



The Family Deal

A leading car dealer group in the state of Michigan began to place serious value on online reviews, in some cases, more than sales numbers on a paper. That's why [LaFontaine Automotive Group](#) partnered with Reputation – not only because of its robust capabilities, but because both companies are in the relationship business. With a mission statement that aligned perfectly with Reputation, **“Build lifelong relationships that connect families, strengthen communities and personalize the automotive experience,”** Reputation quickly became a partner, not just a vendor.



Reputation review management allows us, from a group level, to inspect what we expect each store to do on a daily basis.

Max Muncey,
Senior Manager, Corporate Communications

Benefits



Review request switch from emails to SMS drove **100 new reviews** per month across Google and Facebook



Review request switch from emails to SMS increased **200,000 listing views** per month

Beyond a Transaction

LaFontaine Automotive Group is a nationally recognized, yet personally-known and family-owned car dealership and service business spread across Michigan, USA. Owner Michael LaFontaine Sr. opened up his first Toyota dealership in Dearborn in 1980, which he still visits on a daily basis. The enterprise has since expanded into over [30 retail locations](#) that are home to about 2,100 employees.

The company has more than doubled its size in the last decade, averaging five acquisitions a year, and expanding its used car inventory from 35 million pre-pandemic to 110 million.

However, success is measured beyond that at LaFontaine. Their tagline, **“The Family Deal: it’s not just what you get, it’s how you feel,”** seeps into every business decision and interaction. If you’ve ever walked out of a dealership feeling

cheated, overwhelmed, or uninformed, you’ll know the car shopping experience is not just about the transaction. That’s why LaFontaine’s ethos encourages lifelong relationships with loyal customers. The “Family Deal” is busy at work, but with relationships at the forefront of their business, *communication* is the only way to keep it strong.



We preach a positive customer experience and this platform allows us to make sure our marketing is accurate.

Max Muncey,

Senior Manager, Corporate Communications

The Challenge

Customer review response is only as powerful as its timing. However, in the case of LaFontaine, reviews were coming in and no responses were being sent out. As a result, the group sought out a single platform solution to monitor reviews across multiple channels. They planned to immerse themselves in their online presence and quickly understand what customers were saying about their time with LaFontaine.

After spending six months of 2019 comparing Reputation against another well-known platform, LaFontaine decided to partner with Reputation as soon as experiencing the extent of support from the account team. LaFontaine builds solid relationships with their customers, so they needed a trust-driven partner that could help them nurture such relationships behind the scenes. Rather than taking a number and waiting in a queue like with other platforms, Reputation takes an active approach to working with partners. **“It was always a highlight to deal with the account team at Reputation,”** says Max Muncey, Senior Manager of Corporate Communications. **“So we went all in and haven’t looked back since.”**

The Solution

Since then, LaFontaine has become a team of online hawks by using [review management and booster](#). For example, although Reputation automatically sends a review alert to each department — corporate, sales, service, and customer relations — for every single dealership, negative reviews are re-forwarded to the general manager to prompt customer outreach. Positive reviews that mention an employee name are also re-forwarded for employee recognition. Every conversation and sentiment matters to the LaFontaine team, so they've implemented specific internal structures to properly address them.

Additionally, the company executes automated responses for most of its standard communications and responses for ease of management and efficiency. However, when a customer is not satisfied and reports a star rating between 1 and 3, whether sales- or service-related, a custom response is dispatched including the general manager's contact information for a personalized message.

But what about the internal team at LaFontaine? How has adoption and usage been cultivated? Mr. Muncey himself mentioned, "Each individual

on the team is finding value in the platform in different ways." In fact, during new-hire training, employees are walked through the value of Reputation and its integral part in their success at LaFontaine. It empowers employees to not only recognize the importance of this vendor for the business as a whole, but how they can leverage its power in fortifying individual customer relationships as they dip into reviews.

To date, the automotive group continues to tap into the Reputation product suite for growth as a company. Now, [competitive intelligence](#), a competitor online performance analysis tool, is used in ways specific to the industry that are strategic to scaling as a business. How?

- **Acquisition:** By taking a peek behind the curtain at prospective dealers in their pipeline, LaFontaine is armed with better context when running through the dealership acquisition process.
- **Recruiting:** If a specific position is available, this tool allows the LaFontaine team to perform informed outreach based on employee data from Reputation.

The Future

From CX surveys to employee sentiment, LaFontaine relentlessly stays ahead of market changes by using every tool available to dominate trends, understand expectations, hear the customer and be ready to adapt.

"As we grow, we're going to continue growing with you guys," Mr. Muncey assured. And so the LaFontaine/Reputation partnership continues.

Learn more, contact us at reputation.com