



# BUSINESS PROFILE

## SPOTLIGHT MERCEDES-BENZ OF NORTHERN ARIZONA

**W**hen Todd Blue sold his car dealerships a few years ago, he didn't realize just how much he'd want to return. "I missed the business. I just underestimated how much I loved it," he says. When the opportunity to own a Mercedes-Benz dealership came up, he took it. So Blue, the founder and CEO of Lapis, purchased Mercedes-Benz of Northern Arizona in December of 2023. Blue has a colorful business background. He started out working in what he calls heavy industries that included steel mills, railroad cars and metals. Then he got into real estate and franchised restaurants. He started in the automobile dealership business later in life. Blue collects cars and has a true passion for them. In 2009, he put his first franchised dealership under contract. He gradually purchased more car dealerships until he had a group that he gradually sold off.

"I was really excited when this opportunity in Flagstaff came up because I felt like that it was underserved and underutilized. And I see a great opportunity for that Northern Arizona region including but not limited to Sedona at the top of the list. But also Prescott, Winslow, Flagstaff and other communities that are growing and are really, quite frankly, incredibly vibrant and exciting. Communities that are starving for luxury," he says.

Besides having a true appreciation for the region, Blue also has a deep passion for Mercedes. He loves the brand, and one of his business life goals was to represent the German car manufacturer synonymous with both luxury and quality. "The automobile started with Mercedes-Benz," says Blue. "There's an amazing heritage to say the least. I love the quality. I love the craftsmanship, the engineering, the performance." Mercedes also crafts beautiful vehicles that can handle rugged terrain found in Northern Arizona. "I think their SUVs and all-wheel drive vehicles are incredibly well built with highest quality, but also the performance and technology is at the top of the food chain," says Blue.

Blue has acquired franchises for prestigious car brands including Audi, Jaguar, Land Rover, Lamborghini, Rolls-Royce and McLaren. He's also worked with Aston Martin, Bentley, BMW and Porsche. But he's always found himself drawn to Mercedes-Benz. He admires their durability and engineering. "I like the quality of the German engineering and the fact that pretty much everything they do from their AMG vehicles to their Maybach vehicles, all the way down to the entry-level vehicles, offer most of the same general technology, and you don't feel less than in their entry-level cars," he says. "And then in the highest level cars, of course, you still feel exclusive because of the performance, and the leathers and the different options that you can get on the cars. But ultimately, what it comes down to is the fact that the performance in the engineering is probably second to none ... And Mercedes has always ranked in the highest categories of safety for all their vehicles."

Buyers looking to customize their vehicles can participate in what Mercedes-Benz calls its Manufaktur program. This is a bespoke program that offers custom upholstery and exclusive colors. Blue tells us that the exterior car paint can be matched to the customer's nail polish. Like many top car manufacturers, Mercedes is always innovating. In the latest E-Class model, the touch screen stretches all the way across to the passenger's side so he or she can engage with it too.

The Flagstaff dealership is a modern building complete with expansive glass windows, a terrific lounge and a state-of-the-art cappuccino machine. It includes a showroom with an inventory of both new and certified pre-owned vehicles, a space where cars are delivered and customers are educated and a service department that can service both cars in addition to Mercedes Sprinter vans and Overlanders. Everyone who works at the dealership is Mercedes-Benz certified and goes through rigorous training. "I've always prided myself on white glove service, a spirit and culture of 'yes.' We try to find a way to say 'yes' to our customers in every way we can. We want to try to figure out ways things can be done versus how they can't be done," he says. "I don't think that conglomerates or the large public companies can service luxury customers the way the independently owned dealer can. So that's really what I want to do." Blue is also dedicated to the local community and building relationships. The dealership sponsored the Sedona Mountain Bike Festival this past March. Customers are also invited to dinners, coffee and even on trips. "I'm excited and learning a lot about the Flagstaff and the Northern Arizona community. I love the vibe, that part of the world and gorgeous scenery," he says. "We're really excited about integrating ourselves into the Sedona market and feel that it's a great opportunity for both Sedona and for us to experience luxury automotive unlike any way that they have so far." – *Teresa K. Traverse*

MERCEDES-BENZ OF NORTHERN ARIZONA, 5171 Test Drive in Flagstaff. Open 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. for sales. Visit [mercedesarizona.com](http://mercedesarizona.com) or call 928-220-8526 for more information.