

EXCEPTIONAL SERVICE: NORDSTROM TAKES CUSTOMER SERVICE TO THE NEXT LEVEL

canadian
auto dealer

MARCH 2016



Generations of
SUCCESS

Meet the Clarks, the proud dealership family that just celebrated 100 years running Canada's oldest Chevrolet dealership, J. Clark and Son Ltd. in Fredericton, N.B. How did they do it?

PM #42134512

Take advantage



LEARN HOW TO GET THE MOST FROM YOUR DMS

BY HEATHER HUDSON

In the span of a few decades, Dealer Management System (DMS) software has transformed the dealership from a business of several different entities to an integrated and efficient operation.

For most dealers, the DMS is as indispensable as the computer itself. “I don’t think there’s a dealership in North America that doesn’t have a DMS. It’s a requirement for running a business,” says Maury Marks, CEO of Quorum Dealer Management Systems.

DMS software has come a long way.

Increasingly user-friendly and intuitive, the sophistication of today’s DMS software is due in large part to dealers themselves, says Lynn McNeill, senior Vice-President at PBS Systems Inc., a Calgary-based provider of DMS software.

“Users are smarter and better. They expect and demand more from their DMS providers and, as a result, are getting it.”

DMS providers are constantly upgrading and introducing new features to enhance the experience of their customers.

Marks says his company produces three new versions of software per year. “We constantly listen to our dealers’ ideas and keep integrating them into the software, evolving it and rolling it out to our dealerships.”

STAY UP TO DATE

DMS providers are constantly evolving — but are dealerships keeping up with their software?

Not always, says McNeill. At his company’s annual user conference, which hosts 150 stores to provide training on current and new features for all departments, he says there is inevitably a “revelation moment.”

“I don’t know how many times people have said, ‘Jeez, I didn’t know that [feature] was there.’”

He likens a dealer’s relationship with its DMS software to the kind of annual accreditation you need in certain professions to continue to practice the trade.

“If you don’t continue to learn, press yourself and ask questions, you’re only going to do what you’ve always done. The way to get the most out of your DMS is to keep pushing the envelope and asking questions.”



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TAKE THE TIME TO TRAIN

Ask any DMS software provider the number one thing users can do to make the most of their system and the answer is usually “take advantage of training opportunities.”

Most providers offer onsite training when integrating a new system and periodic training every few months or annually. Many have online resources and support services as well.

Some companies include training as part of the cost of using the software while others charge for followup training.

No matter how your provider charges, it’s critical that everyone, from new hires to seasoned pros, have regular training from the source — not from their colleagues, says Alain Couturier, Vice-President of CDK Global, a Waterloo-based DMS provider.

“Sometimes dealerships will try to [have] an existing user show the newcomer what to do even though we have classes intended for that purpose at no additional charge.”

He says seasoned users may not be aware of the newer features available in the system and won’t give a new employee the complete picture. “They may not be taking advantage of all the new improvements. We find a lot of subtleties that make it very different and more efficient if you learn from the source.”

And it’s not just new hires who should take regular training. Most DMS providers have specialists available to answer questions about the software while users are actively using it, though McNeill says people need to take more advantage of that option.

“Make a phone call or send us an email right through the software to go directly to the support centre to find out how to perform a function you’re not sure about. People get busy throughout the day and don’t take the time to do that, but it’s important to take the opportunity to help themselves.”

Doug Makichuk, Fixed Operations Manager at Gerry Gordon’s Mazda in Winnipeg, says compliance with current processes can be a challenge sometimes.

“It requires monitoring to make sure no one is cutting corners when using the software and ensuring it’s being used the way it’s designed. I try to make sure [employees] follow the steps the software company set out. We try to take the time to learn and use it all. Going in with an open mind is important.”

Couturier says management buy-in is important to help employees maximize their DMS.

“There is a need for leadership to better understand the power and potential of what their DMS can bring. Some of CDK’s dealerships include regular DMS training as part of their employees’ key performance indicators, which helps keep everyone accountable.”

Most DMS providers agree that regular training and access to specialist support is critical to getting the most out of the software. An efficient operation, customer communication and driving revenue depend on it.

