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Building an interconnected CRM experience: Insights from Ford Motor Company CRM Consumer Lead Kim Reedy

Host: Alan Hart, leader in marketing and customer strategy, Deloitte Consulting LLP

Guests: Kim Reedy, CRM Consumer Lead, Ford Motor Company

Alan Hart: We are recording at Salesforce Connections in Chicago, and today on the show, I have Kim Reedy, consumer CRM lead at Ford Motor Company. Kim is a performance marketing, customer experience, and CRM leader with expertise and data-driven marketing transformation within the automotive industry. At Ford, Kim leads CRM and customer engagement initiatives focused on personalization, life cycle marketing, and enterprise modernization.

Prior to Ford, she worked on the agency side, and on the show today, we talk about CRM applied to automotive, layering AI in, and how to think about high-performance human teams making it all go.

That and much more with Kim Reedy.

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Alan Hart (voice-over): Are you ready to go beyond the basics of marketing? I'm Alan Hart and this is Marketing Beyond, where I chat with the world's leading chief marketing officers and business innovators to share ideas that spark change and inspire you to challenge the status quo. Join us as we explore the future of marketing and its endless potential.

Alan Hart: Welcome to the show, Kim.

Kim Reedy: Thank you. Thanks for having me.

Alan Hart: Yeah, I'm excited to have this conversation. Before we get into the business side of things, you will not believe this. The person I just talked to, Trish, she was also a dance mom.

Kim Reedy: Oh, wow.

Alan Hart: And I believe you are a dance mom.

Kim Reedy: I am a dance mom, yes.

Alan Hart: Tell me about what that entails. Because we didn't go into depth before.

Kim Reedy: It is a lot of time, a lot of energy, a lot of money. A lot of early mornings and 14-plus-hour days, makeup and hairspray and all kinds of things. But it's super fun.

Alan Hart: I'm envisioning a huge go bag with all the things.

Kim Reedy: Definitely huge bag. There are dance competition bags. It's a thing, where it pops up and has clothes hangers and all kinds of compartments in the whole—it's a serious job. It's a serious job.

Alan Hart: Wow, wow.

Kim Reedy: Serious job!

Alan Hart: I love it, I love it. Well, it's got to be preparing you for the day job, right? Like, in some ways. There has to be some crossover, in my mind.

Kim Reedy: Yes. There is. You know, I think about the commitment and the hours. And yes. Just... there's a lot there that crosses over. But, yeah, it's fun.

Alan Hart: Well, let's talk about you and the career. You are running CRM at Ford. And how did you find—where did you get your start in marketing, and how did you find your way into the CRM aspects of it?

Kim Reedy: Yeah. Well, I started my career in marketing, actually in event marketing, a long time ago, and decided that I wanted to try something a bit different, in marketing, really, because event marketing ended up being just tons and tons and tons of travel. It was really fun. Lots of great experiences, lots of seeing different things. But I really wanted to do something that I could really connect with the customer more, wouldn't require necessarily as much travel, and I ended up finding my way to an agency, starting to work on Ford, actually.

Alan Hart: Oh, wow.

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Kim Reedy: So, I spent about nine years, actually at a WPP agency working on Ford, all within the CRM space. And as you know, CRM continues to grow and change and morph. So, what it was way back then is very different from what it is now. But that's actually how I started in the space.

Alan Hart: And then one day you said, I want to go from agency to client side. And was that a hard transition? An easy transition?

Kim Reedy: It was easier than I thought. But you definitely have to wear different hats. On the agency side, you're constantly serving your client and what your client needs; whereas, internally, you are working on business objectives. Still have internal stakeholders or clients, but you're ultimately responsible for those objectives. So, it's a little bit of a different hat, a different leadership, I guess I would say. You're more leading versus the agency servicing, if that makes sense, but yeah.

Alan Hart: When we look at CRM at Ford, what does it look like? What does your operations look like that you oversee? Who are your key stakeholders? All that good stuff.

