

SPOTLIGHT
ON

RUNNING A MODERN DEALERSHIP

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WELCOME

Welcome to this edition of AM's Running A Modern Dealership special report. The complexity involved in successfully running a franchised dealership is not appreciated often by those outside the industry. Each department within it is inter-reliant on the others. Together, they must ensure that the business is capable of attracting and retaining customers, of retailing its stock profitably and speedily, and of ensuring owners' cars are safely maintained. Crucially, they must work together to ensure a dealership's overall returns give it the financial resources to reinvest in its people, property and processes for long-term success.

There have always been challenges for its departments to overcome, of course. Anyone who has been in this sector long enough to reach the level of general manager or above will have plenty of war stories and, naturally, the lessons learned from these.

It's often said that there's never been more change than now in this industry, but I think that is misguided. There is always change. It is perhaps the speed of change which is different. Dealer group leaders have witnessed the growth of Japanese brands, then South Korean brands, and now it is the turn of Chinese brands. Those same leaders traversed transport policies which encouraged people away from petrol into diesel, then away from diesel into petrol hybrid, and are now demanding more uptake of electric vehicles.

While these major changes roll on, the leaders running modern dealerships must not let their teams be distracted from getting the basics right. Keep customers in mind, stock what they want and what makes good profit, optimise other revenue streams and – vitally importantly – foster a culture of teamwork that celebrates the successes for everyone.

This special publication features insights from industry experts, suppliers and dealers on the key aspects of running a modern dealership. I hope their contributions will be helpful in inspiring you to improve your own motor retail operation.



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**By Anna Houldsworth,
Head of Paint Protection,
Autoglym LifeShine**

Powering modern dealerships with smarter protection solutions

In today's fast-moving automotive retail environment, dealerships need more than a great product, they need partners who understand how customers buy in a digital-first world. Autoglym LifeShine is not simply a vehicle protection system, but a complete solutions brand, designed to help dealers sell more effectively, consistently and confidently across every channel.

As the customer journey becomes increasingly omnichannel, expectations around transparency, speed and simplicity continue to rise. LifeShine works tirelessly with dealer partners to ensure its protection proposition integrates seamlessly into modern sales processes, adding value without friction, whether the customer begins online, via a finance journey, or in the showroom.

One of LifeShine's greatest strengths is listening. Every dealer faces similar challenges around digital engagement, compliance, training and conversion, but no two businesses operate in exactly the same way. Our teams work closely with partners to understand what they truly need, collaborate to overcome obstacles, and build a LifeShine solution that fits their operation. We are not just a chemical supplier. Our focus is on long-term partnerships that deliver real retail performance.

With decades of experience supporting OEMs and dealer groups, Autoglym LifeShine combines premium protection with practical retail expertise. Our specialists help optimise how LifeShine is positioned across websites, vehicle listings, configurators and in-dealership systems. From digital assets and content to POS tools and training, we make the LifeShine offer clear, compelling and easy to sell.

LifeShine supports increased penetration, improved customer satisfaction and long-term loyalty.



Powering modern car dealerships with connectivity built for performance



**Simon Carter, Senior
Business Development
Manager, Sky Business**

Today's automotive customers expect a smooth, joined up journey — from browsing on the forecourt to final handover. But when systems lag, calls drop, or tools fall offline, dealership teams lose time, momentum and even the sale.

Sky Business helps dealership groups eliminate these delays with fast, reliable, fibre first connectivity built for performance, consistency and multisite scale.

From quoting in the showroom to accessing diagnostics in the workshop, strong, stable connectivity keeps your teams responsive and your customers engaged.

Sales executives can also check stock or provide finance options instantly without stepping away, whilst service teams have access to real time updates.

Customers can enjoy fast guest WiFi and connected screens that keep them informed, entertained and confident about their decision.

Sky Business, in partnership with Scion Interactive, brings richer in showroom experiences to life by creating the Connected Dealership Experience — blending highspeed connectivity with digital signage, interactive displays and in showroom engagement tools to help dealerships create seamless, customer first retail environments.

