

# Customer service a hot topic at LGM's OEM forum

▲ Jackson Hayes

With all the headlines detailing how automakers and dealers are trying to negotiate the changing automotive retail model, it is perhaps lost on some that service providers to the industry have to operate with an equal amount of forethought and vision to keep pace.

Such was the topic for LGM's OEM Forum held in Toronto in early November. The exclusive gathering saw a few dozen executives from a number of OEMs hear presentations about new customer service expectations and growing trends around service excellence.

"We want to ensure your brand experience spills into the F&I office in every way," explained Diana Ricketts, V-P of strategic partners at LGM Financial Services.

Ricketts, who spoke first, talked about the growing need for dealerships and auto companies to leverage customer service as a competitive differentiator. And as the digitization of the sales processes deepens – a transition she called from "bricks to clicks" – so comes a new set of expectations around speed, transparency and efficiency.

Her presentation included a video detailing the level of customer service super luxury carmaker Bugatti has achieved with its customer company command centre.

The platform connects all Bugatti data sources including marketing, customer service and even the cars them-

selves to ensure every aspect of the business and the pricey vehicles is running smoothly.

While the realities of Bugatti and its technology platform would be out of reach for a car dealer and virtually every OEM, she said the same principals Bugatti uses should apply to the entire industry on some level: cater to customers looking for convenience, transparency, rapid response so they can shop whenever they want for every aspect of the vehicle transaction.

Ricketts was followed by J.D. Ney from J.D. Power, who addressed trends around service excellence. U.S. author and customer service expert Michah Solomon spoke last.

LGM reps said the company has focused on meeting the changing market head on. That strategy has led to a new focus on claims and service tools as well as its structures and processes.



Diana Ricketts, V-P of strategic partners at LGM Financial Services, said dealers and OEMs need to leverage customer service as a competitive differentiator

The new "customer-centric claims model," for example, mirrors the OEM model and allows dealers to approve claims automatically without calling in.

And following the move earlier this year that opened up dealer support on Saturdays, Ricketts said LGM would soon move to virtual call centres where the service team can take calls anywhere, anytime. **FAWI**

# LGM's Hub built for the future

NEW SYSTEM REPLACES DRC

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LGM's Drew Collier said the "significant" investment in made in Hub as a replacement for its Dealer Resource Centre is an indication the financial services company has a clear focus on the future of the automotive business office.

The Hub quietly went live in October after and exhaustive two years of planning and development.

"We built the system with a few key areas in mind," explained Collier, president of corporate services with LGM. "First, we wanted it to be captivating, easy to use and intuitive. We also wanted it to be configurable. Our business is growing and we continue to support more OEMs and dealers so we wanted to be able to get more products out to market quickly."

He said the Dealer Resource Centre (DRC) system it replaced required programming for everything. Every new product and OEM had to be programmed in, which would sometimes take weeks or longer.

"With the new system, we can do that in a matter of hours. It is fully configurable and gives us the ability to role out existing or new products very quickly," he explained.

One of the highlights of the new system is the multiproduct quick quote feature. The

module is the one most dealers will use to quickly get a quote for a consumer on aftermarket products.

Where DRC was limited to a pricing on a product-by-product basis, Hub offers the ability to do multiproduct presentations in as little as six clicks, depending on the number of products.

Collier said business managers who would previously take 45 minutes to an hour with a customer going through one product at a time will see that time dramatically reduced thanks the bundle capability.

Work began on Hub in late spring 2014. LGM's plan was to replace DRC with a purpose-built system with an entirely new architecture and new technology stack.

But after looking at solutions in market, Collier said the company instead committed to making the investment and building a team internally to design, create and manage the new system.

"We are in this for the long haul and, as such, we needed to build the software and maintain the software and be able to continue to build new functionality into the software going forward," he said.

"We invested in building an entire team, which is one of the reasons it took us two years. But now we have a software development team that is amazing and allows us to

be really responsive and make fixes, sometimes within 24 hours."

Costs for the program were not revealed, though Collier said the investment was "significant."

The goal, he noted, is to further show the level of importance LGM puts on technology to keep up with where the industry is going.

"It is also a commitment to our OEMs and dealers to continue to give them better tools and add as much value as we can," he said.

Though Hub had only been live for a little more than a month when Collier spoke with Canadian AutoWorld, he said the initial feedback from dealers has been very positive with many calling the user experience "fantastic."

Jeff Fallowfield, LGM's president of distribution and marketing, said Hub aligns

with the company's core values of service excellence and innovation.

"To a certain extent we have been on the sideline for the last year and a bit as we developed our system, but now we have a tool that will really enhance our service excellence," he said. "It will be a great tool for us to act on our core values." **FAWI**