Kim Reedy: I currently run the US CRM practice, and within my team and really within my remit is everything from strategy to creative through execution, analytics, kind of the full end to end, and working with internal teams—my team and then also agency team members as well—to really within all of those spaces. And from a stakeholder standpoint, as you can imagine, within an automotive organization, there's many different pillars and stakeholders from the vehicle and the brand teams, the service teams, the accessories teams, the subscription teams, and on and on and on and on. And all of those different teams are really what I would consider my clients to help with their business objectives ultimately through what we do on my team.

Alan Hart: Yeah. And so it's almost—you may not use these terms—but like a center of excellence model. You're the CRM lead capabilities owner.

Kim Reedy: Yep.

Alan Hart: And you serve the entire set of stakeholders inside Ford.

Kim Reedy: Yep, yep. And I'm on the business side within the marketing team. And I do have peers and CRM product and CRM IT and different areas of the organization. But I kind of feel like I have the fun job of working with all the different business units and coming up with strategies and then ultimately giving those requirements to my product and IT teams to help develop data solutions or technology solutions in order to bring stuff to market.

Alan Hart: Well, you've been—and if I got my facts right—you've been in automotive. So you're at Ford now, but you were in agency life before. There was also another automotive company in the mix at one point.

Kim Reedy: Yes.

Alan Hart: And you've been transforming CRM probably at many points in your career.

Kim Reedy: Yes.

Alan Hart: What does that look like? And when you think about automotive and CRM transformation, where do you start the conversation?

Kim Reedy: Yeah, you're right. I have worked on automotive probably 80% of my career. I did have a couple years that I worked in travel and hospitality and others, which was a really interesting experience. What I did find in there, though, is that a lot of the same principles and such apply. It's just a matter of pivoting, you know, what you're talking about and the life cycle and such. But, within automotive specifically, it's hard. And I say that because especially with more of the established OEMs that have been around for a long time, they're big organizations, and they've been around for a long time. There [are] really established groups and teams and processes and technologies, and it's hard. But what I found is to be able to really just kind of pick a spot and start chipping away at what that looks like and really partnering with the other teams, like the product teams, the IT teams and such, to really develop what that transformation plan will look like because it really is different in every space. I've done subscription marketing, automotive subscription work. I've done full kind of end-to-end journey transformation in automotive. So it really just kind of depends on what the focus is and then figuring, OK, how do we start to chip this off. Because you can't sadly plug it in and make it work.

Alan Hart: Right. How easy that would be.

Kim Reedy: How easy that would be. None of us to probably be here!

Alan Hart: No! Well, I was reflecting as you were talking on the stakeholders you have, there's so many different business models. You've got highly considered purchase, which is like buying a vehicle. You've got the life cycle of, like, living with the vehicle and getting serviced and maintenance and almost like a pseudo subscription—

Kim Reedy: Yeah.

Alan Hart: Life cycle marketing job. And then I'm sure there's—like, I don't know if you do this side of things—but there's the financing component, billing. There's a lot of different touchpoints and models.

Kim Reedy: Yeah, there is. And even technology subscriptions, too—like, true subscription models. So, there is. And it really takes a lot of thought and a lot of data and strategy to really build what that interconnected experience can and should be. And the thing I think that's most interesting in this space is before, especially automotive organizations were really linear in nature from a journey experience: you buy a vehicle, you onboard with a vehicle, you might service a vehicle and such. And we're at a place now where that journey is not linear. With subscription models and different servicing that might be needed for a vehicle, electric vehicles and what they need, it really is this journey that is very unique and personalized to the customer. So having that linear journey isn't necessarily as big of a thing anymore. It's more so this very flexible, fluid experience that each individual should receive. But it's hard.

Alan Hart: Yeah. Well, we're at Salesforce Connections in Chicago. If people can't hear the background noise, we're on the show floor. AI is everywhere and in the conversation. So, how does AI enter CRM, in your mind?

