



Advancing Agricultural Dealerships

Why Implementation & Technology Are Essential
For Effective DMS Development & Deployment

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Introduction

As any service leader will attest, effective aftermarket management is a highly complex operation with many moving parts to balance daily. Whether from a spare parts, warranty, or field service perspective, there's a constant dynamic flow to operations that requires the service leaders and their teams to be consistently ahead of the challenge.

There is even greater complexity for organizations whose network is dealer-based, as is often the case in sectors such as agriculture. However, modern solutions such as those provided by HCLSoftware can alleviate much of the mundane processes that cause friction across the entire service supply chain. This allows service organizations to focus on the essential aspects of business — delighting customers and growing profit margins.

In this exclusive case study, we bring you the key observations from Kris Oldland, Editor-in-Chief, Field Service News, after he spent time with Rudresh Basavarajappa, Vice President of Aftermarket Platform, with HCLSoftware where he explained how he and his team are helping their customers in the agriculture sector, drive greater customer experience and improve profit margins, by taking an approach that goes far beyond mere software solutions and bringing genuine industry leadership into the mix as well.

Summary

Establishing Return on Investment Within 12 Months of Deployment

HCLSoftware

In this case study, we present the strategic deployment of HCLSoftware's Dealer Management System (DMS) within an agricultural machinery client's dealer network.

As we work through the case study, based on extensive conversations with Rudresh Basavarajappa, Vice President of Aftermarkets, HCLSoftware, we'll emphasize the pivotal role of digital transformation in optimizing aftermarket service management. We'll outline the key challenges, including the lack of uniformity in processes and technology across dealerships, and underscore the imperative for digital evolution to boost operational efficiency and competitive edge.

The study elaborates on HCLSoftware's methodical approach towards system integration, enabling enhanced data analytics and dealer performance, and we shall highlight the key outcomes, including notable enhancements in operational workflows, customer service quality, and profitability margins.

Across the study, you will find:

- The Inherent Challenges of Dealership Networks in the Aftermarket
- The Benefit of Experience in Technology Implementations
- The Importance of Industry Knowledge: Tackling Seasonal Variations in Agriculture
- Emphasizing a Customer-Centric Approach in DMS Development & Deployment
- Realizing Business Impact and Gaining Customer Insights with DMS —

Chapter 1

The Inherent Challenges of Dealership Networks in the Aftermarket

One of the perennial challenges that organizations with a dealership network face, whether in agriculture, heavy-duty trucks, construction, industrial machinery, or any other vertical, is they often find themselves grappling with disjointed processes and technologies across the network.

This lack of consistency can pose a significant hurdle for Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) in monitoring and assessing dealer performance, particularly in critical areas like inventory management and service efficiency.

One weak link in the network can significantly harm a brand's reputation way beyond that one dealer's reach. Bad service often gets amplified, which can have a domino effect on profitability. It is a key reason why all organizations that operate across a dealership network must focus on consistency as mission critical.

Indeed, this is one of the core issues that Basavarajappa points to, and one he and his team have been working closely with their clients in the agriculture space to overcome.



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For Basavarajappa, the first issue to address is the absence of an integrated systems in dealerships. Without a unified approach to understanding data, each dealership and the OEM are already facing an uphill battle to handle the multifaceted aspects of effective and profitable service operations.

"If a company is not able to monitor and measure how the dealers are performing, both in terms of inventory and service, how do they improve the dealer performance in these areas?" he asks.

In many dealer networks, when it comes to Aftermarket sales, the dealers are often only utilizing financial or HR systems, which are invariably disconnected from the OEM's own systems. Connecting into a centralized Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system is, of course, the most effective way to coordinate dealer and OEM efforts, but this is, in general, exceptionally rare – particularly in the agriculture sector, but also in other verticals.

As Basavarajappa insists, there is absolutely a critical data gap in dealership management for most OEMs, which is the result of the over-reliance on basic financial or HR systems.

