

# MARINE FIVE STAR DEALER CERTIFICATION

## MEDIA Q & A



***More than 300 dealers in North America have achieved Marine Five Star Dealer Certification. This Q & A provides an overview of the MFSDC program.***

### ***What was the original impetus that led to the development of the Five Star Dealer Certification program?***

In the development of the industry-wide initiative, Grow Boating, Inc., which launched in 2006, four foundations were embraced: dealer certification, product certification, a national consumer marketing campaign, and water access legislative initiatives. For dealer certification, the mandate was to improve the sales and service consumer experience at retail by offering “best practices” materials, process management training, and certification of performance. The vision included a certification program that would differentiate dealers who drive continuous improvement and strive to be the best they can be, while providing resources to improve their operations so they could create an enjoyable customer experience and therefore, sell more boats and become more profitable ... ultimately, growing boating.

### ***Who is the organization that manages the certification process, and what are their distinctive qualifications and credentials?***

Marine Five Star Dealer Certification (MFSDC) is part of Grow Boating, Inc. It is managed by the National Marine Manufacturers Association (NMMA) and the Marine Retailers Association of America (MRAA). NMMA offers administrative support services through its office in Chicago. Five Star Solutions, LLC delivers and oversees certification as a third-party consultant. Five Star Solutions ran training operations and dealer relations for the Chrysler Corporation’s 4,000 dealers. Five Star Solutions certifies the individual dealerships and provides ongoing support and consulting throughout the certification process.

### ***What are the basic requirements for a dealer to become certified?***

To apply, an organization must be a recognized retail boat dealer with a storefront, and a service department. Qualifying dealers register to participate in a custom workshop designed to provide an overview of – and an initial training on – program requirements. The dealer must agree to implement a program of best practices and

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procedures, and abide by the established Consumer Bill of Rights. Through a comprehensive process, the dealer must demonstrate compliance with all program requirements. The dealer undergoes an onsite facility inspection and assessment to ensure all qualifications are met.

Core certification requirements cover the areas of customer satisfaction, training, employee performance and facility. The process involves mapping sales, service, and parts; customer follow-up program; tracking and trending feedback; and making continuous improvements within these areas. Other requirements address internet marketing, lead management, website content, service comeback logs, employee satisfaction survey results, and appropriate inventory.

### ***How is a dealer's submission verified?***

Five Star Solutions verifies dealer compliance with all published requirements (see above) through submittal of documents and photographs. First-time verification includes a detailed, on-site assessment of the requirements. Five Star Solutions experts also consult with the dealer on an ongoing basis throughout the process regarding best practices to help improve individual business operations.

### ***How long does the initial process take to become a Five Star Certified Dealer?***

Most boat dealerships will complete the process in about three months, while others may require longer periods up to a year. This is because each dealer is at a different stage at the outset related to required criteria, so the time requirement varies.

### ***What are the costs involved?***

First-time Marine Five Star Dealer Certification is divided into three incremental payments:

1. Launch Webinar - \$700
2. Onsite Inspection - \$1700
3. Final payment and Marketing Kit - \$495

Total Cost: \$2,895

Note: Annual re-certification is conducted through a webinar which costs \$1595.

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### ***What are the benefits for a dealer to become Certified?***

There are many benefits to becoming a certified dealer, including:

- A dealer is recognized as 'certified' and officially listed and promoted in this highly coveted category to consumer and industry audiences.
- Certified dealers have instant access to customer leads generated through the Discover Boating program.
- Check out the Video, "Why Buy from a Certified Dealer," on DiscoverBoating.com for further benefits. Certified dealers can include this video on their website, as it showcases the benefits of buying from a Certified Dealer (from the boat buyer's perspective).
- According to a survey by Left Brain Marketing conducted in 2007, 79% of consumers surveyed prefer buying from a Certified Dealer.
- Dealership management and owners set the precedent and deliver a strong message to their sales and service teams by validating the importance of certification to their business.
- Certification helps to foster a sense of 'employee pride.'
- Each certified dealership conducts a blind Employee Satisfaction Survey, which is read only by Five Star Solutions, and then summarized in detail for the dealer. The survey provides valuable insight for ownership and management and assists in analyzing employee satisfaction, opportunities for improvement, and retention potential.
- Certified dealers have direct access to the industry's top dealer practices through an exclusive, proprietary compilation that is continuously updated. Dealers have access to more than 500 examples from hundreds of certified dealers from throughout the U.S. and Canada.
- Certification allows dealers to enjoy and practice 'process consistency' to stay focused.
- Certification is all about continuous improvement, as it rallies employees to maintain focus and to achieve goals.
- Certification provides important industry, manufacturer and customer recognition.
- Certification creates a strong sense of entrepreneurship as dealership teams unite to work *on* their business, not just *in* their business. Certified dealers understand their vision, where they are going, how they are going to get there, and what they are missing. They are often more strategic and plan-oriented.

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### ***What is the value of 'dealer certification' to the boat buyer?***

Based on marine industry consumer research conducted by Left Brain Marketing, customers prefer to purchase or service a boat from a certified dealership. MFSCD guarantees customers a critical standard of excellence, as is defined in the established Consumer Bill of Rights (see separate document within press kit). Customer and employee satisfaction is higher, and employees are knowledgeable and well-trained.

Boat buyers working with a certified dealer should have full confidence during any service and/or sales experience that they are dealing with a competent, knowledgeable and customer service-oriented organization. Certified dealers are highly motivated to meet their customers' needs and exceed expectations. Certified dealers are committed to supporting customers' boating experiences for years to come, long after the initial sale or service transaction is over.

Consumers are more at ease knowing a business has subscribed to a set of accredited standards and has been certified by an independent, reliable and credible third party.

### ***Is certification a one-time exercise or an ongoing process?***

Marine Five Star Dealer Certification is an annual process. The program's success depends upon dealers being accountable for certification standards year after year.

Successful dealers get better by showing leadership; driving continuous improvement in their operations; better managing their processes; and keeping employees motivated. Employees appreciate the time, money and effort invested in becoming, and remaining, a high performance company.

Given the changes in market conditions, competition and customer preferences, certification is not a "set it and forget it" effort. A business is either moving ahead, or falling back. Continuous improvement is the framework for a dealer to manage change and facilitate positive growth.

At the end of the first year of certification, dealers apply to be re-certified. Re-certification delivers the support, motivation and ongoing reinforcement needed to help dealers to continually improve.

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### ***How does the boat buying public know whether or not a dealer is certified?***

DiscoverBoating.com includes the official listing of certified dealerships, and Grow Boating promotes these dealers through various advertising, promotion and PR initiatives.

In addition, individual dealers proudly display their official MFSDC seal and Consumer Bill of Rights on their websites, as well as via showroom signage, local advertising, at boat shows and special events, etc. Some manufacturers also include a listing of their certified dealerships on their websites.

### ***What organizations within the boating industry support and promote dealer certification?***

MRAA, Grow Boating, NMMA, many marine trade organizations and manufacturers support Marine Five Star Dealer Certification.

### ***What is the ultimate goal for dealer certification?***

The ultimate goal of Marine Five Star Dealer Certification is to stimulate growth for the boating industry by improving the competitive position of the industry's retailers vs. other industries frequented by the same consumer base.

Only the top performing dealers are certified. Those who are certified are committed to delivering a superior experience for employees and customers alike.

MFSDC is designed to increase industry sales, profitability, and long-term customer loyalty by delivering an outstanding retail experience for boat buyers. This creates a win-win proposition for all those involved: dealers, manufacturers, and highly valued customers.

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