

An Interview with Joe Daquino

By: David Gorin

AmeriGO, the newest RV club entering the RV industry, comes into the game with many similarities to several existing RV clubs. AmeriGO is being established by several high profile industry executives with vast experience in club operations and close connections to some of the industry's major park owning companies.

Joe Daquino, the President of AmeriGO comes to his position with 27 years of sales, marketing, operations and general management experience within the RV industry. Joe served as President of Affinity Clubs, the largest consumer group of RV clubs, including Good Sam, Coast to Coast, and Camp Club USA, with a total of more than 1.5 million enrolled families. As Senior Vice President of Affinity Media he created the two most widely used resources for RV campground and travel information

within the industry and helped transform Affinity from a print based organization to the digital leader in the RV industry.

DG: Joe, congratulations on the new venture – AmeriGO. In a nutshell, what's AmeriGO and where's it AGOing?

JD: In a nutshell AmeriGO is a new, all-encompassing RV club and online community dedicated to RV enthusiasts – established to enhance the RV lifestyle and promote positive growth in the RV industry. AmeriGO RV Club is truly a game-changer in the RV industry. The net goal, as we grow and add even more benefits over the next five years, is to make AmeriGO a modern, full-service club that will be involved in all aspects of the RV market for the betterment of the RV consumer, RV industry and RV campgrounds

throughout North America.

DG: When you say a Amerigo is a game-changer and that AmeriGO will be involved in all aspects of the RV market, can you give us one or two examples of where you see AmeriGO changing the game as we know it today?

JD: By virtue of our independence and digital member experience we will reach segments of the RV market that are looking for the full RV experience. We want to be the kind of RV club that addresses the question, "what is it that prompted your interest in RVing?" Due to our digital nature we will be able to serve the total market in a way never before seen in the RV market.

DG: From the company's early press releases, AmeriGO bears a striking resemblance in many ways to the Good Sam Club. What's the differentiator between

the two clubs? What do you think AmeriGO can do better or different that will make it attractive to RVers?

JD: We view ourselves as very much different than any club in the market – a new paradigm in the world of RV clubs, if you will. There are some 9 million RVers but only less than 1.5 million belong to a club, so there's plenty of opportunity out there. The key difference is at the core of all we do and drives the company's development to be an all-encompassing and modern RV Club, with a fresh outlook and a value proposition for our members that's in tune with the 21st century consumer. Also, our dedication to the RV industry is apparent across the board...from our inviting online community, and our benefits and services, to our third party partnerships and alliances, to our dealership network

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that features the leading independent dealers across the country. We take great care to plan each aspect of the club in a way that is about growing the entire RV industry. We are focused on constantly listening to and working with our Club members, bloggers and advisors, enabling us to shape AmeriGO according to the current wants and needs of today's RVer.

DG: Any thoughts on what AmeriGO sees as the most important wants and needs of today's RVer? How are today's needs different from the last decade or so?

JD: RVers of today are some of the most technically savvy consumers in the country. They're using desktop computers, laptops, tablets, and mobile devices in ever increasing numbers. Their appetite for RV lifestyle news and information grows greater every year. They want the latest and greatest of what RVing has to offer, and

they want it now. Since AmeriGO is not tied to the analog world we will be able to provide them with the latest information and satisfy their needs.

DG: Can you share with us the membership and growth objectives of AmeriGO? How many members do you think you can attract in 12, 24, 36 months? How many AmeriGO parks do you project? How many dealer relationships?

JD: AmeriGO has adopted a distinct business model to achieve critical mass in the shortest time possible. The club will amass upwards of 400,000 members in its first year alone. We've already signed some of the largest, most highly respected and independent RV dealers in the country, including General RV Center, Campers Inn, and Lazy Days. We're represented in 28 locations nationally and plan to increase to about 100 as we grow. As for campgrounds, we've

also focused on working with quality partners and signed 235 to date, including all properties in the Equity Lifestyle Properties portfolio as well as those that are part of the Carefree RV Resorts network. We predict that we will grow to more than 600 parks within the next two years.

DG: You mentioned the connection between Carefree and ELS and AmeriGO. Other than partnering with their impressive base of campgrounds and RV parks, does the relationship between AmeriGO and these companies go beyond just the parks? Is AmeriGO able to access their thousands of RVers and campers as part of the partnership? Are you targeting those RVers as part of the initial base of AmeriGO members?

JD: The primary purpose of our campground affiliate program is to create a nationwide network of quality RV parks where AmeriGO members can enjoy savings on

overnight stays. Our ability to drive additional traffic to these campgrounds is equally important. We are discussing ways in which we can acquire members through the campground channel but have not, as yet, implemented any. At the end of the day, our goal is to create a "win/win/win" situation for our partners, our club, and our RV consumers.

DG: When do you expect to begin to reach out to the independent campground base to enlist additional park partners?

JD: Our intention is to begin those efforts in late second quarter of 2014. Until then, campground operators that are interested in AmeriGO's program can contact us at mnovakovic@amerigorv.com.