These systems often fail to address the complex demands of dynamic, aftermarket-led dealership operations, especially in the agriculture sector.

Yet, this challenge not only indicates a technical shortfall but also reflects a broader alignment issue between dealership operations and OEM expectations.

Addressing this gap requires a solution that builds a more transparent and holistic view of dealer performance through robust data, and there is a critical technology aspect within the equation. However, there is also a major cultural shift required to get all stakeholders across the dealership network and in the OEM themselves to adapt to new best practices that can be unearthed when performance insights are highlighted.

However, for many companies, while identifying the right technology can (and should) take time, it is the implementation and adoption that proves to be the biggest stumbling block, and this is where true partnership should be valued when seeking a technology solution provider. —

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Chapter 2

The Benefit of Experience in Technology Implementations

Recognizing that implementation and adoption often pose the biggest challenges for digital transformation, HCLSoftware has championed an comprehensive approach allowing customers to leverage the extensive experience of its team in the Aftermarket division.

An excellent example of this is how they approached the development and implementation of a Dealer Management System (DMS) with a recent client within the Agriculture sector. As should be the way with such digital transformation projects, the introduction of HCL's technology, [HCL Aftermarket Cloud](#), was seen as a project whose scope was far greater than merely digitizing existing workflows.

Instead, it was viewed as an opportunity for rethinking long-standing approaches that had become antiquated and ineffective. Indeed, working with HCLSoftware would represent a significant strategic shift towards integrating and streamlining dealership functions for the OEM.

Acknowledging the potential impact this would have on the client's operations and drawing on their 30 years of experience working with customers within aftermarket operations, HCLSoftware adopted what was effectively a change-management-based approach to rolling out their solution across the dealership network.

This approach began by establishing some clear change champions within the network, and crucially, the experts in the HCLSoftware implementation team wisely insisted that the dealers in the trial program should be representative of all types of dealers within the OEM's network.

"We went to six dealers," Basavarajappa explained. "Two of them are quite significant players across multiple regions; two were mid-range dealers, and two were very small dealers," he added.

“The OEM actually wanted us to work with their six biggest dealers by revenue size, but we insisted that it was vital we have a range of dealership types in the initial rollout.

This initial step was crucial in both gathering diverse insights and understanding the varying needs of different sizes of dealerships and in demonstrating further down the line to all dealers in the network that others similar to them in size and stature had benefited from HCL Aftermarket Cloud,” he explained.

Having already demonstrated their experience to the OEM and given them true, meaningful consultancy in technology and implementation best practices, Basavarajappa and his team now needed to do the same with these six initial dealers.

The focus was once again centered on educating the dealerships on best practices for implementation rather than tailoring the approach to each dealership. As Basavarajappa explains, the latter only ever results in a disjointed and prolonged implementation that harms adoption rates and ultimately causes the OEM to see a return on their investment far more slowly, if at all.

Indeed, one of the key benefits of working with a team of experts like HCLSoftware, is their deep experience, which can avoid such pitfalls.

This is perfectly outlined in his approach to educating the dealers. The HCLSoftware implementation team understood that the critical essence of any successful DMS implementation is to focus on customer connection and understanding. From there, the dealers will remove pain points across their workflows, leading to quicker adoption of the tools that drive profitability and reduce wastage.

As Basavarajappa points out, **“It is not a case of improving profit in one column, customer service another, and efficiency in another. They are all interlinked. Pushing for greater customer service response times drives efficiencies within the operation. Greater efficiencies in the operation drive improved profits. Each of these aspects is interlinked, but when implementing in the first**

phase, when outlining new workflows and processes, first you must know the customer and be connected to the customer,” he explains.

Through such a combination of strategic planning, customer-centric focus, and technology built on the back of extensive subject-matter knowledge and experience, the initial six dealerships bought into the project quickly and proved to be a success.

Armed with six key change champions, robust data, and backed by real-world results, the implementation team was able to make the case to the client that the timeframe for their intended slower-phased approach could be significantly reduced. With the green light from his client, Basavarajappa mobilized his team to offer full 24-7 support during an ambitious rollout across the entire dealership network.

