

# AS SEEN IN



## A new dimension of customer satisfaction

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As vehicle sales in Canada have rebounded to near record levels since the recession and the number of dealerships selling those vehicles has remained relatively flat after the recession, dealers again are turning to an area that long has been crucial to automotive retailing: customer satisfaction.

I've had more than a few dealership general managers tell me that the key to their ongoing success is how they treat their customers.

While that sounds obvious on the surface, a new dimension to customer satisfaction is emerging.

Dealers are starting to interpret customer satisfaction more broadly as customer experience.

Interestingly, that also matches how consumer expectations have evolved around interactions with dealerships.

In today's competitive world of automotive retailing in Canada, it's no longer only about customer relationship management and customer satisfaction. It's also about customer experience management and enhancing the customer's inter-



actions with the dealership at every point in the process.

Here are several characteristics of taking a customer satisfaction focus and extending it to a customer experience focus.

- A customer experience focus begins with recognizing customers as individual consumers and personalizing how you interact with them inside and outside the dealership's four walls.

Recognizing a consumer as an individual also implies that dealership personnel are aware of past interactions with the consumer and can use those experiences to make each subsequent experience with the dealership consistent.

- To provide that type of consistent

interaction requires a comprehensive snapshot of the customer and the interactions with the dealership so dealership personnel can act accordingly. It calls for the technologies and processes that will capture and help deliver usable information to dealership employees throughout the store so that the employee is equipped with the information that can lead to a more meaningful, positive interaction.

- A focus on customer experience is as much a way of viewing business operations as it is a specific program or survey for evaluating a dealership. After all, a dealership can score well in customer satisfaction – the service appointment was on time, for example – without having delivered a positive, memorable consumer experience.

Overall, widening the focus of customer satisfaction to customer experience calls for a new breed of dealership processes and supporting technologies to help dealership personnel capture, understand, and influence the customer's experience during each interaction.

And that's an exciting horizon for our industry.