



AI-financing spotlight: James Herren of Tracy Honda



Role
General Sales Manager

Dealership
Tracy Honda (Ken Harvey Automotive)

Location
Tracy, CA



\$3,700
back-end profit

Tracy Honda uses Upstart Auto Financing as a first-look lender to deliver faster decisions and higher approvals while maintaining strong profitability.

**“We’re up 20 percent while everyone else in our local area is down 30 percent. I’m going to attribute a lot of that to our relationship with Upstart.”
- James Herren, GSM**

James Herren isn’t a desk-only GSM. He describes himself as a “working GSM,” actively involved in deal structuring and customer conversations while also overseeing the finance department and marketing. Serving a diverse community in a competitive market, speed and flexibility are crucial to keep deals moving.

The challenge: slow responses and rigid approvals

Before Upstart Auto Finance, Herren’s team felt boxed in by traditional lender friction: “Some lenders are extremely difficult to work with. They take forever to answer, but then they’re also really stringent on approvals,” he shared.

Why Upstart: peer validation and a better path to “yes”

Herren first heard about Upstart through a Honda 20 Group, where a peer recommended Upstart because their customer bases were similar. What got his attention? The consistency of AI-driven decision-making for faster approvals.

The solution: making Upstart the first look

After launching Upstart Auto Finance, Tracy Honda quickly positioned Upstart as the default first look for most deals: “Upstart is so often the first look that most of the salespeople walk in and go, ‘Hey, I got an Upstart deal,’” he said.



Stronger Approvals
faster speed to ‘yes’ and highly profitable deals

The impact: stronger approvals, faster speed to ‘yes’ and highly profitable deals.



“Not only will we say yes, but we’re getting a call that makes sense to us and to our customers.” - James Herren, GSM

Results so far:

More approvals that make sense for the customer and the store

For Herren, the biggest win isn't just approval—it's the ability to get an approval that is workable and profitable. "Not only will we say yes, but we're getting a call that makes sense to us and to our customers."



"In the past, a certain deal may have had a 30 percent interest with a \$2,000 bank fee. That same deal now would have a 10-15 percent interest rate with a \$200 bank fee. It's insane."

Beyond incremental approvals, Herren emphasized that Upstart has meaningfully shifted financing volume away from other lenders, becoming the default destination for 95 percent of the deals they previously would have sent elsewhere.

Speed that changes how deals are worked

Upstart's speed to decision reduces time lost to back-and-forth with traditional lenders and helps the store stop guessing. "We know a decision in one to three minutes whereas every other bank can be 20-30 minutes or up to two hours sometimes. Getting an answer from Upstart in two minutes is huge; we know what we're working with out of the gate."

He also shared that instead of "educated guessing" and going back and forth with the customer, the team will send the deal to Upstart early so they can quickly determine how to structure the deal and "which way we're going to pivot."



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Profitability: strong back-end performance



Herren also shared that Upstart has made a huge impact in boosting their back-end performance, which is around \$3,700. "Upstart's back-ends are significant," said Herren.

Deals saved every month

Herren estimates Upstart helps them close an additional 12-15 deals per month that they likely would have lost otherwise, often by turning tough terms into workable options for the customer and the dealership. When asked if Upstart helps the dealership save deals, Herren stated, "Every day. It happens every day."



Herren went on to describe that in his local market of around 80 dealers, Tracy Honda is the only dealer up year over year. "We're up 20 percent while everyone else in our local area is down 30 percent. I'm going to attribute a lot of that to our relationship with Upstart."

Drive your dealership forward.

Ready to speed up financing and convert more shoppers?

Learn more at upstart.com/dealers

¹Findings reported are based on information collected by Tracy Honda from June 2025-February 2026.
²Ibid

Source: <https://automobiles.honda.com/>