The result? HCL Aftermarket Cloud DMS was fully rolled out across more than forty-five dealerships in just six months compared to an industry average of at least three times that time. —



Chapter 3

The Importance of Industry Knowledge: Tackling Seasonal Variations in Agriculture

Of course, when seeking a technology partner, subject matter expertise and effective solutions are essential parts of the equation; however, so is industry knowledge regarding the vertical market you operate within.

The HCLSoftware team understood the importance of this. They went to significant lengths to understand the challenges specific to their client, a prominent German player in the agricultural machinery sector, as well as the challenges their customer's customers faced. Outlining these was a critical factor in developing a successful implementation of the DMS.

For example, Basavarajappa emphasizes the significance of seasonality in agriculture. **"It is a great influencer,"** he explains. **"For example, how do we project our inventory planning? You can't project based on the 12-month consumption pattern because it is never standard."** It may seem obvious to any service leader



Unlike other Aftermarket sectors, in agriculture, the availability of parts is more critical than service offerings.

who works within an industry that has peak seasons, but the reality is most inventory planning software use traditional forecasting methods based on consistent consumption patterns, which can be ineffective and will lead to inaccurate demand predictions, and in some cases, stock outs.

Similarly, it is vital to understand the relationship between revenue ratios across service and parts. Unlike other Aftermarket sectors, in agriculture, the availability of parts is more critical than service offerings.

As Basavarajappa explains, **“In terms of the Aftermarket, customer loyalty is driven by parts availability. That is because 90% of the repairs are done by owners themselves, and close to 90% of aftermarket revenue comes from part sales, not service.”**

Again, it is crucial to understand these vertical nuances when applying a solution. While there are many shared pain points across vertical industries regarding the aftermarket, there is rarely a one-size-fits-all approach to developing effective solutions across multiple vertical markets.

Indeed, the technologies used across different verticals may often be the same. HCLSoftware, for example, covers a vast array of sectors, including heavy trucks, construction and agriculture, to name just a few.

Still, the understanding of how best these technologies should be implemented within a particular sector or even within a specific organization allows them to truly empower better processes that lead to more harmonious Aftermarket operations.

Indeed, it was through a comprehensive understanding of the challenges within the agriculture sector that the HCLSoftware team were able to execute an implementation that was not only rapid in terms of rollout but impressive in terms of results, including improving missed machine detail capture by 39%, improving customer records (essential for practical parts re/upselling) by 41% and allowing the dealers to fulfill an impressive 500 parts orders each day. —

In terms of the Aftermarket, customer loyalty is driven by parts availability.



Chapter 4

Emphasizing a Customer-Centric Approach in DMS Development & Deployment

As we noted earlier in this case study, the HCLSoftware team's approach to developing an effective implementation of the [HCL Aftermarket Cloud](#) started with the customer. As we can see from the results, this was a crucial strategic decision.

So how did they approach this, and why was it such a critical tool in winning the support of senior leadership both amongst the dealers and the OEM themselves?

Understanding the Customer's Voice

The HCLSoftware implementation team knew that the most influential voice in any business ecosystem is that of the customer and that this is where one would find the weak links in the existing aftermarket supply chain.

Their initial approach was to record a series of interviews with the OEM's customers. As Basavarajappa explains, **"This approach was not just about gathering data but about listening to the customers' actual experiences and needs."**

The team uncovered a process where the OEM invoiced the dealers, who subsequently invoiced the customers. This resulted in delays and confusion for the customers, creating negative experiences. Importantly, it highlighted a major disconnect in the customer value chain immediately after the equipment gets purchased from a dealership. This rendered a significant number of customers invisible, leaving the dealer and OEM unaware of their needs during the service lifecycle until they returned for parts. Of course, there's a risk that customers could just as easily go to a third-party supplier, resulting in a loss of parts revenue.

