Kunes Country Auto Group knows a thing or two about creating and keeping loyal customers. Sell a good product, implement efficient processes, and take care of your customers. For 10 years, Auto/Mate has maintained the same values and is fortunate to count Kunes Country Auto Group among its loyal customers.