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## Executive Interview with David Hirschhorn, Director of Brand Management at CRP Automotive

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*David Hirschhorn has been director of brand management at CRP Automotive for the past two years. He is charged with ensuring that CRP's core brands are being maximized from both a marketing and sales perspective. He has been with CRP for more than eight years, and has served the company in many product development capacities, including roles as an assistant product manager, product manager and senior product manager.*

*He is directly responsible for and has played a major role in the development of the Rein Automotive program, CRP's proprietary brand for OE quality import replacement parts, which is the focus of this interview. In this exclusive AMN Executive Interview, Hirschhorn shares details on the development of the Rein Automotive program and its role in CRP's future growth.*



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**CRP created the Rein Automotive program, CRP's proprietary brand for OE quality import replacement parts, just in the past few years, so it may be an unfamiliar name to some. Can you tell us more about the brand?**

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CRP launched the Rein Automotive Brand in 2008. It's CRP's umbrella brand for a wide range of genuine, OE-quality automotive replacement parts for European vehicles, including Audi, BMW, Mercedes Benz, Mini, Porsche, Saab, VW and Volvo. The line includes anti-vibration and suspension parts, air conditioning parts, axle boot kits and wheel bearings and bearing kits, as well as a new coolant hose program. We source these parts from a select group of OE-quality companies that are either OE suppliers or are able to meet our stringent criteria and very rigorous approval process. As a result, our Rein Automotive line has been very consistent in delivering the level of OE quality, vehicle fit and ease of use that today's distributors and shops are demanding. The name "Rein" means "pure" in German. We chose it because we wanted to convey consistent and reliable quality, which is the hallmark of our brand.

### **Why is the import part market, and the Rein Automotive brand, important for CRP today?**

CRP has more than 50 years of heritage and experience as an imports parts supplier. We focus heavily on European applications but are quickly growing our coverage for various Asian makes and models. While the market knows us well for the ContiTech and Pentosin product lines we provide, the Rein Automotive brand gives us the opportunity to expand beyond that and provide our customers with important products that are not available from these two global brands.

Many of the products that make up the Rein brand come from companies that are not as large or don't have the market awareness of ContiTech and Pentosin. We are able to partner with these companies, grouping their products together to create an offering that is very attractive and beneficial to our customers. To CRP, this represents an excellent growth opportunity, and to our customers, it means proven OE quality solutions for many of their problems from a very reliable source they have learned to trust and respect.

We all know the import car parc is growing rapidly and changing at the same time. Because of this, there is a lot more interest in the products we offer for import vehicles. Some of our supplier partners manufacture very high-tech components, which for years had low demand but now have become very popular due to the changes in the market. An excellent example of this is our hydraulic mount and radiator hose programs. We're very excited about these parts because their design and performance has changed quite a bit over the past 10 years and we anticipate a big increase in demand.

In a very short time, we will launch our line of import coolant hoses under the Rein Automotive brand name. The coolant hoses used on many late model vehicles are more than just "hoses." They are systems composed of complex vehicle-specified assemblies featuring molded configurations with integrated thermocouples, O-ring seals and multiple connections to various engine components. Because of this, the typical "cut to fit" solution for molded hose that's been around the market for years won't work anymore. These applications require the exact form, fit and function of the OE part.

**From a geographic standpoint, what are CRP/Rein's most important markets today, and why?**

The focus for the Rein brand is mostly on European vehicles, so the geographic regions we've been targeting are the East and West Coasts as well as areas like Chicago and portions of Texas. But as the number of import vehicles grow, so does demand in other geographic markets. Today, we have customers throughout the United States, Canada and Mexico for the Rein Automotive brand. Fortunately for us, our ContiTech belt program is an all makes, all models program with growing distribution in most regions, so we're able to use our established customers to find out when the demand for European vehicle components grows enough in other markets to start targeting them.

**As a younger brand, what is Rein Automotive doing from a marketing perspective to gain customer trust and brand recognition? What role does CRP play in this effort?**

We're using a couple different approaches to spread the awareness of the Rein Automotive brand and the quality of parts we supply. On the pull side marketing, we're supporting and attending conventions and training seminars for technicians focused on European vehicles. A couple of the groups we support are the BIMRS association for BMW Technicians and LMV Industries, which among other things, has seminars for technicians working on Mercedes vehicles. We believe it is important to establish early adopters to a brand who can function as a brand advocate within their respective communities/groups. We have a strong core group of professional installers acting in this capacity today.

We are also taking a "retro" approach to building awareness in the market by having our field service reps discuss the features and benefits of the Rein Automotive program when they are out making shop calls. Our decision to use this old, but proven approach was based on the very good success we have experienced establishing technician level awareness and demand for our ContiTech Pro Series timing belt kits (a timing belt kit that comes complete with the belts, tensioner, idler, water pump and hydraulic damper).

We are also advertising in a variety of trade magazines and publications for our wholesale distributors and

technicians, as well as working with our WD customers to develop promotional programs. A marketing tool kit, including a launch campaign strategy, has been created to assist our wholesale distributors with the promotion and sale of the Rein Automotive program.

Additionally, electronic cataloging can be a true game changer today. We have cataloged the entire Rein Automotive offering to ACES and it is available through Activant and Wrenchhead as well as on our website ([www.reinautomotive.com](http://www.reinautomotive.com)) or on ShowMeTheParts.com, under “CRP/Rein Automotive.”

**Which product categories do you feel will be most competitive in the import market over the next few years and why?**

This is a very interesting time to be in our field because of all the changes we’re experiencing. The types and brands of vehicles people drive are changing and the amount of time a vehicle is in service is growing as well. Because their vehicles are getting older, owners are changing their service habits. Instead of getting a part for that 5- or 6-year-old vehicle to just keep it on the road for a little longer, many owners are now making an investment to keep their vehicles properly maintained for the long run and choosing to put high-quality parts, regardless of how “old” it is.

Because of this new mindset, there is a higher demand for the quality of parts that are used on a car after it hits that mystical 100,000-mile plateau. We’re seeing many vehicle owners choose to replace things like engine mounts, suspension components, fluids, belts and hoses with high-quality replacements rather than lower quality and cheaper alternatives. As a result, we think the products that keep vehicles in operation for a longer period of time will need to be very competitive. This is where we believe the Rein Automotive brand will best serve the market need. The brand stands for quality and technicians will know from the first time they touch the brand what comes inside the box.

Additionally, due to the growth in the numbers of imported vehicles, we’ll see many parts that used to be considered “dealer only” now available from aftermarket suppliers. A perfect example of this is the late model coolant hoses I mentioned earlier. If a shop only has a few of these installations a month, it doesn’t hurt much to source the part from the dealer, but as demand goes up and some shops start replacing 10 or more of these complicated hoses monthly let alone weekly, the game changes. The need arises to have additional supply sources to ensure competitive and fair pricing for everyone as well as shop profitability. Just like the other components in our Rein Automotive product offering, these Rein Automotive hoses are a perfect “plug and play” solution, matching the OE in form, fit and function. So the technician doesn’t have to worry about looking for all the parts individually, and watch an easy coolant hose change turn into a part-sourcing nightmare.

And let's not forget about the wholesale distributors who may not be getting the business today because they may not be able to offer the exact replacement part. They are on the receiving end of a lost sale and may not even be getting that "first call" for this type of part. With the Rein Automotive hose program the wholesale distributor has a viable source and can now participate in this type of part activity.

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