



Hirlinger Chevrolet: A Look Inside Three Brothers' Climb to 75 Years of Success.

Time for a Change

For 75 years, the Hirlinger family has served the needs of customers in Ohio, Indiana, and Kentucky. A Chevrolet dealership with over 250 new and used vehicles in inventory between their two stores, they previously used the same DMS provider for 25 years. Then, just as the automotive industry felt the 2009 economic “hiccup,” the dealership’s contract expired with that provider and Ted, Steve, and Mike Hirlinger decided to seek change. The three brothers who run the successful family-owned dealership knew it was the ideal time to seek out a more powerful yet affordable alternative.

Steve Hirlinger saw the DMS as the backbone of the dealership, since all operations ran through it, and knew that making a change would require due diligence. So, the brothers began to research and consider DMS providers and they decided to include as many of their dealership’s decision makers in the process as possible. In particular, they included the office and service managers, who had to give their full approval before the Hirlingers would make a DMS switch.

Everyone involved agreed that a new DMS had to be compatible with GM, fully integrate with their other third-party partners, and deliver a seamless connection between service, parts, office, sales, and F&I.



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Biggest Bang for the Buck

When the research was complete, the comprehensive functionality, ease of use, and minimal learning curve made Autosoft® DMS the unanimous decision. “The bang for the buck was there with Autosoft—a big, big savings, but really, as powerful as Reynolds or ADP,” said Steve Hirlinger.

Equally important deciding factors included personalized install and set-up support. F&I forms and menus had to be customized. Fixed operations required modified set-ups for electronic time flags, dispatch, payroll, and even account-based wholesale pricing levels to support the Hirlingers’ growing body shops sales. Autosoft fit the bill on all accounts.

The Hirlinger team also found Autosoft’s system reduced both processing time and employee frustration. Search results and screen loads were extremely fast and benefitted from auto-populating technology that eliminated re-entry and improved accuracy. In addition, the monthly savings and freedom from contracts were considered a major bonus. Steve Hirlinger said he’s talked with dealers paying five-to-six times more for their DMS.

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An Easy Transition

Several years after switching to Autosoft DMS, more changes were on the horizon for Hirlinger Chevrolet. Looking to grow and upgrade to Chevrolet’s facility image program, the Hirlinger brothers moved their operation down the road and built a brand new facility. It included an indoor delivery center, additional service bays, a customer café, and more.

Autosoft engineered each step of the technological transition, coordinating pre-move plans and post-move install, as well as adding double the number of DMS users to the system. The joint effort resulted in a clean “flip-of-the-switch” transition on move-in day, with everything powering up just as it had in the old store. Best of all, the move and additional users required no additional equipment—the dealership just needed to provide the new users with their own workstations.

Reliable Through Change

Fortunately for the approximately fifteen new Autosoft users, getting up to speed was a breeze. They utilized a combination of options from on-site learning for the advanced roles, to remote learning and on-demand, online self-study. Everyone was efficient on the system in days, not weeks.

After the initial ramp-up, additional support was a quick, easy call or chat away—even on Saturdays. New hires, newly promoted employees, or anyone needing a refresher had ongoing, unlimited access to reference materials. Just a click away, users could choose from Autosoft’s Get Started role-specific training, Knowledge Base step-by-step instructions and screenshots, Learning Video tutorials and webinars, and User Guide manuals that could be viewed, downloaded, and printed.

Steve Hirlinger relayed, “It takes a load off of us and just shows you how easy it is to use. And that reliability, the help we get when we call the 800 number, we have a live person on the phone in fifteen seconds. The guys in hardware are super too. I tell them what I need, they log in, and it’s done. We don’t have to hire a team of three or four network or computer guys. We lean on Autosoft heavily for that. That’s priceless.”



Fixed Operations Director, Jerry Joseph, joined the team around the time of the move and quickly learned he could lean on Autosoft's support team to tailor setups for his wholesale pricing levels, retail matrix, and electronic repair orders (EROs). The biggest difference he noticed in working with Autosoft versus other DMS providers was that the Autosoft team had first-hand dealership experience and knowledge.

His fourteen technicians and three service writers have taken advantage of the customizable appointment system and scheduling tools that run the shop efficiently, and help them serve customers with the highest level of personalized treatment, even without a dispatcher.

Jerry told us, "We use the color-coding system to distinguish customers that bought from us and those that didn't. We can highlight ones that need extra attention, the waiters, the ones that need loaners." Furthermore, he said, "There are still avenues of Autosoft that I haven't tapped yet that can make my job even easier. All of it is very easy to operate."

Later, Autosoft helped Hirlinger group with two more additions: Performance Parts and Medium-Duty Trucks.

With those additions, the Autosoft DMS accurately and efficiently covered the needs of managing over half-a-million dollars in parts, including performance engines and transmissions. Jerry explained that without having its own body shop, a large inventory of mechanical parts was needed to serve everyone in the area. He commented that the Autosoft DMS, "just continues to grow for us and things are working really well."

Raising the Bar

When asked to sum up his experience with Autosoft, Steve Hirlinger replied, "We haven't missed a beat with Autosoft. I would recommend them for sure."

And Autosoft? What's next for them? Autosoft is rolling out an industry-shifting, single platform DMS with full mobile functionality. It contains all the right dealership management tools and technology, plus Autosoft's proprietary-developed CRM, Vehicle Management, Collaboration, and Analytics solutions. The solution will not only help dealerships grow revenues and profits, but also help customers realize an engaging, connected experience that saves them time and keeps them loyal.

To request a demo of this next generation, engaging DMS experience, or to start a conversation, call 844.888.8200 or connect online at www.autosoftdms.com.



Autosoft develops and supports a complete dealer management system (DMS) that has been named the Highest Rated DMS from DrivingSales for three years in a row. With affordable month-to-month contracts, Autosoft's DMS improves processes and reduces operating costs in over 2,000 franchised automotive dealerships. Easy to use, affordable, and innovative software helps dealers focus on their customers' needs.