

## Cars.com Grows Business With Improved Agent Productivity



### Industry

Online Media

### Geographies

United States

### Challenges

- ❑ Limited visibility into workload, capacity, and activity metrics to enable support supervisors to better manage the workforce and plan for growth
- ❑ Exclusive dependence on email for assigning owners to incidents, escalating, and tracking progress
- ❑ Reliance on limited technology resources to maintain and improve support applications
- ❑ Coordination of customer data across disparate systems
- ❑ Low percentage of incidents resolved by a single owner

### Solution

With help from consulting partner Model Metrics, the company deployed Salesforce CRM Customer Service & Support to its first 90 users within three months, increasing customer visibility, productivity, and efficiency—and providing more flexibility in case management processes. With the initial rollout a success, Cars.com extended Salesforce CRM companywide, doubling the user base within the first 12 months.

### Results

- ❑ Increased support agent productivity by as much as 50 percent, from six cases per hour to nine; decreased case-handling time by 26 percent
- ❑ Enhanced the efficiency of the customer support team by as much as 33 percent, from 600 dealers per agent to a peak of 800 dealers per agent, while cutting response times by more than 65 percent and consistently beating SLAs by more than 50 percent
- ❑ Created greater visibility into support metrics for motivating agents, allocating resources, and calculating staffing needs
- ❑ Significantly increased percentage of cases resolved by a single case owner
- ❑ Improved overall customer service experience with quicker single-owner resolution

“Salesforce CRM has simplified data management and reporting for the 25,000 cases we handle each month. Now we can more easily extract metrics from the system, identify support trends, and manage staff resources. Managing our cases and communications in one place makes a huge difference in our business productivity.”

— David M. Corken  
Operations Director

Partnered with more than 200 leading metro newspapers, television stations, and their Web sites, Cars.com is the most comprehensive destination for those looking to buy or sell a new or used car. The site lists more than 1.8 million vehicles from 12,000 dealer customers, classified advertisers, and private parties to offer consumers the best selection of new and used cars online, as well as the content, tools, and advice to support their shopping experience.

Cars.com’s spectacular growth has included its share of challenges, of course, including difficulty managing a highly dispersed workforce, learning how to efficiently process hundreds of thousands of transactions each year, and gracefully revamping existing business processes to accommodate differences between business-to-business and business-to-customer interactions.

“We didn’t have a real case management program, so when it came time to upgrade our CRM software we went through the typical discovery process for any young company,” recalls Operations Director David M. Corken. “We were already using Salesforce CRM SFA and immediately recognized that an integrated CRM solution from Salesforce would provide the most comprehensive solution for managing both cases and our sales process.”

Cars.com’s decision to implement Salesforce CRM paid off and customers aren’t the only ones who have noticed the company’s dedication to providing quality service and support. In 2007, Cars.com was honored with a Service Elite Award from CRM magazine, a leading publication that serves the CRM industry.

### Revving Up with Salesforce CRM

Salesforce wasn’t the only choice available to Cars.com. The company shopped around, researching other case management programs and selected Salesforce CRM for its affordability, accessibility, and flexibility.

Soon after, Cars.com deployed Salesforce CRM Enterprise Edition and Salesforce CRM Customer Service & Support to more than 180 employees across the United States. The implementation process began in March 2005 and concluded three months later, thanks to the expert assistance of Model Metrics, a CRM consulting firm and salesforce.com partner specializing in on-demand solutions.

“Overall, the experience with Model Metrics was fantastic,” says Corken. “They were very knowledgeable with the Salesforce CRM product and had a great understanding of the implications, benefits, and consequences of each step of the implementation process.”

### Collaborating Across the Organization

For Corken’s growing staff, such a painless implementation process provided an important boost toward achieving an effective case management program. His division features a 23-person dealer support team, a five-person customer support team, a quality assurance team, and a production staff—in addition to a two-tiered product management, finance, and technical support team. All 41 members of the staff obtained Salesforce licenses, enabling each to navigate the many facets of interacting with customers in a cohesive way.

“Salesforce CRM makes us more knowledgeable and efficient so we can focus our resources on what’s really important: making sure our customers are happy.”

— David M. Corken  
Operations Director

“We use dashboards to communicate with our agents now,” Corken explains. “We tell them where we stand as a team, we track their turnaround times, and we monitor the case volume in the queue. We also use dashboards to note how many inquiries an agent has handled and how many are still open. Using dashboards is a great way to get everyone functioning as a team and lets each member of the staff know how he or she is doing individually.”

In order to field the more than 25,000 inquiries the company receives each month, Cars.com now uses Salesforce CRM to unify its business processes for responding to customers from multiple channels—primarily by phone and email. Tight integration of sales and service processes yields more accurate information about each customer, increasing efficiency throughout the organization.

With Model Metric’s help, the company integrated Salesforce CRM with an Oracle-based data warehouse, as well as with custom-built applications for order entry and fulfillment. By leveraging the Force.com API, which accommodates many types of data formats and programming languages, it was easy to get the data into Salesforce CRM. System administrators also created parent-child relationships for managing complex cases, allowing agents to track cases by issue type.

### Integrated CRM Drives Business Results

Since implementing Salesforce CRM, Cars.com has revolutionized the way it does business. The company is more efficient, with agent productivity climbing from six cases per hour to nine cases per hour, even as case-handling time has fallen from 13 minutes to 9.5 minutes per request. Similarly, the peak agent capacity has jumped from 600 to 800 dealers per agent and from 8,500 to 14,000 for-sale-by-owner customers per agent.

Not only has the team’s effectiveness soared in recent months, but Cars.com has also enjoyed a new level of flexibility in its case management processes. With Salesforce CRM, whether a dealer calls their sales rep or the support center, all of the case details are captured and stored in a consistent way. In addition, agents now have the flexible business processes they need to accommodate differences between business-to-business and business-to-consumer transactions.

“On the dealer side, we have established long-term relationships,” says Corken. “As a result, we want to make sure we track every nuance of these relationships. Salesforce CRM streamlines the workflow and delivers the reports we need to monitor customer satisfaction.”

The email-to-case capability of Salesforce CRM allows agents to send and receive messages from within the Salesforce environment without ever having to open Microsoft Outlook. An internal knowledge database simplifies training, makes it easier to document solutions to common problems, and speeds up resolution of common issues.

Corken and his team are now evaluating additional ways that they can use CRM technology to automate Cars.com’s rapidly growing business including integration of Salesforce CRM with computer telephony integration (CTI) software and IP phones to simplify call handling and improve responsiveness to customer requests.

Based on its past success with Salesforce CRM, Cars.com anticipates a smooth ride into the future.

*Read more about Cars.com and why it was chosen for CRM magazine’s 2007 CRM Service Elite award at [www.destinationcrm.com](http://www.destinationcrm.com).*

#### For More Information

Contact your account executive to learn how we can help you accelerate your CRM success.

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