From real time content and digital offers to smooth, data driven interactions across every touchpoint, the partnership helps dealerships reduce friction, enhance the customer journey and strengthen brand consistency across multiple sites.

With Sky Business and Scion Interactive [DMI.1] — you get the network, tools and partnership to deliver a smarter, more connected dealership experience.



Discover more at skybusiness.com/skybusiness-scioninteractive



**Simon Cook – Sales Director,
Vehicle Manufacturers –
Car Care Plan Ltd**



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Our in-house, highly experienced underwriters and actuaries are ready to develop your bespoke vehicle aftercare programmes. We know no two brands are the same, so our team works closely with you to understand your business and analyse your requirements, before proposing products that provide real value and utility for your customers. Our underwriting team forms a key lynchpin in the success of our aftersales programmes, providing open, honest and transparent insight and support to help develop and grow your aftersales activity.

Our expert marketing team works with you to create effective marketing solutions for your vehicle aftercare programme. From planning to design, execution to analysis, our professional, highly experienced, in-house marketers provide a range of services from the creation of point of sale material all the way through to retention campaigns and e-commerce platforms. Our marketing solutions are designed to support your aftercare programme in both the retail and direct-to-consumer environments.

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**Ryan Sanderson, Senior
Customer Success Manager
(North), Evolution Funding**



EVOLUTION FUNDING | **ClickDealer**

Dealer in a Box: more leads, easier finance, bigger profits

Running a modern dealership has never been more demanding. Expectations are higher, margins are tighter and customers want speed, clarity and confidence at every step. That's why we're proud to sponsor Running a Modern Dealership.

Dealer in a Box is powered by Evolution Funding and Click Dealer, combining deep motor finance expertise with proven digital retail technology. We work with dealers of every size across the UK, helping them compete in a market where digital-first experiences increasingly shape buying decisions.

We chose to support this spotlight because it speaks directly to the reality dealers are facing today. Modern retailing is not about adding more systems or complexity. It's about bringing the right tools into one platform, so your business runs more smoothly, your team can focus on progressing deals and customers get a clearer, more confident journey.

What we hear consistently is that dealers don't want to be logging into multiple systems to get a single deal over the line. They want finance, compliance and digital retail to work together. That's exactly why Dealer in a Box exists.

It brings these core elements together in a single package, designed around how dealerships operate today. The result is greater visibility across the deal journey, less friction, better quality leads and faster transactions - supporting increased vehicle sales and stronger profitability.

This supplement shines a light on what it really means to run a modern dealership. We're delighted to be part of that conversation and to support dealers building businesses ready for what comes next.



By **Tim Smith, Chief Strategy Officer, Keyloop**

Convergence: from fragmented tech to full power performance

If there's one thing I hear consistently from dealer leaders today, it's this: complexity is slowing us down. Over the past few decades, automotive retail has layered system upon system; each solving a problem but, collectively, creating a maze. Too many tools. Too much rekeying. Too many teams working around technology rather than being powered by it.

That's why this edition of Running a Modern Dealership feels so timely. Across the industry, there's growing recognition that the old model has reached its limits. Retailers aren't asking for more technology; they're asking for connected technology. They want one version of the truth. They want systems that talk to each other. They want convergence.

This is why Keyloop have built Fusion. Instead of adding more software to an already crowded landscape, we're bringing core retail operations together into four Domains: Demand, Supply, Ownership and Operate all in a single, unified platform. When your data, people and workflows sit in one place, you immediately reduce friction. And once that foundation is in place, you can unlock something even more powerful: AI that actually works.

AI isn't the end goal; it's the multiplier. But only when it has the context, structure and clarity that convergence provides. That's when AI stops being hype and starts improving workshop yield, speeding up stock movement, and increasing sales conversion.

This feature brings together the people and ideas reshaping what a modern dealership can be. I hope it sparks new conversations and new ambition for the road ahead.



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Securing success in used car sales

Tom Seymour discovers that the crucial profit centre for dealers relies upon discipline – discipline with stock management, with pricing and with enquiry conversion

The UK used car market delivered a third consecutive year of growth in 2025, but the operational reality for dealers is becoming more complex. Electrification and new brand entrants add some fresher wrinkles to automotive retailers thinking about their used car operations this year and into the future.

