

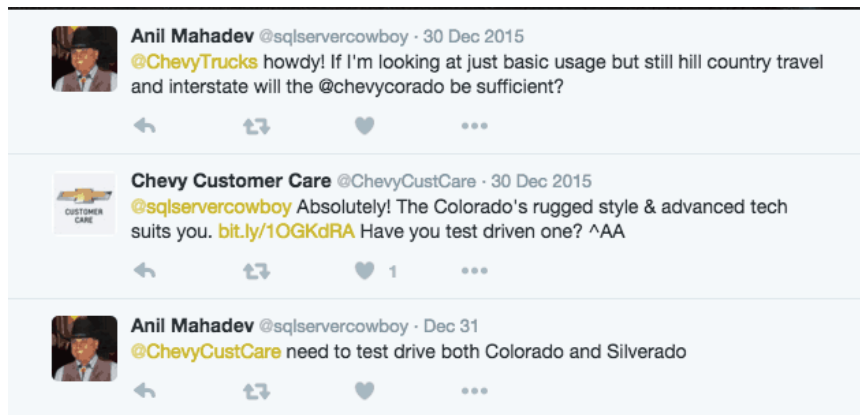
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GM's Social Media Center of Expertise is 'Changing People's Perceptions and Experiences'

When Anil Mahadev reached out to Chevy trucks in a tweet, he asked about the Chevy Colorado, inquiring specifically about “hill country travel,” “interstate” use, and if the Colorado would “be sufficient.”

Chevy Customer Care responded to the individual's tweet and put Mahadev in touch with the closest Chevy dealership. Mahadev then went on a test drive and purchased the truck.

“If you're listening, you're changing your customer's experience,” said Rebecca Harris, global head of General Motor's Social Media Center of Expertise (CoE). (Chevrolet is an American automobile division of GM.)



[GM](#) has been producing vehicles to get drivers on the road for more than 100 years. GM is not just one of the largest automakers in the United States; it is also a leader in [a new area of customer service](#) for the automotive sector.

The company’s global Social Media Center of Expertise, created in 2013 and based in Detroit, is devoted to the customer, with staff constantly having conversations with users on social media and responding quickly to questions, comments, and concerns.

“There’s lots of different things you can do with that listening,” Harris said. “You can listen for product issues early. What are they saying when we launch a vehicle? We have been able to help identify a couple of early product issues.”

Another of the center's goals is to provide customers a way to communicate with GM in the social space and show the customer that there's one face for GM, whether they are talking with the Chevy Marketing team or someone from customer care. This, in turn, helps GM effectively [build relationships](#) with customers and automotive shoppers.

The center functions across the disparate areas of GM to focus on the customer and use feedback accordingly.

"I can't prove to you that I'm changing numbers around corporate reputation," Harris said. "I can't (prove that) with numbers, but I can tell you that I'm changing people's perceptions and experiences with our company and that matters."

Harris said the key to [using customer feedback](#) is to think outside the box.

"[Policy and procedure] are there for a reason, but you have to be responsible and think about things a little bit more than just so black and white about it," she said.

"I think the two foundational pieces for me are listening and taking some sort of action to change the outcome, and then providing that customer care piece that not everyone is out there providing today."

Brand Reputation and Customer Feedback

Harris said there is “no magic measurement to connect all these things together.” But there are statistics showing the importance of listening to and engaging with customer feedback. According to [Ambassador](#):

- **71 percent of customers who have a positive service experience via social media are likely to recommend that company**
- **It is likely that consumers will spend 21 percent more if they receive good customer service via social media**
- **33 percent of consumers prefer communicating with a company via social media than by telephone**

When it comes to GM’s brand reputation, Harris said there’s both value and risk in customer feedback.

“They are having experiences that they are telling people about. They are endorsing the brand and talking about what happened to them, and how it happened,” Harris said. “There’s a value associated with all of that, and there’s also a cost associated with that because if you had a bad experience and you wanted to tell everyone about it... there’s a definite cost for the company for that to happen.”

The [center focuses](#) not only on engagement with the customer but also on addressing potential reputation risks for the GM brand.

Supportive Leadership

In order to listen to the voice of the customer, have a conversation with them, and take actionable steps to improve their experience, there must be support from the top down.

“Your executive leadership team has to support the action and change the culture of the company because if you don’t have that executive support all the way through you can’t make this work,” Harris said. “We’re very fortunate... [we have a] large commitment from our leadership to work in this space and to really make a difference. You cannot be successful if you do not have that leadership team on board.”

The Social Media Center of Expertise is made up of about 600 individuals in five regions.

GM is [no stranger to innovation](#). GM’s former President and CEO Alfred Sloan created something similar in 1933: the first full-time automotive industry consumer research department. Henry “Buck” Weaver was the director.