

## Whitacre Gives GM Employees Credit For the Automaker's Turnaround

by Jim Stickford

Former GM CEO Ed Whitacre visited his old stomping grounds at the Tech Center's VEC building on Feb. 18 to sell copies of his new book, "American Turnaround: Reinventing AT&T and GM and the Way We Do Business in the USA."

Whitacre, who ran GM during the critical months after the company came out of bankruptcy, was well received by Tech Center employees.

Ginny Schmidt, an engineer who works in intellectual property, waited in line to get her copy of Whitacre's book autographed.

"I've always been a fan of Mr. Whitacre," Schmidt said. "I supported him when he was here. I've been here at GM for 13 years and I got his book because I wanted to see what were his insights of our company. I remember those times and I wish he stayed around here longer. I liked his personable, approachable style of leadership. That's why I want to read his book."

Robert Harris, a systems manager at GM's global supply department, said he too was a fan of Whitacre.

"I want to read how we did it, how we survived as a company," Harris said. "I was here when we lived it, now I want to see how we did it. We were just working hard

and didn't look at what we were doing as making history."

Also on hand was Whitacre's collaborator, former *Wall Street Journal* reporter Leslie Cauley. She said they worked on the book for a little over a year.

"The biggest surprise I got from writing the book was learning about Ed's background," Cauley said. "I worked as a business journalist covering the telecom industry, and he was with AT&T for many years, but I didn't know much about his personal life. It was nice to learn about his path. He's from Texas and his family was a union family. His father worked for the railroad. His is the quintessential American story. His life is uplifting and it's never really been covered."

Though she spent much time covering the telecom industry, Cauley never covered the auto business and said learning about that was also an experience.

"This book has a lot of what is done at the Tech Center," Cauley said. "It played a huge role in GM's comeback, and most people don't know about that."

Whitacre said he decided to write the book after his friends and family encouraged him to write about his career.

"I finally succumbed. The hardest thing about writing this book, aside from all the hard work, was telling the truth without hurting

people's feelings," Whitacre said. "They're all good people, but some had to be moved, things had to be changed. I agonized over that a lot."

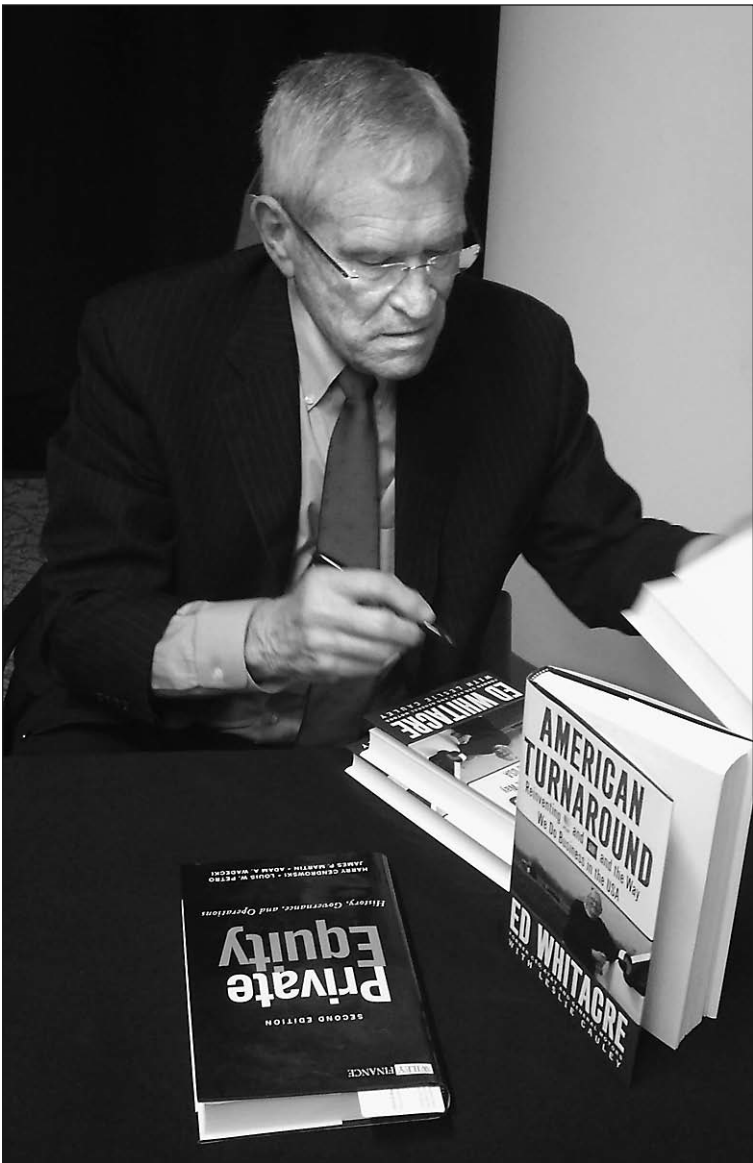
Whitacre said he was retired from AT&T when he was asked to take over GM by the Obama administration. He first said no, but they kept asking and said that it was a public service to run GM, and that was the clincher.

