

**The MyDealerLot solution, using passive UHF radio frequency identification technology, enables the dealerships' maintenance and sales staff to greet customers personally, and provide more efficient service.**

By Claire Swedberg

Oct. 21, 2011—Following the success of an RFID pilot undertaken at [Fields BMW Winter Park](#), a car dealership located near Orlando, Fla., [Fields Automotive Group](#) is installing the RFID-based solution, provided by [MyDealerLot](#), at all of its 10 Chicago and Southeast U.S. dealerships. The expansion plans follow the conclusion of the Winter Park pilot, during which the technology successfully improved efficiency and customer service by enabling staff members to identify every car arriving at the lot for service or washing, as well as loaner vehicles being returned to the dealership.

MyDealerLot's Automated Customer Recognition & Messaging System includes [Alien Technology's](#) Squiggle passive EPC Gen 2 RFID tags and ALR-9900+ readers, as well as a plasma screen to display information regarding customers who have arrived or are scheduled for service, and software to manage that data.



*At the entrance to Fields BMW Winter Park's service area, a pair of RFID reader antennas identify a car's owner's upon arrival.*

The solution was initially tested at the lot as a way to improve customer service, says Joe Allegra, Fields BMW Winter Park's service manager. The BMW dealership, he says, strives to provide high-quality customer service, to make those who drive its cars feel welcome and recognized upon arrival. To encourage customers to return to the lot, the dealership offers unlimited car washes at no cost to the driver, as well as maintenance services. Typically, the facility serves 100 to 125 vehicles daily.

To make the process more efficient, and to ensure that customers are immediately recognized, the dealership began working with MyDealerLot to pilot the use of radio frequency identification. The firm installed two MyDealerLot RFID reader portals, one at the service area entrance, and another at the entrance to the car wash.

MyDealerLot also provided a large screen that lists the names of individuals entering the lot, which can be viewed by employees to make sure they can greet those visitors by name, and serve them as soon

as they enter.

When a new car is sold, or when a vehicle comes in for service, an adhesive ultrahigh-frequency (UHF) RFID tag is attached to that car's windshield. The tag stores a unique ID number, explains George Cresto, MyDealerLot's founder and CEO, and information about the vehicle identification number (VIN) and the owner's name is linked to that ID in the MyDealerLot software. A record of the car's purchase, along with the service provided to that vehicle, is subsequently stored in the database.

When a customer enters the service area, the portal's ALR-9900+ reader interrogates the RFID tag and forwards the ID to standalone software, residing onsite. The software then displays that individual's name on the plasma screen in the service area, and rings an audible alert to let workers know of a status change on the screen. An employee can then view the name listed on the screen, respond immediately to that customer by meeting him at his car and greeting him by name. At the same time, the software sends a text message or e-mail to the appropriate client advisor (the individual on the sales floor who sold that customer the vehicle), prompting the advisor to stop by the service area and greet him personally.



*An RFID reader and antenna were also installed at Fields BMW Winter Park's car wash.*

Upon receiving BMW service, the customer is entitled to free use of one of the lot's 62 loaner cars, which are also equipped with a UHF Gen 2 RFID tag. When a customer is assigned a particular loaner, his name is input with the ID number stored in the software for that vehicle. When the driver later returns with that loaner, another e-mail or text message is sent—in this case, to the service advisor, who then knows which vehicle the individual has arrived to pick up. In the event that a customer's car is taken to the car wash as part of the service process, the portal at that location reads the vehicle's tag, and the status is listed on the screen in the maintenance area, informing the staff of its whereabouts.

When a loaner car is returned, an alert is displayed on the receptionist's screen, indicating that a customer has brought back the vehicle and will be picking up his own car and paying for service, and thereby improving efficiency for both the staff and customers. The receptionist can then prepare the vehicle owner's paperwork before that person enters the office, so that he can quickly pay for the service. That feature has resulted in the payment process becoming more efficient, and fewer customer queues taking place throughout the day.

Upon arriving at the car wash, a customer passes through the RFID reader portal, which recognizes that vehicle's tag number, permitting it to drive through the car wash without requiring the owner to provide identification to employees.

Allegra says customers have told him that they like the personalized service and appreciate being greeted personally upon arrival, as well as the faster processing time at the cashier's desk.



*George Cresto,  
MyDealerLot's founder  
and CEO*

The technology also allows dealerships to combine the efforts of maintenance and sales departments, by enabling sales teams to learn of a customer's arrival at the service area. They can then greet that individual, discuss his car with him and potentially make another sale.

Based on the pilot's success, the installation at the Fields Winter Park BMW dealership is now permanent, with approximately 5,000 tags in use on cars. Nine additional lots are expected to install a similar system, in order to track vehicles at maintenance and car washes.

Altogether, Fields Automotive Group has 32 dealerships, some of which are operated on a franchise basis, in Florida, Illinois, Wisconsin, North Carolina and British Columbia, Canada. Fields could opt to expand the system to all of the lots that the firm or its franchisees operate, based on the system's success at the 10 sites utilizing the technology.