



The Cadillac and Chevrolet towers give the dealership much-needed curb appeal, says dealer Tony Wilson (left).



1930 Chevrolet sold by OMS founder J. Norval Wilson

Ontario Motor Sales reno more than just bricks and mortar

Revamping the 'way we interact with our customers'

BY LAWRENCE PAPOFF

OSHAWA, ONT. – The blue letters on the showroom wall at Ontario Motor Sales read “established 1923.” Gracing the showroom is an ebony-coloured 1930 Chevrolet. It's there courtesy of the grandson of the man who bought the sedan from J. Norval Willson, the store's co-founder.

But the car's owner drives off in a Nissan Rogue, a warning that neither history nor sentiment is a guarantee that OMS will survive to celebrate its 100th birthday if it does not adapt.

The dealership, located in Oshawa, Ont., has five GM stores within 25 km to say nothing of the other brands that compete in an area once thought to be GM's domain.

OMS president Tony Willson, the founder's great-grandson, seems to know this.

The store has physical upgrades such as two new separate entrances or towers – one blue and gold for Chevrolet over the breezeway and one black and silver for Cadillac leading to the showroom.

This gives the store more “curb appeal” to the motorists speeding by. There is LED lighting in and out. But there is more than just physical change.

THE 21ST CENTURY CAR-BUYING AND MAINTENANCE SOLUTION

Speaking at the store's reopening celebration in late September, Willson tells the guests “not only have we reimaged the bricks and mortar, we have revamped the way we interact with our customers ... We have launched OMS Direct, the 21st-century car-buying solution.

No longer will customers have to go to the store for a test drive, the car they fancy will come to them.

No longer will they have to come to the store to sign the paperwork to buy a car, he promises that OMS Direct will bring the paperwork to their home or office.

And gone are the days of travelling to the dealership for seasonal tire changes. A tire change truck will do the work in the

customer's driveway.

“The service we are launching today is the future of auto retail and we are excited to lead the charge.”

Before the ribbon cutting, Willson and Dave Hicks, the store's marketing and business development manager, discussed why they created OMS Direct.

Willson says that growth in the Oshawa area has put customers and potential customers far from the dealership. He reckons people just don't have time to drop in for a test drive or a seasonal tire change.

Then, there are the growing millennial consumers who want to do as much online and away from the dealership as possible.

So they figured out what services can come to the customers.

He stresses the fact that tire sales and tire changing are key. The dealership stores over 1,000 sets, he says. The changer can handle any make or model.

Picking up and delivering a vehicle, not just the Cadillacs, for service are also important. Ten years ago, there were only 247 pickups; last year, he says, there were over 4,900.

THE FOUR PILLARS

“We have four pillars in OMS Direct – sales, tires, service and parts or accessories ... We expect to add two more in the next five to 10 years,” he says. A body shop pillar is one.

Hicks says change did not come overnight. The store had been picking up and delivering vehicles in need of service, for example. But they added others, such as the tire changer truck.

“There was a need to change the customer experience. We knew we had a great core of products that needed marketing under one umbrella as a holistic, vehicle ownership experience.”

So they brainstormed, taking from each department services that could go mobile, discussing staffing, how it would look, and upsell.

“We came up with the concept and a marketing company helped us with branding. A video provider came up with ex-

plainer videos (on the website) to tell our customers what we are looking to do,” he says.

Willson says the Internet customer was not a challenge. The dealership has a well-disciplined Consumer Concierge or BDC where Internet marketing is “channeled, recorded and tracked.”

“We have a pretty sophisticated Internet

department. Our contact forms are coded so that when people contact the dealership, they are directed to the specific party involved. We are a heavy CRM dealership.”

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MANAGING CHANGE

It's not unusual to find staffers with 30 years' experience at the dealership. So change wasn't simply ordered. Hicks says it was managed to "avoid negativity and lack of buy-in."

He took the concept to department managers first. The results were encouraging. "We got a lot of ideas we hadn't thought of," he says.

Next came the rank-and-file. To get them onside, they created a focus group made up of staffers only, no management.

"We created an internal focus group within the dealership and picked a couple of reps from each department and brought them into the meeting," he recalls.

They were the first to see the explainer videos. The response was enthusiastic.

He says that created a "deeper discussion" about items such as how far they would be taking a car for a test drive. That group became the OMS Direct internal advocates.

The next step was to introduce the program to the rest of staff by breaking them into groups of 10 to 12. In each group were people from each department. Department managers were not members.

Employees who rarely got a chance to voice their opinions spoke up.

"Those meetings were fantastic ... People could speak up knowing that their direct manager wasn't involved in the group," Hicks says.

There was plenty of feedback and that meant buy-in. Staff could see their ideas get buy-in. And that created more enthusiasm.

One technician recommended they put a wrap or graphic with the dealership's name, telephone number, etc. on the roof of the tire changer truck so people living in highrises would be introduced to OMS Direct.

"We are trying to create a visual spectacle so that when people look out their windows, they will know who we are," he says.

Willson is optimistic. But he is realistic, too.

"The dealership is not obsolete. From where I sit, I don't think there will be direct factory sales. But we need to adapt to a higher level of customer service."

Not every customer needs to make their way to the store. It would be a mistake to expect them to, he says.

"We have to adapt. Other businesses have gone through change management."

How to get the most out of those ups

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those lost opportunities."

He says the sales manager can now tell how well each salesperson does when it comes to turning walk-ins into sales. Are they devoting enough quality time to each or are they talking themselves out of a deal?

For instance, when looking at the numbers in The Next Up, a manager might notice that a salesperson entered only 13 new prospects in CRM, however they have actually seen 20 customers.

"The question should then be, what happened to the remaining seven? Why weren't they entered?"

"We can now see that the salesperson saw 13 customers, but only sold three.

"Why? What happened to the other 10? Where do we stand in our road to sale – test drive, write-up, sold?"

It may be that the salesperson isn't spending as much time with some customers as others. Perhaps, their presentation needs improving. Perhaps, they are biased or get along with some customers and not others.

"Regardless of why the sale isn't happening, it has to change because generating walk-in traffic costs money and every opportunity counts.

"The Next Up helps groom the sales team to treat all customers the same. We create a culture of 'love the one you're with,' appreciate that opportunity. It's a coaching tool," Piquette says.

What about the possibility that salespeople will lie when it comes to recording time spent?

"You can only hide for so long; cross-tabulations in the reporting expose that," he insists.

He says The Next Up system, which is compatible with most CRMs, has been in use at over 450 dealerships in the U.S. The result has been over 25 million entries or records and an initial CRM input increase of 20 per cent during the first month.

Mercedes-Benz Canada has been using the system in its company-owned stores in the Toronto area for over three years and has recently installed the system in its newly opened Vancouver store.

The Next Up can also be used in the F&I/business office and the service drive.

For more information, call Jon Piquette 514-889-0039 or jpiquette@thenextup.ca.



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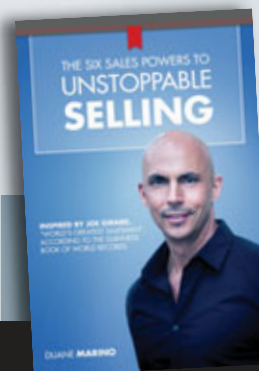
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