Ultimately, Whitacre said he was glad he took the job. He also credits the work done at the Tech Center for playing a huge role in saving the company.

"The Tech Center turned the company around," Whitacre said. "Saving GM was about designing, building and selling the best cars in the world. The workers are responsible. They brought GM back, not Ed Whitacre. They all did an excellent job."

Whitacre said he had heard a lot about the Detroit business world.

"I always heard about the Detroit business culture, but I didn't see anything terrible. It wasn't any different from anyplace else," Whitacre said. "The biggest factor in GM's turnaround was the change in attitude. We simplified things so we could get the hell out of the way of our people so that they could do what they could do. Remember, the quality turnaround happened pretty quickly."



Former GM CEO Ed Whitacre was at the Tech Center recently to sell copies of his book, which dealt in part with the turnaround of GM.

## 2014 Impala Feature Offers Security for Data, Property

Technology that connects drivers to Internet in cars is in demand, but it does make those who use it vulnerable to information theft by strangers, such as valet parkers.

To get ahead of this danger, GM now offers in its 2014 Chevrolet Impala a feature called "valet mode" that shields personal items and information from a stranger who takes the wheel.

The new Impala's available 8-inch center stack display is an interactive touch screen for the next-generation Chevrolet MyLink system, but doubles as a PIN-activated retractable faceplate over a secure storage bin large enough for items like a wallet, MP3 player and smartphone. Addresses and contacts stored on MyLink also remain PIN-protected.

"Valet mode is the kind of feature that Impala customers will appreciate," said Chris Perry, Chevrolet vice president of global marketing. "It is one of many great new features on our newest MyLink and a small part of Impala's overall technology package."

Chevrolet customer clinic participants showed interest in valet mode, particularly young car buyers who valued MyLink's information privacy protection. The hidden bin also provides a secure place for personal items.

"We were able to move the MyLink system's electronics to another location in the vehicle, effectively creating the space behind the touch screen," said Matt Highstrom, General Motors human-machine interface designer.

MyLink also allows for increased personalization. Owners can click and drag icons on the home screen located in the center stack, similar to using a smartphone or tablet.

Based on consumer research, MyLink designers developed four appearances or "skins" to appeal to distinct customer groups.

These and other functions will be rolled out to other Chevrolet models with the next-generation MyLink system.

"We can't design a custom Impala interior for every customer, but we can give them the next

best thing – an infotainment system that reflects their tastes and features that meet their needs," said Matt Fuligni, design manager, Chevrolet User Experience.

The 2014 Impala will begin production this spring and eventually will be offered with three engine choices. A 3.6-liter V6 will be available at launch, starting at \$30,760 including destination charges.



Melissa Howell

## Howell Succeeds Brinkley at GM

General Motors appointed Melissa Howell as vice president, Global Human Resources, effective immediately.

Howell has more than two decades of experience in GM Human Resources, supporting manufacturing, sales, marketing, corporate staffs and manufacturing engineering. She has worked in compensation, benefits and labor relations and held key assignments in Europe, Asia and North America.

On her leading GM Human Resources, GM Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Dan Akerson noted, "Her no-nonsense counsel and proven track record as a business partner and change agent will benefit the total GM team."

Howell, 46, will report to Akerson and serve on the company's Executive Operations Committee. She succeeds Cindy Brinkley, who decided to leave GM to pursue other opportunities.

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