According to the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders (SMMT), used car transactions rose 2.2% to 7,807,872 units in 2025. Battery electric vehicle (BEV) volumes surged 45.7% to 274,815 units, lifting market share to 3.5%. Hybrids rose 28.6% to 407,531, while plug-in hybrids increased 6.3% to 88,032. Electric vehicles (EVs) in total accounted for 9.9% of all used transactions.

Some of the UK's largest used car operators such as Arnold Clark, are already seeing used EV volumes reach towards 20% of all sales (see case study on page 13).

Petrol and diesel still represented the majority of used car sales with a share of 89.9%, with petrol at 56.7% and diesel at 33.1%.

Forecasts from Cox Automotive Europe suggest overall 2026 used car volumes will reach 7,827,658 units, up 0.9% in 2025. That topline stability, however, sits against a structural shift in fuel mix, residual value (RV) behaviour and supply dynamics that

demand tighter operational control. Key operational focuses for this year will be less about chasing volume and more about mastering stock turn, capital efficiency, pricing discipline and preparation speed in a market defined by data transparency and margin compression.

FUEL MIX, PARC EVOLUTION AND THE SUPPLY REALITY


Cox Automotive Europe forecasts diesel's share of the used parc will fall from 30% in 2026 to 25% by 2029. Petrol is expected to decline from 57% to 52% over the same period.

In contrast, BEVs are forecast to grow from 5% to 12% of the parc by 2029, with PHEV and HEV vehicles rising from 7% to 11%.

The used plug-in vehicle market has gone from being "something to think about for the future", to entering into a phase where it will structurally rebalance the UK car parc.

This will have a direct influence on sourcing strategies, residual risk modelling, workshop capability and forecourt mix for the remainder of the decade.

At the same time, structural supply gaps remain embedded in the market.

The constrained new car volumes during the pandemic years continue to restrict five- to-seven-year-old supply. Philip Nothard, 

	Forecast	% +/- 2025	% +/- 2001-2019
Q1	2,028,325	0.4%	8.0%
Q2	2,015,284	1.0%	4.8%
Q3	2,014,206	1.3%	4.7%
Q4	1,769,843	0.9%	7.2%
2026 full year	7,827,658	0.9%	6.1%

Fuel Type	Decline	2025 Projection
Diesel	- 60%	(-5% in 2025)
Electric	- 42%	(-7% in 2025)
Hybrid	- 58%	(-9% in 2025)
Petrol	- 57%	(-11% in 2025)
PHEV	- 55%	(-2% in 2025)

Age Group	Decline	2025 Projection
Less than 1 year old	- 58%	(-13% in 2025)
1-2 years old	- 54%	(-15% in 2025)
2-4 years old	- 47%	(-4% in 2025)
4-6 years old	- 38%	(-4% in 2025)
6-8 years old	- 31%	(No change)

Age Group	Decline	2025 Projection
Less than 1 year old	- 49%	(-3% in 2025)
1-2 years old	- 42%	(-7% in 2025)
2-4 years old	- 35%	(-3% in 2025)
4-6 years old	- 26%	(-2% in 2025)
6-8 years old	- 18%	(1% in 2025)
8-11 years old	- 9%	(-2% in 2025)

Source: Cox Automotive Europe

insight director at Cox Automotive Europe, warns that retailers can no longer rely on traditional seasonality patterns.

He says: "What was once predictable seasonality is becoming increasingly indistinct."

Modern used car operations will be tracking evolving fuel mixes, diversified channels, shifting renewal cycles and manufacturer strategy changes.

SOURCING STRATEGY: BUILDING STOCK FOR MOMENTUM

Lucy Tugby, marketing director at Motors and Cazoo, says dealers built stock volumes in December, traditionally a quieter month, in preparation for a strong start to 2026.

This resulted in a steady churn of used cars in January, with the average dealer stocking 54 units. Franchised dealers, independents and super-markets all closed the month with fewer vehicles left on inventory due to robust demand.

