

New Roads charts new path with Mazda purchase



By Brock Weir

When Michael Croxon founded the New Roads Automotive Group, his vision was to be "all things automotive in the Northern 905."

By his own admission, it was a "pretty grandiose personal vision" but is now one step closer to reality.

This week, Newmarket's Dave Wood Mazda came into the New Roads fold, a group which tends to the automotive needs of customers in Aurora, Newmarket and northern Richmond Hill.

For Mr. Croxon, the acquisition is not only a way to build on the 30-year legacy Mr. Wood has built as an automotive dealer in York Region, but also an opportunity to "further deepen" the brand in the minds of consumers in the northern 905.

"It is another outlet that we can use to immerse ourselves in the community, which is one of our pillars," says Mr. Croxon. "Adding Mazda to Subaru, Kia, General Motors and all the GM brands is a nice fit. This is our second Japanese nameplate. Subaru kind of stands on its own in terms of the customers and Mazda appeals to an entirely different clientele in my estimation."

It was not always an easy road for Mazda, adds Croxon. When the company was under the Ford umbrella, it was essentially a "secondary brand" for the company, one which was "starved of investment for future product." When it was eventually spun off on its own before being brought back during the "Ford Crisis" years, Mazda brass took the opportunity to reassess themselves and re-evaluate who they wanted to be and how they wanted to serve the automotive market.

"The answer was being a very high quality, high performing Japanese automobile brand, but it has taken them a few years to find their stride," he says. "If you look at the product they have been coming out with of late, from a design and technology standpoint, I think they are poised for a greater market share in the coming years. They have got some exciting new product coming out shortly, so our acquisition is well-timed from that perspective."

The relationship between Croxon and Wood goes back a number of years. The two men are partners in Newmarket Auto Body. Knowing Croxon was in "acquisition mode" to broaden the brand, Wood approached him to see if he would be interested in jumping into Mazda and he jumped at the idea.

"It is a very, very well-run dealership with a very loyal staff and a very loyal customer base, and I think that speaks to Dave as an individual and as a leader," says Croxon. "We have a pretty loyal customer base ourselves and we foster it through good old fashioned customer service and doing things we think are right by the customer in terms of their experience, our showrooms and our service departments."

?It is an automobile, so we're never perfect, and we acknowledge we're never perfect, but it is how you react to those imperfections that set you apart from the competitors. Employee engagement leads to customer enthusiasm. Customer enthusiasm leads to performance in terms of how we manage ourselves, whether that be financially, or customer satisfaction, and performance enables us to contribute back in the community. The whole thing just operates full circle.?

In addition to the acquisition of Dave Wood Mazda, 2015 is set to be a year of further growth for New Roads with the opening of a new facility for Richmond Hill Subaru, currently slated for May, and a renovation to their General Motors store in Newmarket beginning mid-spring. These renovations will include 16,000 square feet of new space, including drive-thru lube lanes, tire centre, customer lounge, and a new showroom specially designed to house their Cadillac brand.

Plans are also underway for a new Subaru dealership in Newmarket in 2016.