

AUTOMOTIVE

## Lincoln embraces experience economy via owner services

November 30, 2017



*Lincoln Personal Driver provides owners with a chauffeur when they need it. Image courtesy of Lincoln*

By SARAH JONES

U.S. automaker Lincoln is taking its customer service beyond the dealership, creating a luxury experience for its owners centered on ease of mobility.

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From the expansion of a Chauffeur service pilot program to expedited security screenings at airports, Lincoln is aiming to remove friction and hassles in travel to both nearby and far destinations. For time-strapped affluent consumers, efficiency is a form of luxury, a perspective Lincoln's services tap into.

"We believe the future of luxury automobile ownership revolves around effortless service and saving clients time," said Amanda Park, product communications manager at [Lincoln](#), Detroit. "It's more than just owning a vehicle, it's about the experiences that surround it and that sense of surprise and delight for the consumer.

"For Lincoln owners that means delivering exceptional products with effortless, personal, time-saving services to match," she said. "What that looks like today is services like our Clear collaboration for hassle-free airport security travel, to our Personal Driver pilot as well as our standard Pickup and Delivery service."

### Driving on demand

Lincoln is entering a new partnership with Clear, which offers its members dedicated security lines at airports and arenas, allowing them to verify their identity by scanning their iris or fingerprints.

A Clear employee then escorts the customer to the screening process, allowing them to bypass lines. Clear is currently offered at more than 30 airports and arenas across the United States.

Starting in January, new Lincoln owners will be given a complimentary six-month membership to Clear, while clients of the premium Lincoln Black Label will receive a full-year membership.

### *How Clear works*

Helping consumers closer to home is Lincoln's Chauffeur pilot. After debuting in Miami and San Diego earlier this year, the service is rolling out to Dallas.

Redubbed Lincoln Personal Driver, the program gives Lincoln owners the option to delegate driving duties to a trained, screened chauffeur. While affording consumers the convenience of being in their own car, this service frees them up to be passengers rather than drivers.

For busy clients, these drivers can also be given tasks such as filling the car's gas tank, washing the car, picking up dry cleaning or running other errands while owners are at appointments. Lincoln has found clients using this for a range of activities, including dates and doctor's appointments.

Following in the footsteps of other luxury vehicle subscription programs from Cadillac and Porsche in the U.S., and leveraging parent company Ford's Canvas subscription service technology, Lincoln is planning its own pilot for early next year.

Slated to debut in California, this will give customers the opportunity to subscribe month-to-month, with fees such as insurance, maintenance, roadside assistance and vehicle pickup included in the membership.

Since 2016, Lincoln has been offering clients a Pickup and Delivery service, in which a valet picks up an owner's vehicle at any location and gives them a loaner ([see story](#)). When the consumer's car is done being serviced, it is washed and returned.



*As part of The Lincoln Way, the automaker opened a new experience center in Dallas. Image courtesy of Lincoln*

From January to October this year, use of this client service went up 223 percent. Today, Lincoln offers Pickup and Delivery across the U.S. on all 2017 or later model year vehicles.

Consumers can book services via The Lincoln Way mobile application, which also offers a concierge, roadside assistance and parking location.

"Through our research, we learned that more personalized service appeals to luxury owners on all levels," Ms. Park said. "Convenience, time savings and personalized service are critical to our clients three elements that informed the development of Lincoln's Pickup and Delivery service.

"The chauffeur services pilot taught us that customers are using this type of service after a night out on the town, getting to and from medical appointments, and running errands during the day, so we are renaming the pilot Lincoln Personal Driver based on those findings."

#### Self service

Technology has become a means for automakers to create services that reach consumers outside of the showroom.

German automaker Mercedes-Benz is bringing artificial intelligence-powered chatbots to the automotive world to allow drivers to ask questions at any time.

Daimler, Mercedes' parent company, is working on a new voice activated chatbot solution accessed through an application on mobile devices or in their cars. "Ask Mercedes" will interact with consumers to answer their queries and help build a series of customer support prototypes ([see story](#)).

As consumer buying habits shift from owning to renting, service is one way to maintain clientele.

Contradicting the depiction of millennials as against car ownership, new YouGov research finds that 40 percent of affluents in this age bracket are planning a vehicle purchase in the next year.

Part of the YouGov Affluent Perspective 2017, a look into this group's car buying behavior and preferences found that while a quarter of affluent individuals could see themselves ditching car ownership in the future, an overwhelming majority have at least one vehicle today. Affluent consumers may not be trading in owning for sharing yet, but it behooves automakers to be prepared ([see story](#)).

"We are committed to being a luxury brand that offers exceptional products as well as warm, human, personal experiences," Lincoln's Ms. Park said. "Our approach to effortless service is based on our desire to provide client experiences that are easy to access, simple to use and save customers a true luxury item: their time.

"It is a matter of carefully identifying and delivering the most appropriate solution for each client need."

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