Inventory planning must look beyond monthly performance to quarterly momentum.

Building stock ahead of anticipated demand remains a strategic lever, but it must be supported by pricing agility.

Average used car prices in January were £17,815, down 1.6% month-on-month. The decline was driven largely by nearly new supply, with cars less than two years old down 1.6% to £28,382.

Nearly new models aged under six months with fewer than 5,000 miles accounted for seven of the fastest selling used cars. The MG3 averaged just 7.4 days on the forecourt.



“ WHILE (PREPARATION) SPEED IS IMPORTANT, CUTTING CORNERS RISKS UNDERMINING TRUST AND LONG-TERM RELATIONSHIPS

LUCY TUGBY, MOTORS AND CAZOO



Used vehicle parc forecast by fuel type 2026-2029								
	2026		2027		2028		2029	
		% share		% share		% share		% share
Diesel	11,111,769	30%	10,609,176	29%	9,909,778	27%	9,249,175	25%
Petrol	20,889,497	57%	20,618,754	56%	19,824,105	54%	18,921,617	52%
BEV	1,882,876	5%	2,544,757	7%	3,358,746	9%	4,394,298	12%
PHEV/HEV	2,591,381	7%	3,133,102	8%	3,581,865	10%	3,987,218	11%
Total parc	36,475,523		36,905,789		36,674,494		36,552,308	

Source: Cox Automotive Europe



ADVERTISING FEATURE

"Sales sell the first car. Service sells the next one"

By Neil Addley, managing director, JudgeService



It's a phrase every dealer should live by, but the data proves just how powerful the service department is when it comes to long term loyalty.

Sales, service plans and servicing form a genuine virtuous circle. Customers who've bought from you before are far more likely to choose you again for servicing, and those who service with you are much more likely to buy their next car from you. Break the chain and loyalty weakens. Strengthen it, and you can increase repeat business without spending a penny more on marketing.

Start with insight. OEM surveys are fine for hitting bonus thresholds, but they rarely tell you what's really happening on the ground. Targeted experience surveys and structured monitoring of online reviews across Google, Facebook and Trustpilot reveal the detail that actively drives business.

The numbers underline the opportunity: a customer who bought previously is 68% more likely to service with you (42% vs. 25%). And servicing is the single biggest driver of repeat sales - 76% of repeat buyers had their last car serviced at the dealership. Service plans matter too: 69% of customers offered one will service with you, compared with just 47% who aren't.

And geography still counts. 51% of buyers within five miles take a service plan, falling to 25% for those travelling over 50 miles.

If you want more loyal customers, start by perfecting the service experience, and selling cars closer to home doesn't hurt, either.

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The competitive pressure in nearly new underscores the importance of stock profiling.

Dealers must understand how age bands are performing and adjust acquisition accordingly.

PREPARATION STANDARDS AND TRUST ECONOMICS

Consumer sentiment data reinforces the link between preparation quality and conversion.

Motors' latest Consumer Insight panel research showed 58% of buyers worry about purchasing unreliable vehicles.

That statistic places preparation standards at the centre of the used car value proposition.

Tugby says: "While speed is important, cutting corners risks undermining trust and long-term relationships."

Clear warranty information and transparent condition reporting increase buyer confidence and accelerate sales. In a data-transparent marketplace, reputational risk from poor preparation can quickly undermine margin.

RESPONSE TIME AND RESERVATIONS

Shaun Harris, commercial director at Codeweavers, believes digital conversion metrics for used cars are as critical as acquisition metrics.

High-quality imagery and video content have a clear impact on online conversion rates. He advises a minimum of 20 images plus a video, alongside accurate and detailed descriptions.

Beyond presentation, Harris highlights the effectiveness of vehicle reservation tools, which, in some cases, deliver conversion rates above 70%.

Affordability transparency is equally important. Providing integrated finance calculations and part exchange valuations on-site removes friction and supports faster decision-making.

Response time also remains one of the most overlooked metrics in the used car sales industry.