Kim Reedy: In a lot of ways, really. And we don't know everything at this point by any means. I'm hearing that everywhere here at Connections. Everyone's learning and experimenting and figuring out where it fits, and in a lot of ways, we're there too. But some of the stuff that I've seen is thinking about having models learn behavior that ultimately helps serve what should we send customers, when should we send it, what channel should it be in—those types of things. And then also from a creative standpoint, there's a lot of opportunities there, as we think about personalization, and every customer having their own experience. In order to manually create those thousands and thousands and thousands of pieces of creative and assets is impossible. So using AI to help us get there also will become more and more necessary. So I think within those two spaces is what I'm seeing initially. But there's so much more that we will need to do in order to get to the ultimate vision of true personalization and unique customer experiences to really help lead the customer through their ownership experience.

Alan Hart: Yeah, it sounds right. And some of the announcements that have been coming out around opening up the platform of Salesforce, right, with MCP, opportunities to tie in your own agent or your own LLM or AI tooling that you'd like to use, is pretty exciting.

Kim Reedy: It is. Yeah.

Alan Hart: It's a lot to figure out how it all comes together, but yeah, pretty exciting stuff.

Kim Reedy: It is. Definitely. I'm excited to lean into that a lot more as we move forward. I feel like this space is definitely a space that is ever evolving, and next year when we come to Connections, there'll be a whole other slew of technology and things to consider. That is one of the exciting things about being in the space.

Alan Hart: We talked about AI. Let's talk about humans. You lead a lot of humans, work with a lot of humans. How do humans fit into the equation with the transformation, and what are you thinking about?

Kim Reedy: Right now, there's a lot of education on what AI can do for us and how it can make us smarter, better, faster. So there's a lot of upskilling, learning. But I'm seeing it really as more of an assistant for us. I'm not seeing it replace people. I'm not seeing it even necessarily take away tasks, but more so potentially automate certain things to make it easier and faster, particularly around even insights. So we can move faster and react to some of the things that we might see. But I'm seeing the humans and the AI really work nicely together. There's a lot of discussion everywhere, right, about AI replacing humans. I don't see that at all from where I'm sitting. But at least, in my experience of what I'm seeing in the industry overall in the space, I'm seeing it just become a tool.

Alan Hart: Right. Well, I'll reflect on my own personal AI journey, going from using a prompt, an LLM, and typing it in and seeing what it would do, to now programming my own skills or GPTs or whatever it might be, to do those repetitive things that I used to go prompt it to do. And now I want to save myself a step and do a little bit more advanced. And then I had the experience recently of trying to build an agent with a team, and now that we're done, we are rethinking should we even have an agent? Because if we use the MCP protocol and could query the data we were looking at, we need to think about this problem differently. And it seems like there's just this constant evolution of how do I structure my problem-

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solving? Because the tools are advancing so fast, and also how humans can help problem-solve with the tools is changing too. It's fascinating to me.

Kim Reedy: Yeah, I agree. And I've had kind of the same experience over the last year of just starting with, oh, what is this going to do? And then building upon that over time. And I think there's a long way to go. But to your point, I've also struggled a little bit of it competes a bit. So yeah, I think it's still finding its spot. That's what I'm seeing right now.

Alan Hart: Yeah. Well, I will say I am doing a lot more than I used to do because of it. So, productivity is through the roof, in my opinion.

Kim Reedy: Yeah, I agree. I'm definitely seeing that as well.

Alan Hart: As we think about this journey you've been on, is there a decision that you've had recently that you're just genuinely proud of or something that you released and you're excited about, and what made it work for you?

Kim Reedy: One of the things that we've done recently has been in the retention or loyalty space. And if anyone's familiar with automotive, loyalty is actually down overall right now. So, as you look at almost any automotive company, loyalty's down. People are not necessarily as brand loyal as they used to be. And there's a lot of things influencing that. A lot of things in the market overall, whether it's price or product or other things.

So we did launch a loyalty or retention program and it really utilized a lot of different data, a lot of different pieces of technology and triggers and other things, and really ended up showing up to the customer in moments that really mattered when they were making their purchase decision. And for a car, that's a big moment. That's a big considered purchase. Most people are not buying \$40,000 to \$70,000 products on a weekly basis.

