



Brand New Space Delivers the Best Possible Volkswagen Experience

By Kara Kurylłowicz

In Toronto's west end, Humberview Volkswagen's 14-month, inside out and top to bottom, \$5 million renovation began last June and was a part of the dealership's commitment to meeting the VW brand standards that ensure VW customers worldwide have the best possible experience.

Whether shopping for a brand new or pre-owned vehicle or reaping the benefits of Humberview Volkswagen's high-tech service and maintenance services, customers of all ages evidently appreciate the new and better-than-ever environment. The 38,000 sq ft space now includes two dedicated fully climate-controlled showrooms for new and pre-owned vehicles, which respectively accommodate 12 and 10 vehicles with another 60 vehicles easily accessible in the outdoor lots.

As a result of Humberview Volkswagen's laser focus on what ultimately benefits its valued customers, Humberview Volkswagen's Customer Service Index scores are among the top three in Canada. In addition, for the first time this year, Humberview Volkswagen became a proud member of the 2016 Wolfsburg Crest Club which is awarded exclusively to the dealerships that meet the highest standards for sales and service excellence.

Q Magazine talked to general manager Jim Leckie about the dealership's most significant changes at 1650 The Queensway:

How are consumers responding to the new and certified pre-owned vehicle showrooms?

Consumers genuinely appreciate the comfort and convenience of both our brand-new and pre-owned vehicle showrooms because they can now see any new vehicle in our line up, or shop for a Pre-Owned vehicle within the comfort of our spacious showrooms—rain or shine. They're able to take their time assessing the various options with our sales team because they're never going to get too hot, cold or wet to continue the conversation.

Virtually every pre-owned vehicle that's available at retail in Canada is displayed and eventually sold from an outdoor lot through all hot humid summers, torrential downpours or snow covered winters. With our new dedicated pre-owned showroom customers can look at a vehicle sheltered from the elements, clear of snow and rain. Our Pre-Owned showroom provides customers with the same conveniences as our New car showroom, and we provide them with the same standard of professionalism and courtesy as our New Car buyers.



Our pre-owned customers regularly tell us, “The showrooms really made me feel like I was buying a brand new car and that’s how I felt through the entire process.”

How have your waiting areas changed?

Customers compare our two new waiting areas to Apple stores—which is a great compliment because we know they’re clean and modern, but welcoming.

VW customers run the gamut from young singles and couples in their twenties and thirties to people in their sixties and eighties.

What do they have in common? A passion for Volkswagen and a genuine interest and appreciation for the refinement of the product—like the advancement in technology such as our drive assist—esthetics, and value for good old human interaction.

Our new waiting area offers two distinct spaces: a breakfast bar and a lounge with soft, low-level seating. Of course, we offer free Wi-Fi and the use of iPads as well as a selection of beverages, breakfast and snack options, from bagels and

muffins to sandwiches.

While her Golf was being serviced, an 82-year-old woman played with her own iPad for two hours and watched the younger men and women who were interacting as much with each other as their technology.

We also have a new digital Volkswagen Welcome Wall: 36 feet wide and five feet high with a total of 16 big screens, that airs everything from breaking news to Volkswagen vehicle ads and informational, educational clips on tire technology and more. Customers watch, learn and enjoy a great coffee.

That video wall actually drives a lot of employee/customer interaction with follow-up questions arising as a result of what they’ve seen. In fact, one prospect pulled off the Queensway and into the dealership to learn more about what he’d seen on the wall while stopped at traffic light. He’d been looking for a new vehicle and thanks to the wall, we sold him a Golf Sport Wagon.

It’s the ideal spot to wait while a vehicle is brought up for a test drive or until the service department finishes with a vehicle.



We offer shuttle services to CF Sherway Gardens and we'll also drive you home or back to work, but most people would rather wait. At any given time, we usually have five to 20 people in our waiting areas with children happily watching the 30 tropical fish in our 4 foot by 2 foot aquarium for half an hour or more.

How is the service and maintenance drop-off different post-renovation?

It is far more high-tech and sophisticated with new instrumentation and capabilities designed to add value, while building comfort and trust between our customers and staff. Ironically, our new, high-tech environment has actually contributed to greater interaction and dialogue with customers as well as greater transparency.

We want to be the dealership that has earned customers' trust and is known for its transparency and integrity.

To make that happen, we set the scene every time a vehicle comes in for service. The drive-through allows the owner to register with one of six service advisors, then watch as the depth of their tires is measured and wheel alignment assessed with the results available on colour-coded printouts.

Service technicians will show them the current state of their tires and wheels compared to the manufacturers' recommended specifications. We explain the safety implications associated with excessive or uneven wear and the impact of misalignment on tire longevity. We also let them know that the state of their tires and alignment reflects road conditions more than driver behaviour. The \$129.95 investment in alignment is worthwhile when you're prolonging the life of a \$450 to \$1,800 set of tires.

It's our way of showing customers what's going on behind the closed doors and how our proactive approach is mutually beneficial.

As a result of the new technology, our tire sales have increased 35 per cent and our realignment services are up 50 per cent—which indicates our customers have faith in our service teams and our technology.

What else sets your new space apart?

Our new and dedicated Vehicle Delivery Area was designed and built to give customers complete privacy when accepting their new vehicle.



We want the new owner to feel special but even more importantly; we want to be completely focused on them, providing them with a thorough review of their vehicles' features, whether it is the many safety features, how to sync their devices with the vehicle's BlueTooth, or the steps required to program preferences for two drivers. We want them to be completely comfortable asking whatever questions come to mind or requesting yet another step-by-step demonstration.

In our old space, they were typically surrounded by other consumers in shopping mode, who might ask the Sales Consultant a question, or slip into their new vehicle not realizing that a handover was in process and inadvertently disrupting a special moment.

Ideally, we spend an hour or more with new owners during the handover but we know that they're often so excited and there is so much information to communicate that they simply can't retain it all.

Before we created and designated the handover pod, we typically received calls about the vehicle not performing as the owner expected. We quickly discovered the

vehicle was doing what it was supposed to do under the circumstances, but the owner/driver hadn't understood the collision warning and active lane change systems or had mis-programmed a particular function.

We also schedule a 30-day, return pit stop that is enticing because it starts with a free wash and vacuum. We know new owners appreciate it because 70 per cent show up for their pit stops and ask follow-up questions.

What continues to surprise you about the Volkswagen brand and its fans?

The level of interest, commitment and dedication continues to delight and amaze me. Volkswagen lovers breathe, live and die for the brand—it's a bit of a cult with a number of our customers and staff members proudly sporting VW-inspired tattoos. They are incredibly knowledgeable about the brand, its history, technology and of course their own vehicles. They become familiar with one another and our staff, and will ask that only a specific service advisor or technician work on their vehicles, which highlights our focus on trust and building relationships.