"So by speaking with our customer's customers, we were identifying a pain point for them the OEM weren't aware of. In doing

There will always be lag time in every company and across every network.

so, we were then able to uncover a clear path to revenue leakage that was entirely avoidable,” Basavarajappa explains.

Incentivizing Dealerships to Connect with Customers

Of course, it is human nature to resist change, as much as it is human nature to ask the evergreen question, “What is in it for me?”

While the initial rollout approach of focusing on six dealerships that were representative of the entire dealer network was one powerful tool in outlining the benefits of the DMS to the wider network.

Again, the HCLSoftware team were savvy enough to know that one tool was not sufficient for effective and rapid rollout and adoption of a new system. There will always be lag time in every company and across every network.

With this in mind, the HCLSoftware implementation team advised the OEM also to include strategies to incentivize dealerships to engage more closely with their customers so they could see first-hand the benefits of doing so in their day-to-day operations.

“They incentivized dealerships for implementing the DMS,” Basavarajappa explains, **“and this allows them to not only demonstrate the value of the DMS to the dealers but also to capture a huge amount of information into their system, which was previously not available with them.”**

“Again, it is about seeking multiple benefits for the dealer,” Basavarajappa continues, **“the OEM, and their customers, and getting buy-in from the dealerships was vital to achieving this, so we understood the importance of encouraging adoption in as many ways as were viable. The results then speak for themselves.”** —

Chapter 5

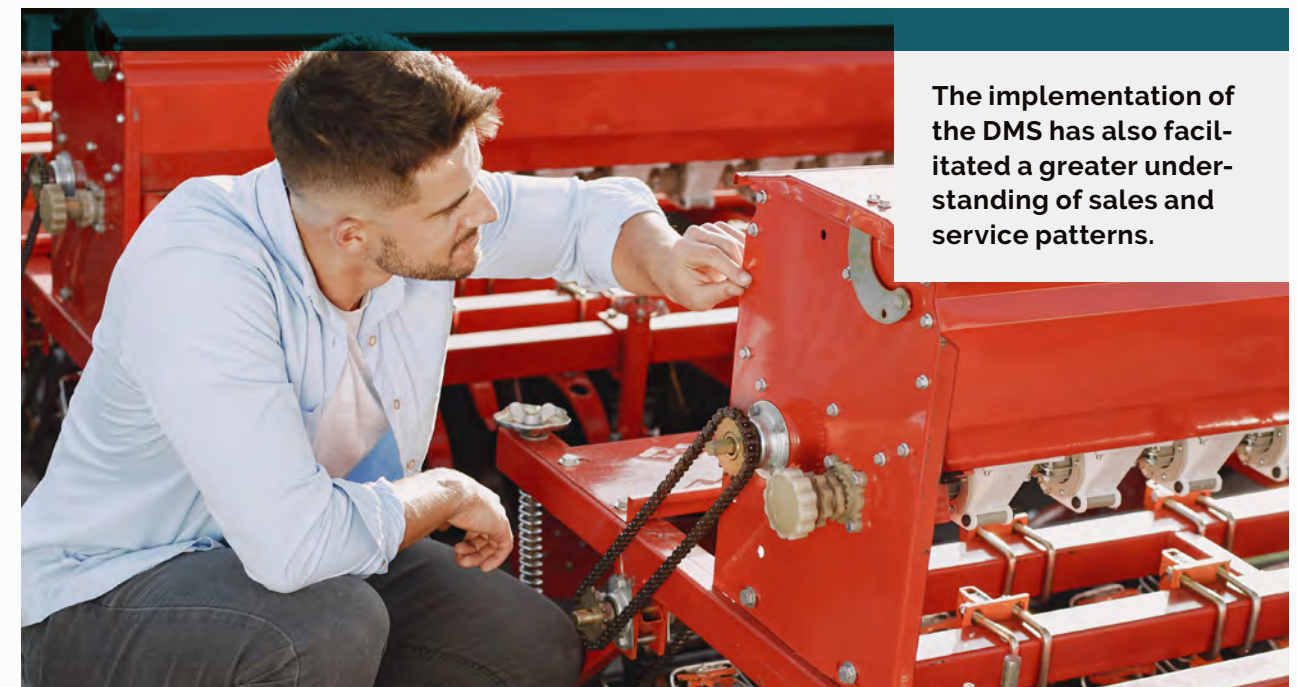
Realizing Business Impact and Gaining Customer Insights with DMS