What we do, sadly, in my space, is not going to solve all of loyalty, but it could it could chip away at it. There's a lot of other parts and pieces that are part of that. But I think ultimately it goes to show, I think if you focus on specific business objectives and you're really intentional about audiences and data and content and showing up when it matters most, in a very personalized way, that you can move some needles and really see some great results. Again, I'm not going to solve loyalty for Ford, myself, with this program, but I do see it as something that will continue to grow and expand and turn into something bigger. So that was really exciting for myself and the team overall.

Alan Hart: I love it. Well, we've been talking about the complexity of CRM programs and the evolution of them and all the new technology. It's a dizzying pace, and the commitment both as a dance mom and as a business person running these programs, it shows. One of the things we love to do is get to know you a little bit better. And so, my favorite question to ask everyone that sits in that chair is, has there been an experience of your past that defines or makes up who you are today?

Kim Reedy: You know, I think there was one moment that I remember, and this was about 14 years ago—because my daughter is 14—so that is a great reminder. And it was back when I worked at the

agency for Ford, and I was pregnant. I was invited to this very high-level executive meeting, and I was much more junior in my career, and I had this opportunity to speak to very high-level leaders at Ford, and it was one of the first experiences that I had of that nature. And I just remember being so nervous and just sweating, and what am I going to do? And why am I in this room? And look all around? Just one of those moments that you're like, I should not be here, and I'm pregnant, and this is just not the right spot for me right now. But, looking back, it was such—I'm so thankful for the opportunity where my leadership at that time, knowing I was much more junior, gave me that experience. And it really built confidence. It exposed me to—it was the beginning of being involved in a lot more things like that. It exposed me to those types of environments, which can be hard, especially as a younger professional to really kind of break into or feel comfortable. So, that's one moment that I feel gave me a lot of confidence to be like, OK, if I can do this, I can do a lot more—like a leadership or kind of being part of that group. So I look back and I'm thankful for that experience. I think it really did a lot for me to then grow beyond.

Alan Hart: Yeah. That's awesome. Well, if you were starting your journey all over again, what advice would you give your younger self?

Kim Reedy: I would say, do things that are uncomfortable. A lot of people often—even myself sometimes still—we fall back into the things we know because it's comfortable and we can do it in our sleep, and we know we're right and we have the plan. But especially in this space, there's always something you don't know because probably every day something new comes out, and it's something different to consider. So, just be curious and kind of challenge yourself in those ways because that's how you're going to grow. Put yourself in uncomfortable places because that's how you learn and grow. So, just having that mindset, I think, is key.

Alan Hart: That's awesome. Well, is there anything you're trying to learn more about yourself?

Kim Reedy: Yeah. I mean, AI, for sure. We talked a little bit about that. Both personally and professionally in this space, in the CRM space, obviously using a lot of the Salesforce products. There's a lot of AI built in really everywhere. So, continuing to learn more about that. So how might we use those things? And then, like I said, personally, too, like, how might I automate some of my tasks that sadly take up a lot of my time from being a dance mom and a professional. So how could I use some of that to my advantage to then be curious in maybe other areas. Or have time for a yoga class! That's also helpful, yeah.

Alan Hart: That would be nice. Or just to get a workout in. Yeah, I had a personal experience. I started experimenting with AI personally first before business and I was trying to sell something, and I didn't realize that I could connect this system to my email. And as soon as I realized that, I was like, oh, can you write emails for me? And now it can write emails—and it can't send them on my behalf yet, but it drafts them, and then I just need to go and review and hit send. And it was amazing. It's a little hack.

Kim Reedy: Yes, it is. And you know, things like that really do free up a lot of time. I don't know if I'm personally in a place that I would even want it to send yet because I'm like—

Alan Hart: I don't know that I want it to send, but yeah.

Kim Reedy: I kind of want to look at this, and is it the right tone and words? You know, every scenario is different. But I'm with you. Those types of things are so helpful.

Alan Hart: Yeah. Well, as you look out in the world today—could be the world of dance, I don't know—but is there anything you're just really curious about? You look at and go, hmm, that's interesting.

