

# The Fixer

OEM AUTOMOTIVE SOLUTIONS FINDING SUCCESS IN THE PROBLEM SOLVING BUSINESS

▲ **Jackson Hayes**

If you don't want to hear tough answers to your tough questions, Caroline Bourret isn't for you.

Known by dealers and OEMs as The Fixer, she has made it her business to get dealerships struggling with one problem or another back on the track to profitability. And business is good.

After three years in the market with her company, OEM Automotive Solutions Inc., the results are speaking for themselves.

"The first year I started I was mainly getting calls from OEMs. Last year, it was about 75 per cent OEMs and 25 per cent dealers. But 2016 has been the opposite with about 75 per cent of the work coming directly from dealers who are personally reaching out," she tells Canadian AutoWorld.

Bourret's journey in automotive started in Quebec over 20 years ago. Her lengthy resume includes a laundry list of jobs inside a dealership and a diploma from Georgian College's Automotive Business School. The bulk of her experience has come on the corporate side, having worked in various roles for Volkswagen, Hyundai, Toyota and more.

From 2008 to 2014, she worked as a warranty and audit specialist for Porsche Canada, a move that set her on the path she finds herself on today. She formed OEM Automotive Solutions in early 2014 and set about spreading her particular brand of problem solving to the industry at large.

It has been an interesting three years, she assures.

The story is usually the same every time: Either an OEM is fed up with a store's performance or a dealer at his wit's end reaches out for help.

Bourret says she visits the dealership, talks to staff, observes behaviour, analyzes the culture and spots the issues – often without having to peer into the financials.

"I can tell a lot just by watching how the dealership functions," she says.

Her areas of expertise runs the gamut and includes CSI improvement processes in parts and service departments,



Caroline Bourret

on-site training, compliance reviews for warranty, parts, service and recommending corrective actions, preventing warranty charge-back and administering and organizing special programs for things like CSI, service actions and retention.

After absorbing everything on-site, she'll complete her research and crunch the numbers to produce a custom action plan the store can follow. It is personalized and adapted to the specific problems. The plan also includes a timeline detailing when certain targets should be hit or programs put in place.

Some of the mistakes she sees time and again relate to staff and turnover. She says it is often because a general manager or dealer will not pay staff properly meaning they don't attract and retain the best people available.

She says stores end up paying more in the long run because underpaid staff usually leave for a better opportunity once they are trained and have gathered some experience.

"There's a lot of money involved in training a person. While people make mistakes, we have to think of that as the cost of gaining experience. What you don't want is someone taking all that experience and benefiting someone else," she says.

She also stresses that her job doesn't always identify malicious behaviour or deliberate human error. Often, poor performance can be blamed on simply following the same strategy for too long.

"They are not making mistakes, per se. Sometimes it is just people who have done a particular job a particular way for 15 or 20 years and they haven't seen anything else or another way to do things," she says.

"Some might question why something should be changed if it is working. But the question is, is it working well or could it be great? Some people are happy with a certain level of comfort and won't take the steps to push harder and go from good to great. They are very happy with the status quo." **CAW**

For more information, contact OEM Automotive Solutions at [ocmasinc@gmail.com](mailto:ocmasinc@gmail.com) or 647-801-6463.

Canadian AutoWorld

**Quick Tip**

- with Caroline Bourret, president of OEM Automotive Solutions Inc.

You can image that having spent several years personally visiting underperforming dealerships across the country, Caroline Bourret has seen it all and heard every excuse in the book.

She reveals that one of the biggest problems she sees time and again is the total lack of a plan for what she calls the "unexpected."

"You need to have a back-up plan for things like vacation, illness and unforeseen events," she says, noting stores should ensure that not too much information about processes and systems rests with one or two people.

Imagine this scenario: A service department manager running an already busy warranty department is the only one in the store with the experience and knowledge of the system running the show.

The brand gets hit with a major recall during winter tire season and after a huge service campaign has been sent out to customers. Then the service department manager gets into a car accident and can't come to work. What do you do?

Relying too heavily on one department manager can be a recipe for disaster, Bourret says.

She explains that while some dealership groups have lived through an "unexpected" event and learned to plan for it, most dealerships don't have a back-up plan in place today that could guide them through a similar situation.

"And we're talking about multi-million dollar businesses. I seriously can't understand how some cannot think about it," she says.

## Canadian dealers to stand up against distracted driving during spring 2017 campaign

Distracted driving is a factor in approximately four million vehicle collisions in North America every year, according to figures from the CAA.

Seemingly innocent actions such as reaching for a ringing phone, sending a quick text or engaging with a chatty passenger has proven to have devastating impacts on the safety of our roads.

As major players in the automotive industry and a main contact at the vehicle point-of-sale, dealers are uniquely positioned as powerful influencers of driving habits in their local communities.

As a customer prepares to drive off the lot in their new car, there's a valuable opportunity to reinforce the perils of driver inattention to a captive audience.



On Mar. 1, 2017, the annual Auto Dealers Against Distracted Driving Campaign will launch nationwide for its third year running.

During the month-long awareness campaign, hundreds of dealers in every province will band together to help educate their customers around positive driving habits, asking them to make the official pledge against dis-

tracted driving before they leave the dealership.

Dealers will be invited to actively participate in the campaign this year by visiting the campaign website, [distractionfree.ca](http://distractionfree.ca), to order a free point-of-sale kit. The campaign kits, which contain marketing collateral designed to help kick start the important conversation with customers, will be available for pre-order in December and remain available through to Feb. 3.

The point-of-sale kits will be mailed to participants in time for the March push and will include campaign-branded mirror danglers, key tags, pens and customizable posters. To complement the in-store materials, dealers will also have access to a range of digital tools to help maximize their online outreach through websites, social media,

industry press and more.

The Auto Dealers Against Distracted Driving Campaign is organized and led by LGM Financial Services, which has championed the cause from the beginning.

The campaign has grown steadily since its inception in 2015. More than 700 dealers registered to participate last year; they collectively gathered roughly 4,000 pledges against distracted driving.

This year, the campaign goal is to at least double the number of pledges to more than 8,000. **CAW**

For more information on the campaign and to learn how to get involved, visit [distractionfree.ca](http://distractionfree.ca) or follow LGM's campaign coverage on Twitter: @LGMCanada