

“Better Drives Us”: How Hyundai Canada is Signaling a New Era for the Auto Industry

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“Hyundai, like Sunday.”

I asked for it. I asked for the correct pronunciation of that internationally-renowned and beloved car brand, and now I’ll never forget it.

And neither will you.

Hyundai: You’ve probably heard of it; the name again on the tip of everyone’s tongues thanks to a memorable, highly-lauded SuperBowl Hyundai Sonata 2020 commercial featuring John Krasinski, Rachel Dratch, and Chris Evans sporting some iconic Boston accents — “Smaht Pahk” — an ad which has so far attracted around [55.2 million views](#) on YouTube. Now that’s some good traffic!



Who better to school me on the ins and outs of pronouncing “Hyundai” than Don Romano, the President and CEO of Hyundai Canada, a person whose job it is to champion the name, and ensure it reaches its greatest potential.

I spoke with Romano at the top of 2020, exciting times for an auto brand zooming forward with its customer service, employee culture, technology, and brand loyalty. And these areas have been top of mind for a while: Only a few years back, Romano penned a compelling case for adjusting customer service strategy to better a brand, even after the initial attempts to do so fail.

“Almost four years ago we decided that our company ... needed to change. Our customer service scores were embarrassingly low. For an automotive company, in a rapidly changing and highly competitive environment, poor customer service is the kiss of death,” Romano wrote, with strategic scrutiny. But happily, in 2017 and after much trial and error, Hyundai Canada rose to have the fourth-best customer service standing in the national automotive space.

‘In a rapidly changing and highly competitive environment, poor customer service is the kiss of death’ says Don Romano of @HyundaiCanada #custserv #customercare #cx

Now, their goal is to be number one.

I wanted to know more about the journey to this destination, and how Romano and Hyundai Canada are forging a strong customer service ecology and employee culture for this brand. Joining in the conversation was Jessica Cryer, VP of Business and Customer Service strategy at Hyundai partner [CSPN \(Customer Service Professionals Network\)](#). As the Q&A unfolded, it became clear that Hyundai Canada’s customer service game has been enhanced by an unconditional investment in people, in product, and in processes, which ultimately succeeds in building an unwavering brand ‘belief system’ and trust in “Hyundai, like Sunday.”

If You Don’t Know Hyundai, Here’s Why You Should

Talking to Don Romano is an education. Within the exchange of a few sentences, I learned that Hyundai is the second-largest seller of pure electric vehicles in Canada, coming in a close second to Tesla. This is quite a feat, as the majority of the major car brands have yet to produce what is slowly realizing itself as the car of the future.

Year after year, the demand for these electric wonders has doubled: In 2018, Hyundai Canada sold 1,200. In 2019: Over 5,000 left the lot, and this notable uptick is expected to continue well into the new decade. Hyundai also has the honour of being the first automotive company in Canada to begin retailing fuel cell vehicles — which are electric but run on hydrogen.

“Our commitment to environmental progress is pretty much unmatched in the industry,” beams Romano. “We are very proud to be one of the leaders in the new technologies that will make the world better. I think that probably ties into listening to customers and feedback and the overall landscape.”

Yes, the customers, the marrow of automotive life. With leadership roles at Toyota, Mazda, and Nissan in his rearview mirror (forgive the occasional car pun), no one knows the value of the customer better than Don Romano, who has lived and breathed the auto industry for a healthy segment of his career.

When I ask him how he ended up journeying down this road, he says with amusement, “Accidentally.”

About About Hyundai Auto Canada Corp.

Hyundai Auto Canada Corp. is headquartered in Markham, Ontario, and is a subsidiary of Hyundai Motor Company of Korea. Hyundai markets a full line-up of award-winning vehicles from subcompact to sport utility to luxury and is committed to providing world-class vehicles that over-deliver on quality, safety and design. Hyundai entered the Canadian market in 1983 and has grown into one of the best selling foreign manufacturers in Canada. Hyundai’s success can be contributed to the Company’s commitment to quality, safety and design which is reflected in the numerous awards won by our vehicles.

About CSPN

[CSPN](#) is a leading provider of employee-centric and CX training [programs](#), consulting [services](#), and networking [opportunities](#), designed to empower organizations and harness the competitive advantage of delivering an exceptional customer experience.

About Fonolo

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