

# The bigger they are the harder...

by Tyler Granakis

Well, writing an article on Toyota's current problems is a bit too easy. The article would practically write itself. Instead, I'd like to address what this means for the American three.

Firstly, the image of Japanese infallibility is gone. You can't recall millions of vehicles and expect people to believe you never make mistakes. Toyota's handling of the matter is a bonus. Behaving in typical corporate fashion will tarnish their image for a very long time. No longer will the Japanese manufacturers be able to point fingers at us and say we don't take our customers as seriously as they do. Toyota has revealed that in a situation like this, there is no easy solution that will make everything go away. I work for a company that bought new tires for all the affected Explorer owners and still had massive fallout in the customer relations department. Our company stock still hasn't completely recovered.

Secondly, Toyota is learning the downside to massive sales. Selling millions of vehicles makes containment very difficult. I'm certain quality is easy to manage when producing on a small scale. Rolls Royce has the luxury of nit-picking every unit they make. But when a company expects to churn out several thousand units a week in multiple facilities, monitoring quality becomes more difficult. To be fair, this recall is not the fault of the Toyota assemblers. I'm sure if these issues had been spotted on the line, they would

have never made it out of the plant. But the same could be said for our recalls. The important thing is to convey this to our customers. Let them know that we care about what we build, and most things that go wrong with a car have nothing to do with the people building them. Toyota is also going to learn about the fickle American consumer. Japan has shown great loyalty to their own products, a luxury not known in the U.S. for some time now. Japanese automakers will receive the same treatment any company in the U.S. receives. They will see that most Americans spend their money without caring who profits. They want to get the most bang for their buck. Japanese advertising has done a lot to create the illusion of their cars being a better value than ours. Dismantling this illusion just got a lot easier.

This is a great opportunity for us to level the playing field in the United States. All three U.S. Auto companies can now stand proudly with their products and tout them as being as good or better than the foreign competition. This massive recall will help make the myth of foreign quality vanish. There are many divisions of manufacturing where the U.S. Products are renown to be the best. Examples such as Snap-On tools, Gibson Guitars, and Red Wing shoes can be our template to reclaiming "The Best Money Can Buy" crown in our industry. If we continue to make great products and concentrate on quality, we can secure our futures with companies that will once again hold the respect of the world.

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