As we can see from the statistics outlined in this case study, [HCL Aftermarket Cloud DMS](#), alongside the effective approach to implementation championed by the HCLSoftware implementation team has been proven to deliver truly remarkable results.

The OEM has seen a significant positive business impact and a tangible return on investment (ROI) within just a year of its implementation.

Those senior leaders at certain dealerships within the network who were initially reluctant to change and skeptical of the benefits soon recognized the system's value in providing a transparent view of their operations.

"They were able to see the ROI within a year," Basavarajappa explains, adding proudly, **"Every dealer principal has written an appreciation letter about this product."** This truly is a testament



The implementation of the DMS has also facilitated a greater understanding of sales and service patterns.

to the immediate and positive reception of the DMS across the network.

As we've seen, both the OEM and the dealer have seen key financial gains, yet the benefits go far deeper. The implementation of the DMS has also facilitated a greater understanding of sales and service patterns, enabling dealers to grasp customer needs more intuitively. As Basavarajappa comments, **"We eradicated the clutter, and everything became much more transparent right up to the topmost level."**

Indeed, such transparency is a hallmark of an effective business, but even more so when applied across a dealership network. In the clarity that comes with transparency, we can discover hidden flaws and strengths of the brand and the way they interact with their dealers and customers, which can foster a culture of accountability that drives all aspects of an operation towards greater heights.

The implementation of the DMS thus served as a catalyst for change, not only in how dealers managed their operations but also in how they interacted with and understood their customers. By providing valuable insights into customer behavior and equipment usage, the DMS enabled dealers to make more informed decisions, tailor their services to customer needs, and ultimately enhance both their own and the OEM's reach and influence across their market.

Ultimately, the DMS initiative executed by the expert team at HCLSoftware was not merely about installing a new system; it was about transforming business practices, driving efficiency, and fostering a customer-centric culture that could sustain growth and adapt to changing market dynamics.

This is the true essence of digital transformation, which goes far beyond the boundaries of digitizing technology systems, but drives key results aligned with core strategic business goals. At HCLSoftware, they call that fueling the 'Digital+ Economy'. —

By providing valuable insights into customer behavior and equipment usage, the DMS enabled dealers to make more informed decisions.



About HCLSoftware

HCLSoftware

Part of the HCLSoftware portfolio, HCL Aftermarket Cloud is a comprehensive service lifecycle management platform for equipment manufacturers to differentiate through service excellence. Trusted by businesses worldwide, Aftermarket Cloud will help streamline your service value chain, deliver unmatched aftermarket services and attain your sustainability goals.

HCLSoftware is a division of HCLTech (HCL) that operates its primary software business. It develops, markets, sells, and supports over 30 product families in the areas of Digital Transformation, Data Analytics & Insights, AI and Automation, and Enterprise Security. HCLSoftware has offices and labs around the world to serve thousands of customers. Its mission is to drive ultimate customer success with their IT investments through relentless innovation of its products.

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About Copperberg

COPPERBERG

Herbert Spencer once said: "The great aim of education is not knowledge, but action".

Copperberg creates physical and digital platforms bringing together the manufacturing community in order to grow and build relationships globally. During the recent global pandemic, we have been focusing on virtual events and digital content—ensuring our community remains connected. So, how do we actually do that?

On a daily basis, we work hard to improve, develop and innovate our concepts and original content in order to ensure the best hands-on, real-life strategies for all our community members. Our ambition is to provide ideas, networking, and industry exchange between peers, that inspires and leads to action.

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