



# AI-financing spotlight: John Alvarado of Salinas Honda

**Role**  
General Sales Manager

**Dealership**  
Salinas Honda (Del Grande Dealer Group)

**Location**  
Salinas, CA



**\$3,500**  
back-end profit!

For Salinas Honda, Upstart Auto Finance isn't just a lender – it's a sales tool that builds trust early, delivers instant decisions and helps the store close deals other dealerships miss while staying focused on profitability.

**“We’re one of the most profitable dealerships in our dealer group, and one of the reasons is because of Upstart. The reserves are fantastic.”  
- John Alvarado, GSM**

John Alvarado is the GSM at Salinas Honda and has cultivated a management team with one focus: moving cars. According to him, “Upstart is one of the strongest avenues to put metal on the road.”

### **The challenge: buyers who show up guarded and deals that don't close elsewhere**

As part of Del Grande Dealer Group (DGDG), Salinas Honda competes across a broad radius, from local Salinas buyers to customers driving in from Monterey and the San Jose area.

The dealership often encounters skeptical, guarded buyers, particularly those who've faced high APRs or steep down payments elsewhere.

Alvarado notes many customers are thin-file and payment-driven, looking to fit a manageable monthly budget rather than focusing on rate.

### **Why Upstart: A sales tool that builds trust early**

Salinas Honda doesn't treat financing as something to bring up at the end. They bring Upstart in early as a way to reduce friction and build trust with car buyers.

Once the customer becomes familiar with Upstart during the early steps, Alvarado says the store often sticks with Upstart when the numbers work without needing to shop the deal.



**“We use Upstart as a tool to bring walls down. We’re one of the only dealerships that could actually go through the full process without running customers’ credit until we agree to numbers.”**

- John Alvarado, GSM

### **The solution: Upstart as a preferred non-captive option**

For Salinas, Upstart is a preferred non-captive option, and Alvarado added that Upstart is a top three lender at the dealership, replacing many of its traditional lending partners.

**The impact: instant decisions, stronger approvals and meaningful profitability.**



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- John Alvarado, GSM

### Speed that accelerates the pace of the deal

Alvarado described Upstart approvals as near-instant, helping the team avoid long wait times with other lenders.

“Upstart is instant to 30 seconds. Other banks, we’re sitting for an hour, two hours,” he said.



### Approvals that win deals other stores can't

Alvarado says they're consistently closing deals they would have missed without Upstart, often because nearby dealerships don't have access to the same toolset.

“We're making deals that we would have missed in the past if Upstart weren't involved. It's daily,” he said.



### A different way to evaluate risk

Alvarado contrasted Upstart's approach to traditional score-only decisions, especially for customers with lower scores, but strong repayment behavior. “Other lenders are score driven. Upstart is performance driven.”



### Profitability that drives loyalty

Alvarado connected Upstart directly to profitability, and he shared that Upstart is a main reason why they lead their group in profit.

“We're the most profitable dealership in our dealer group, and one of the reasons is because of Upstart. The reserves are fantastic.”

The average back-end for Upstart deals is ~\$3,500 and average dealer compensation is over \$1,100.<sup>1</sup>

Alvarado also shared the store is #3 in its district, outperforming almost all other dealerships in the San Jose area.



### Fast funding that supports F&I

Alvarado also called out funding speed and ease of uploading slips through the portal, which matters because F&I compensation is tied to time-to-fund. “My finance team gets paid based on how many days it takes to get funds, that's why they like Upstart – Upstart funds quickly.”

Ultimately, he shared that Upstart has become a true partner thanks to the level of support: “Our dealer relationship manager, David, is a huge help because of his availability. He's always a phone call away. I attribute a lot of our loyalty to him.”



Drive your dealership forward.

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Learn more at [upstart.com/dealers](https://upstart.com/dealers)



<sup>1</sup>Findings reported are based on information collected by Upstart from January 2026-February 2026.