

Taking your show on the road

Minnesota dealer converts Indy Car trailer to mobile showroom

In May, we learned about an innovative sales tool adopted by Thompson's Garage Door & Openers in Rochester, Minn. To learn more about their mobile showroom, we talked to Kayla Thompson, advertising/ marketing manager.

Who had the idea to convert the Indy Car trailer into a mobile showroom?

It was Dustin's idea to buy a trailer and renovate it for a "mobile showroom." (Dustin Thompson is general manager.) Dustin and I thought up the ideas, what to include in it, and the graphics for the outside.

Where did you get the Indy Car trailer?

Dustin drove to Indianapolis in January 2015 to pick it up from Eric Bachelart, a former Indy Car driver with the Conquest racing team.

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What's special about an Indy Car trailer that makes it better than using a semi-trailer?

It's set up with a gooseneck that allows us more storage than a regular trailer. It's also easier to maneuver and get into parking areas for the shows, and it's wheelchair accessible.

When did you first put the finished showroom into use?

We first used the trailer at the Winona County Fair, July 8-12, 2015.

How much did it cost to buy and renovate the trailer?

The base cost of the trailer was \$11,000, and we spent \$21,000 to renovate it. This includes all of the renovations inside, such as walls, flooring, all doors, openers, all outside graphics, etc.

How often is it used each year?

We use it about eight times a year for outdoor fairs, car shows, and some antique shows. Most of these events are one week long.

How many doors are displayed in the trailer?

There are five doors mounted on a wall and four movable doors that roll out in front of the trailer. We also have a fully functional garage screen door on the back end of the trailer with a working garage door. We have four working openers displayed in the trailer as well.

What are some other noteworthy features?

- There is air conditioning inside the trailer for the hot summer months, a 20' awning for shade, and full lighting when it gets dark.
- We have custom-made videos of before and after pictures that will continuously play on the TV inside the trailer, along with our commercial.
- The trailer has extra storage for literature and hand samples.

What are the biggest benefits you've received from the mobile showroom?

- The mobile showroom shows how big and professional we are for a small company.
- It gives customers a variety of different options to look at, feel, and hear instead of just looking at pictures.
- · It's eye-catching, giving consumers a reason to stop by our booth. That leads to more leads and/or sales.
- We can give full demonstrations of working garage doors, openers, and screen doors.
- We are more inclined to take on extra fairs and shows, as it takes only minutes to set up for a show. Plus it's fun to work in and show off to our potential customers. Previously it would take us hours to set up for a show, and we had no shelter from the Minnesota weather.
- · Since we started using the trailer, our sales have increased during the shows.

If you had to do it all over again (renovate a trailer for the same purpose), what would you do differently?

It would be nice to have taller sidewalls to give more headroom for the working garage doors. Other than that, it seems to be perfect.

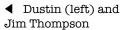




ROLLING OUT:

In addition to five doors mounted on interior walls, the trailer carries four movable doors that can roll out for display.

▼ FINISHING TOUCHES: The trailer's rear door is a working garage door with a fully functional garage screen door behind it.





About Thompson's Garage Door & Openers

- · Founded in 1991 by Jim Thompson, the current president and owner
- IDEA accredited
- 8 installers
- 4 salespeople
- 3 office staff (a receptionist, accountant, and marketing manager)
- 7 service trucks



Kayla and Dustin Thompson