Harris says there is a clear uplift in success rates when enquiries are answered within two hours, ideally within the first hour. For multi-site groups, that requires process discipline and system integra-

tion. Customers must be able to engage through web, chat, phone, social media or in person with consistent communication across all channels.

BUILDING SCALABLE, REPEATABLE USED OPERATIONS

Harris says dealers building scalable, repeatable models prioritise seamless system alignment and eliminate duplicate data entry.

Consistency in vehicle presentation is critical. Clear, simple, technology-driven listings help customers navigate stock confidently.

He also notes growing customer demand for transparent and fixed pricing, which continues to gain traction over traditional negotiation models.

Harris says: "The most scalable used car operators trust in data-led decision-making, because, while data is rarely wrong, human instinct can be."

While increasing transparency has reduced the margin for instinct-based pricing, the best modern used car operators will be combining their market experience alongside data to set them apart.

CASE STUDY: DALES CENTRAL MOTORS

Dales Central Motors offers a practical illustration of how data-led stock management can materially improve performance.

The family-owned group operates seven franchises and a multi-brand van centre across two sites in Cornwall. It typically holds between 300 and 400 used vehicles at any time and estimates it sells one in every three or four used cars transacted in Cornwall.

Two years ago, Dales onboarded Indicata's used car pricing and insights platform. Since then, it has reduced stocking days from 51 to 40, a reduction of 11 days, equating to more than 20%.

Danny Fox, group sales manager, oversees the used car strategy across the group. His approach is explicit.

He says: "Our pricing matrix is focused on stock turn as we know that if we get that right that used car profitability will follow."

Twelve sales managers and business

managers have access to the platform.

Group stock is reviewed weekly, with an external monthly session involving Indicata's customer success manager to review the status of every used car in detail.

The discipline extends beyond headline pricing. The platform provides what Fox describes as an "umbrella view" of every car, including pricing, imagery and market position.

This enables brand specialists to fine-tune individual vehicles based on franchise knowledge, while retaining group-wide strategic oversight.

In a market often described as short of stock, Fox says the data has enabled the group to increase prices on certain high-demand, low-supply models with confidence, rather than resorting to discounting.

He adds: "With the current used market short of stock our weekly pricing review often encourages us to increase prices on

certain models rather than reduce them."

Dales uses data to balance local market conditions with national opportunity.

Indicata provides a national sweep of total market stock, allowing the group to gauge where a vehicle sits locally and nationally.

Around 10% of Dales' used sales are to buyers outside Cornwall, particularly higher-value Cupras where buyers will travel for a particular specification or colour.

Online stock visibility is therefore integral to its model. Vehicles are priced and prepared for digital retail as early as possible, often before physical arrival.

