

# GM closing Arizona IT Innovation Center

*Nine-year-old facility to close in October, eliminating more than 900 salaried jobs*

Exactly nine years ago, we attended the ribbon-cutting at the new General Motors Information Technology Innovation Center in Chandler, their fourth location (along with Warren, Michigan; Austin, Texas; and Roswell, Georgia) for in-sourcing the company's innovation capabilities and tapping into Arizona's ever-expanding pool of new and experienced IT talent.

About 500 employees were already employed there, about 25 percent of them recent college graduates, with GM expecting to hire a total of 1000 employees at the Chandler center over the coming five years—most focused on web technologies, end-user applications, dealership and factory systems, and vehicle technology.

GM's IT Innovation Centers were conceived as part of a companywide transformation to improve performance, reduce operating costs and increase output of technical innovations. GM announced Chandler as the site of the company's fourth IT Innovation Center in March 2013, and construction on the 170,000 square-foot center was completed in June 2014.

The facility became part of a global campus connected by full-room, large-screen 24/7 teleconferencing—featuring real time two-way, three-way or more-way video links with teams in other centers throughout the GM network

—in Korea, China, Austin, Australia, Detroit and other hotbeds of development worldwide. This aimed to enable rapid development of the latest in a wide range of e-based customer interface and satisfaction methodologies, while incorporating flex hours, creative commons for collaborative brainstorming, stand-sit workspaces, idea walls for sketches and notes, and more for its employees. Developed here were customer-first technologies including some of the first systems for purchasing a car 100 percent online.

In late August, *The Detroit Free Press* reported the planned closure of the facility in October, eliminating the jobs of about 940 workers, most of whom are part of GM's corporate IT support team.

The news followed a GM announcement the prior week saying they planned to eliminate about 200 engineering positions, in an effort to reduce vehicle complexity, stating that many of those engineers were expected to move into other jobs within the company.

General Motors spokesperson Kevin Kelly told industry journal *Automotive News* that some IT employees will continue to work in Arizona on software-defined vehicle technology, while those whose positions are terminated can apply for open positions until the end of October. ■

