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Streamlining systems, operations to produce better results

BY IAN REILLY

With the Canadian market holding strong, the automobile retailers I talk to are focused on improving operational effectiveness and transforming the customer experience to gain the best competitive advantage.

I highlighted one dealer group with that focus in this publication's June edition. That group's leadership team mapped out, department by department, the entire customer journey with the dealership. They identified all of the interactions between the dealership and its customers.

They also pinpointed a number of obstacles keeping customers from an optimal experience and the dealership from optimal effectiveness. And then they set about looking for areas where they could change how work gets done in the dealership to remove those obstacles and improve the customer experience with their stores.

One of the "Aha!" moments they had was to see the number of third-party systems plugged into the DMS. They also began to see the limitations of those systems and how those limitations impacted their results.

Many dealerships use software that plugs into the DMS to manage a specific, narrow dealership process



Ian Reilly

and those tools often handle that process well.

Yet, many dealers also tell me about the concerns they have with these tools. The most common complaint is a lack of complete integration with the DMS.

The first problem a lack of integration can cause is that dealership employees may have to re-key data into the DMS to complete the transaction.

Secondly, the lack of integration with the DMS can hamper management's ability to gather critical decision-making information all in one spot.

As an alternative, when applications are built to work together and are wholly integrated with the DMS, dealership data is available seamlessly across each application. The dealership is able to operate on a complete retail management platform.

The result for dealers can be streamlined processes, greater efficiencies, and more robust and accurate reporting that can help managers make better business decisions.

For customers, it can mean fewer obstacles, helping create a smoother transaction and a better experience with the dealership.

If your management team has not already tried mapping your customer journey with your dealership, I encourage you to do so.

Look closely at all of your process steps, including the systems and software you use every day. I think you will find a number of ways to streamline your dealership operations, improve your overall business effectiveness, and create a more rewarding experience for your customers.

Ian Reilly is the vice-president of sales for Reynolds and Reynolds (Canada) Ltd.