AI-financing spotlight:
Tom Pence of Northside Honda

Role	Dealership	Location	$2,580
General Manager	Northside Honda (Northside Auto Group)	San Antonio, TX	back-end profit

"I want everything sent to Upstart": How Northside Honda made Upstart its first look lender

As General Manager of Northside Honda in San Antonio, TX, Tom Pence has made Upstart Auto Finance the store's first look for non-captive financing on new and used inventory alike. Since Upstart delivers competitive rates with stronger profit opportunity with none of the back-and-forth associated with other lenders, Northside Honda has effectively stopped doing business with three of its previous top lenders. For Pence, it comes down to three things: higher approvals, speed and better terms for the customer and store.

His conviction comes from experience. Pence first worked with Upstart's technology years ago and championed adoption at a previous store before bringing that same playbook to Northside Honda. Today, he's mandated use of Upstart across his desk and is leading the push to get all four rooftops in his auto group on the platform.

"If you're going to submit a deal, unless it has to go to our captive, I want everything sent to Upstart. My desk guys will say 'I can't get this,' and we'll ask, 'Did you send it to Upstart?' They send it, and it gets approved."

Higher approvals for new and used, across the full credit spectrum

Upstart's AI-driven decisioning analyzes thousands of variables beyond a traditional credit score, and as a result, Pence has seen more approvals across more customer types, on both new and used vehicles. He emphasizes that Upstart isn't a niche or subprime tool; it competes for his best deals, too, including strong-credit, new-car buyers.

> "The dealers who take the time to understand how Upstart buys **don't want to do deals any other way**."
> *- Tom Pence, General Manager*

"For a first-time buyer, we used to have to go to Honda with a large amount down. The more we send Upstart, the more the algorithm figures out the customer and adjusts the approvals. It makes it a lot easier," said Pence.

> "Even if it's not approved up front, **Upstart lets us find a vehicle that works for the customer.** It gives us a way to not just tell someone 'no,'" - *Tom Pence, General Manager*

Because Upstart uses a soft credit pull, Pence's team can submit deals with no impact to the customer's credit, which lets them place the customer in a vehicle that works, instead of turning them away.

"Even if it's not approved up front, Upstart lets us find a vehicle that works for the customer. It gives us a way to not just tell someone 'no,'" shared Pence.

Better rates with extended terms and fast funding

Upstart's rates and more flexible terms help Pence sell more new and used vehicles to a wider variety of customers without sacrificing gross - leading them to use Upstart as the preferred lender almost always.

In June 2026, Northside Honda averaged $2,580 in back-end per Upstart deal and $1,412 in reserve.[1]

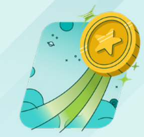
Finally, Pence shared that while other lenders can take up to three days to fund, "Upstart funds within six hours or by the next morning".

The Bottom Line

By making Upstart its first look, Northside Honda approves more buyers across the full credit spectrum, both new and used, at better rates and longer terms and funds deals in hours instead of days.

"The dealers who take the time to understand how Upstart buys don't want to do deals any other way," Pence said.

What a typical Upstart deal looks like at Northside Honda[1]:



Average Amount Financed:

$30,622

Average Contract APR:

15.5%

Average Funded FICO:

654

Average Back-end:

$2,580

Average Reserve:

$1,412

Drive your dealership forward.

Ready to speed up financing and convert more shoppers?

Learn more at upstart.com/dealers

[1]Findings reported are based on the Upstart Dealer Performance Report for Northside Honda, 6/1–6/28/2026.

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