

Next Generation Service CRM

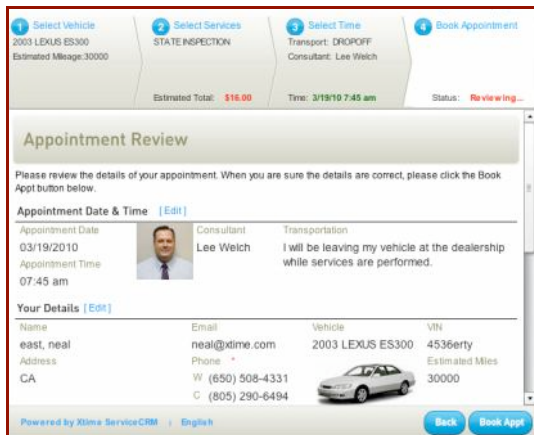
Meeting Higher Customer Expectations

In today's market, convenience and trust are the factors driving customers either to your door or to your competitor's

First Generation Service CRM

Advances in Service CRM have come quickly. Only five years ago, nimble start-ups introduced the first web-friendly CRM products designed specifically for automotive Service. Dealers struggled with the same issues then and many software vendors chose to tackle dealership challenges with stand-alone solutions. Some vendors addressed the need for improved convenience with online scheduling systems for Service Departments. The rise in the number of reservations made through online scheduling systems is solid evidence of the popularity of these tools with customers.

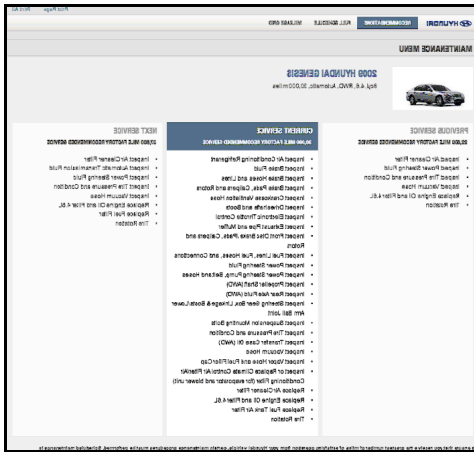
These systems were a significant advancement in convenience, making it simpler and faster for customers to find appointments to accommodate their busy schedules. With 24/7 access to the Service Department's appointment system, a customer can bypass the inherently frustrating process of making reservations through an advisor, who often isn't there to answer the call. A case in point is Lexus's recent 2010 Customer Service award from *Business Week Magazine* which stated, "In June (2009), Lexus launched the ability for customers to make Service appointments online. Now available through 78 dealers, the service lets owners choose an appointment date and time on their computer and use photos to select their service adviser."



The screenshot displays the 'Appointment Review' interface of the Lexus Online Service Application (LOSA). At the top, a progress bar shows four steps: 1. Select Vehicle (2003 LEXUS ES300, Estimated Mileage: 30000), 2. Select Services (STATE INSPECTION), 3. Select Time (Transport: DROPOFF, Consultant: Lee Weich), and 4. Book Appointment. Below this, summary information includes 'Estimated Total: \$16.00', 'Time: 3/19/10 7:45 am', and 'Status: Reviewing...'. The main section is titled 'Appointment Review' and contains instructions: 'Please review the details of your appointment. When you are sure the details are correct, please click the Book Appt button below.' The details are organized into three sections: 'Appointment Date & Time' (03/19/2010, 07:45 am), 'Your Details' (Name: east_neal, Email: neal@xtime.com, Address: CA), and 'Vehicle' (2003 LEXUS ES300, VIN: 4536erty, Estimated Miles: 30000). A small photo of a silver Lexus ES300 is shown next to the vehicle details. At the bottom, there are 'Back' and 'Book Appt' buttons.

Lexus Online Service Application (LOSA)

Other software vendors chose to create online Service catalogs that let customers research dealer services and determine Service costs in advance. With Electronic Service Menu (ESM) applications, dealerships and manufacturers can provide detailed, VIN-level Service descriptions, publicly post prices for manufacturer recommended and dealer premium services, and clearly differentiate between factory maintenance and optional dealer services. A well-informed customer is more likely to be a satisfied and trusting one. Sharing this information with customers, through a convenient interface like a web-based electronic Service menu, is a powerful step towards building trust between dealership and customer. A recent example is Hyundai's rollout of ESM to all 800 of their dealerships and to all of their customers.



Hyundai's Electronic Service Menu Product

Next Generation Service CRM

The rapid acceptance and use of stand-alone solutions like online scheduling and ESM has led to a predictable outcome -- the need for a Service CRM solution that integrates online Service scheduling with electronic service menus. First generation CRM solutions have improved the customer experience but, in doing so, have also raised customer expectations. The full impact on convenience and trust is not realized until the online scheduling application fully integrates, in real time, with the electronic Service menu.

The promise of this integration is compelling. A customer reviewing and selecting among recommended and premium services will see these selections automatically captured in an appointment that can be booked directly through to the DMS from the electronic Service menu interface. Additionally, a customer at ease with booking Service appointments online will now receive an intelligent recommendation with the services and pricing specific to their exact vehicle, and will be assured that the service details and corresponding pricing become a part of the appointment record. This type of real time integration already exists in the airline industry, where customers can select flight, ticket class, seat location and meals.

To keep up with customer expectations, the new generation of Service CRM integrates these two applications and additionally incorporates call backstopping, mobile access, online bill pay, advanced shop control, email / text messaging and certified DMS integration into a unified solution that creates a truly enhanced customer Service experience. With a fully integrated, web-based, Service CRM solution, all Service resources (advisor time slots, loaners, tech hours, etc.) are optimized because they are scheduled and allocated within a common underlying shop control system -- no matter where the appointment is initiated (online, call agent, advisor, DMS, smart phone, walk-in or in-vehicle). Specific Service options are automatically linked to the resources required to perform them, resulting in a reduction in troublesome overbooking, which wrecks havoc with customer satisfaction and trust.

With an integrated platform, a Service Department can capture all inbound demand with common menus and pricing that is consistent across all appointment channels. In the end, this optimized scheduling leads to additional availability for all of these Service-related resources. Service facilities with more available resources can satisfy customers' needs more promptly, driving up both CSI and monthly income.

Neal East, a 25-year veteran of high technology sales, product development, and executive management, is CEO of [Xtime](#), exclusive Service CRM provider for Lexus, Toyota Canada, Hyundai, Infiniti, Volkswagen, AutoNation, Group 1 and Sonic. [Click here](#) to read this article in its entirety.