Kim Reedy: You know, I'm curious to see where AI overall will take us. I was just talking with someone the other day about this, and I feel actually very lucky that my daughter is the age that she is at 14 and she's not necessarily planning her future yet. And we have a few years to kind of see how some of this plays out because I'm wondering, what is that generation... What are the right choices for careers? Where are they going to go? Are there new things that may be created that they may want to go after or go into? And I think that's just so interesting. I mean, we look back to the dot-com era a long time ago and look at how many things came from that, right? And I'm really curious. Like, I'm just really observing, OK, we probably have two years before we have to start really talking and considering, OK, what do you want to do when you grow up? And I feel like AI really could start to influence some of those decisions. Especially, she's a very creative person and dance and those types of things. And I think about creatively, of course, you're not going to use AI to dance, but I just think it's a really interesting time.

Alan Hart: Yeah, I'm about four years ahead of you with my daughter, and we're doing the college thing in the fall, and we've had this exact type of conversation. The one thing I've seen—and it actually came up in a conversation earlier today with Kevin Siminski at Salesforce. We were talking about this exact topic, and he was interested in what's happening with trades, like trade skills—like plumbing, electrical, physical things. And I think there's still going to be a place for computer science and all these things because everything will evolve. There'll be new problems to solve, I'm sure. But even in my daughter's—she wants to do aerospace engineering. And that's an interesting field because as I looked at engineering as a discipline, there's a lot more mechanical engineer majors now than there are other areas because of this push to physical, which is an interesting dynamic. I mean, the discipline of engineering and breaking down a problem doesn't change.

Kim Reedy: Sure, of course.

Alan Hart: That's still a very valuable skill. But where you apply that—physical world or the AI world. It's interesting.

Kim Reedy: Yeah. I think it's just going to be a bit of a mindset shift. And yeah, I'm excited to see where it goes. And I'm also hearing a lot of kids that are in this space going into electrical or plumbing or other things, too, where it's just a very physical thing. So yeah, I'm curious to see where all that goes. So, that's my future Kim problem. But I do think about it now.

Alan Hart: Yeah. Exactly. Especially as you're saving for that inevitable tuition bill.

Kim Reedy: Yeah.

Alan Hart: Well, you are in an interesting vantage point. You're a practitioner, you're leading people, you're doing this work, you're working with the technology. As you think about it, and you may talk to

other marketers, what do you think is the biggest maybe underestimated opportunity that's right there in front of us?

Kim Reedy: Yeah. You know, it's interesting. As I've been going through a lot of this work, and I've been talking to other people, I think one of the things that—I won't say it's forgotten but is maybe not as much at the forefront as it should be—is really the organization and the process. I think a lot of companies are focused on the technology, and we have to do this, we have to get this, we have to use the next best thing. But the thing that I have found—and as I talk to other people, too—is without the right process and the right operational model, the technology is not going to work.

Alan Hart: Right.

Kim Reedy: And I've really had to focus a lot on that myself and even ask for help in that space, because it's a lot when you're dealing with large organizations to rally the teams and have that structure be right. But I do think that with the right leadership and the right buy-in and the right vision, it doesn't have to be as hard as maybe it seems, but it's foundational, I think. It's hard to be successful without those things.

Alan Hart: I agree.

Kim Reedy: So I would encourage people to really pay attention to that space.

Alan Hart: Yeah. We think about this too. And I advise other people—we have four pillars, if you will. The normal ones, you would expect: people, process, and tech. And you just talked about process, and I think we've had to add data to the fourth. And it's almost an optimization problem at the end of the day, like a big manufacturing plant. And if all four of those are not synchronized and moving together and one is deficient, they all can only go as fast as the slowest partner, right?

Kim Reedy: You're right. Absolutely. And you're right. Data is another huge part. It's one thing to have the data. It's another thing for it to be enabled and available in a way that will sync with the people, process, technology. So, I love that add. That's great. Yeah.

Alan Hart: Well, Kim, thank you for coming on the show.

Kim Reedy: Yeah. Thank you. This was amazing. Thank you for the opportunity.

Alan Hart: Awesome.

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