



From 'The Big Idea' to FordPass: How Ford's Reimagined Customer Experience Came to Life

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- For 18 months, team members charged with improving Ford's relationship with customers covered the walls and ceilings of their Command Center in Dearborn with sketches, post-its and printouts – benchmarking customer experiences of other leading-class firms
- Ford employees spent three days in April camped out in conference rooms at a Detroit hotel with some of the best mobile, design and customer experience minds in the world in their quest to enhance the company's relationship with its customers
- The result is FordPass, available this spring to Ford vehicle owners and non-owners alike; the free platform reimagines the relationship between automaker and consumer, and aims to do for car owners what iTunes did for music fans

DETROIT, Jan. 11, 2016 – Last April, Elena Ford and a team of Ford employees spent three days behind closed doors at a Detroit hotel with some of the best mobile, design and customer experience minds in the world.

Their task had just become a lot tougher. What started as a mission to improve the relationship between consumer and dealer during a four-and-a-half-hour annual interaction had transformed into a greater cause – how to make consumers' lives easier during those 900-plus hours a year they spend in a vehicle moving between home, work, school and social events.

“It was really competitive, with people moving between rooms trying to determine what owners, ride-sharers and general commuters would want out of a world-class customer experience,” said Ford, the company's vice president, Global Dealer and Consumer Experience.

The 72-hour marathon yielded what the company considers one of its most significant innovations ever: FordPass.

The platform, available this spring to Ford vehicle owners and non-owners alike, reimagines the relationship between automaker and consumer. FordPass aims to do for car owners what iTunes did for music fans.

FordPass features four elements to benefit members: Marketplace includes mobility services; FordGuides help consumers move more efficiently; Appreciation, where members are recognized for their loyalty; and FordHubs, where consumers can experience the company's latest innovations.

Benefits of FordPass include transportation services like reserving and paying for parking in advance, with ride sharing, car sharing and multimodal transportation services coming in the future. FordGuides provide assistance to any FordPass member who needs help on the commute – regardless of location.

A day in the life

At the end of the three days in April, the team came up with a model for FordPass, one of about 10 names considered. What started off simply as “the big idea,” the platform evolved out of brainstorming a day in the life of an ideal member, then was refined over the next several months to mirror the wants and needs of a consumer.

The team determined this person – whether a vehicle owner or not – could have the following daily interactions with FordPass:

- Start his or her car via the FordPass app in the morning
- Use FordPay to locate and pay for parking in a downtown lot
- Redeem perks at an affinity partner
- Instantly pay Ford Credit bill
- Chat with a FordGuide about where to find a FordHub to learn more about a new technology
- Use FordPass app to call roadside assistance to fix a flat tire

“Instead of having a handful of interactions with consumers each year, we determined we could actually have a handful of interactions each day, with the intention to make people’s lives easier and more rewarding,” said Stephen Odell, Ford executive vice president, Global Marketing, Sales and Service. “That’s how we decided we could elevate and participate in the full customer experience.”

Command Center

Despite FordPass coming together over the course of 18 months – “a record amount of time,” Ford said – it was not easy to accomplish.

The team cluttered the walls and ceilings of its Command Center at Ford World Headquarters in Dearborn with sketches, post-its and printouts – busily benchmarking customer experiences at other leading consumer experience firms such as Amazon, Ripcurl and others. Amazon is known for its popular on-demand Mayday button, which consumers can click to immediately be connected to a tech advisor.

Comparisons and ideas were flying – so much so that team members had to start making some do-it-yourself renovations to the Command Center.

The 80-inch TV screen used to visualize how FordPass would work turned out not to be big enough. At one point Jay Davis, director of Global Distribution Strategy, started drilling large pieces of cardboard into the walls to provide more space for the sketches, post-its and printouts. When that wasn’t enough, the team attached more cardboard to the ceiling to hang 11x17-inch slides and mockups.

With the launch of FordPass now just a few months away, the Command Center continues to change and grow as the team preps for its debut.

About Ford Motor Company

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