

## James Gouin



CFO  
**Tower Automotive L.L.C.**  
Livonia

8:00 pm, June 21, 2009

Private company, \$1B and up

### CFO of the YEAR AWARDS -- WINNER: James Gouin

CFO

**Tower Automotive L.L.C.**  
Livonia

Even though Livonia-based **Tower Automotive L.L.C.** is a private company, owned by former **Chrysler L.L.C.** parent **Cerberus Capital Management L.P.**, the **Securities and Exchange Commission** is welcome anytime.

That's because CFO James Gouin rebuilt Tower's entire financial system after joining the company in November 2007, following the company's emergence from Chapter 11 bankruptcy the previous July.

"It was a huge change," Gouin said. "When I came here I would say that the control environment was virtually nonexistent — everything from policies and procedures or even, "What is internal control?" "

The company, which posts about \$2.5 billion in annual revenue, is now Sarbanes-Oxley-compliant, produces full reports required by the SEC, such as forms 10-Q, 10-K and 8-K, has the oversight of disclosure and enterprise risk-management committees and a complete internal control and quality oversight system — in roughly a single year.

That's not as easy as flipping a switch. Some consider SEC-style reporting and control to be onerous, expensive practices.

"But ... the governance it drives and the control it drives down deep into business is really the way you should run the business," he said.

The uncertainties about the long-term future prospects that come along with private-equity ownership also make the controls worthwhile.

Advertisement

and of... chie... COIT

## Crain's Private 200

Ranked by 2008 Revenue

Excel format includes  
300 companies along with  
expanded contacts you won't find  
in our print edition

[DOWNLOAD HERE](#)

"Since we don't know what the ultimate exit is from Cerberus — who knows, it could be a public offering, it could be a consolidation or a roll-up, but either way, we'll be ready," he said.

Gouin, 49, knows the demands, and benefits, of public-company reporting requirements from the ground up. He got his first job with **Ford Motor Co.** as an accounts payable clerk at Ford's Essex engine plant when he was 19.

He worked his way up the ranks of Ford's financial hierarchy, with stints in marketing and sales, manufacturing, product development and other areas until he was CFO of Ford's North American operations and vice president and corporate controller for Ford's global operations.

He left Ford in March 2007 to establish the Detroit office of **FTI Consulting** as a senior managing director at the firm. Then, the opportunity to join Tower came along.

"To come into a company that's much smaller where you can really, really have an influence is what I saw here at Tower, and I saw a tremendous opportunity for value creation longer-term."

— Ryan Beene

© 2009 [Crain Communications Inc.](#)