DG: Popular wisdom seems to hold that younger people are generally not "joiners". With the RV market reaching into a younger and younger segment

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of the population, how will AmeriGO attract the younger RV owner and camper to join?

JD: Part of developing any business certainly is understanding your audience, which is clearly another way AmeriGO shines. By design, AmeriGO RV Club presents a comprehensive online experience with a blend of rich content and an inviting community - including a vast, engaging presence in many social networks. We are pleased to be viewed as a resource and a place to explore and share everything about RVing. Our new website features an ever-expanding range of RV-related news and information, RV travel tips & hints, tech resources, RV destinations information, and much more. The way we view it, it's not about getting today's RVer to 'join,' it's about becoming part of their experience and enhancing their RV lifestyle. We also offer brand-

new benefits ideal for today's RVers such as our vertical-interest groups, where we will bring together folks with similar passions or lifestyles from around the country through our own series of "electronic" campfires. We will also create an industry-wide "members recommendations" portion of our website that will help consumers in choosing everything from the right campground and dealer, to the appropriate RV and accessory, to the best travel experience for their needs.

DG: What kind of relationship do you see between AmeriGO and commercial RV parks and campgrounds? Aside from parks offering a discount to AmeriGO members, what else do you expect from the parks? And as importantly, what can the parks expect from AmeriGO? Do you see a two-way relationship here with benefits for both

AmeriGO members and the parks they visit?

JD: Our campground relationships are among our most important. Our goal is to support their marketing and communications efforts so that they can reach the greatest number of RVers possible. In addition to our efforts to drive more traffic to our affiliate parks online, an AmeriGO affiliated campground will have the opportunity to communicate directly to RVers in our customer database. In return, we expect our affiliated parks to be highly consumer oriented and always find ways to ensure a quality experience for our mutual customers.

DG: What are your thoughts on branding in the park industry? Do you see AmeriGO becoming a park brand either through licensing or franchising?

JD: We don't have any plans for licensing or franchising. As for branding, AmeriGO's

goal is to become the most trusted resource for products, services and information that add value and security for the RV enthusiast. Our campground relationships will play an integral role in our efforts to communicate those brand attributes to the RVing public.

DG: I know you'll have a heavy presence in social media and on the Internet. What about a print directory? Any plans along those lines?

JD: A great strength of the AmeriGO experience is that it will be internet based. The AmeriGO website will form the nucleus for all membership offerings and transactions. As well, AmeriGOrv.com will provide RVers with dynamic and relevant content unavailable to non-members, including a directory of campgrounds, dealers, and service providers. The site will become the one,

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true, most advanced and comprehensive portal for the RVing public.

DG: Good Sam obviously has a close relationship with its sister company, Camping World and has basically incorporated the President's Club of CW into Good Sam. Do you see AmeriGO teaming up with a national retailer to market RV and camping equipment, supplies and maybe even RVs?

JD: Our aim is to foster growth throughout the entire RV marketplace, and we'll grow by creating valuable partnerships and alliances with a wide variety of high quality, third party providers and vendors regardless of their ownership affiliation. We have established a robust RV Club benefits program with unique offerings and will continue expanding those offerings

especially for RV enthusiasts. AmeriGO recently launched our a coast-to-coast network of dealerships that provide amazing deals on new and pre-owned RVs as well as quality workmanship, and unparalleled offers on parts and accessories for the ultimate peace of mind as they ride the open road across North America. We are also empowering RV enthusiasts with preferred access to the comprehensive resources to buy and sell RVs online with a full spectrum of inventory as part of alliance created with RV Trader.

DG: Anything else you'd like to share about this new addition to the RVing world?

JD: The company's new website is launching soon at www.AmeriGOrv.com. To celebrate this industry game-changing addition to the marketplace, AmeriGO RV Club is offering free one-year memberships to RV

enthusiasts who register via the following link: join.amerigorv.com/join-free/.

AmeriGO RV Club offers outstanding value-added membership benefits, services, and discounts via a highly advanced online RV club experience. Benefits for members are extensive from valuable insurance option choices that ensure the best deal on the right coverage to savings at hundreds of AmeriGO-affiliated campgrounds, to RV extended warranties, to AmeriGO's sanctioned Road Care Plans for the ultimate in peace-of-mind as RVers navigate the open road, to preferred provider pricing on RV financing options. RV enthusiasts can take advantage of frequently updated exclusive deals and discounts on dining, shopping, attractions, events and more in their local area and across North America.

Members can also share their experiences and engage in communication with other like-minded RV enthusiasts via the site's online community, local chapters, lifestyle or niche-focused groups, and social media channels, including the company's page on Facebook at www.facebook.com/AmeriGOrvClub and Twitter @AmeriGOrvClub. Additional services and programs will be introduced online on an ongoing basis.

AmeriGO RV Club is headed by industry experts including Joe McAdams as Chairman, Mike Schneider as CEO, Joe Daquino as President, and Sue Bray as Editorial Director who ensure the focus of the club remains on enhancing the RV lifestyle for today's RVers and on growing the RV industry.