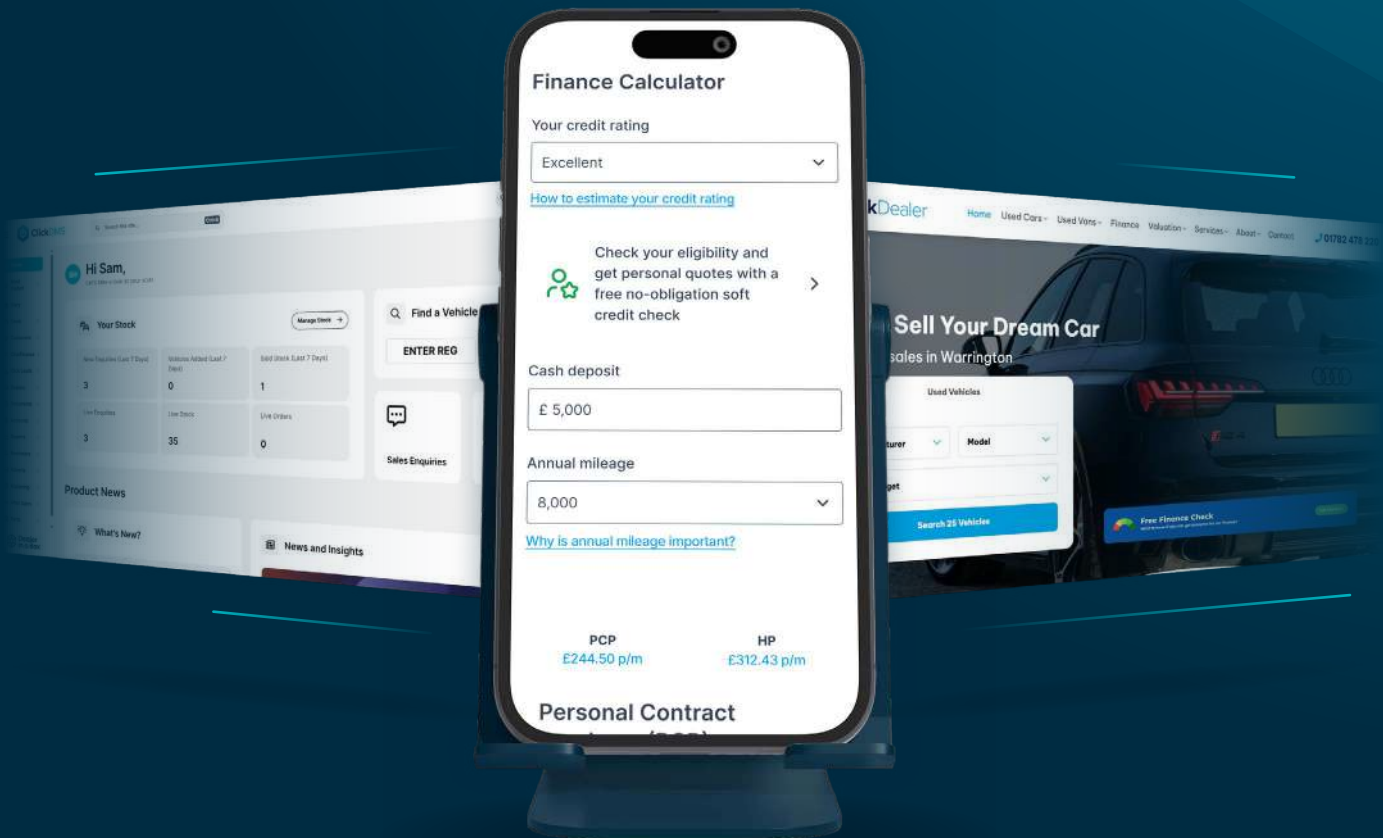
In peak registration months such as March and September, the team identifies part exchange stock from new car sales and prices it ready for online listing before the vehicle has even arrived on site.

This approach shortens time to market and reduces exposure to shifting valuations.





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CASE STUDY: ARNOLD CLARK

Arnold Clark has long been defined by the scale of its used car operation. With more than 180 franchised dealerships and specialist Motorstore sites across the UK, the group's DNA remains firmly rooted in used vehicles, even as new car dynamics reshape the wider market.

Chief executive Russell Borrie explains that Arnold Clark's focus and DNA has always been its used car business and that focus has made it one of the largest retailers of used cars in Europe, with annual volumes of 190,000-plus vehicles.

Borrie describes a market that has shifted rapidly from a "pull" environment to a "push" one, driven largely by more aggressive new car finance offers and increased competition.

Borrie said: "The market has been disrupted. You cannot talk about used cars without talking about new cars because they both affect one another."

The influx of new entrants, including Chinese brands, has intensified competition in the new car space, with subvented finance deals and sharper monthly payments. That, Borrie explains, has had a knock-on effect on cars less than 18 months old, which are now harder to shift when they sit alongside compelling new car offers.

Arnold Clark's long-standing model has been to "use finance to sell cars, not cars to sell finance". Selling at competitive APRs has helped drive volume, but Borrie acknowledges that when new car propositions become more aggressive, younger used stock faces headwinds.

USED EVs MOVE INTO THE MAINSTREAM

Where Arnold Clark sees clear momentum is in used electric vehicles. Two years ago, EV stock was viewed largely as a future opportunity. Today it is becoming core.

Borrie says: "It's probably nearer 15% of our used car sales and will get very quickly towards 20%."

That growth reflects the return of three-year-old cars from early adopters and salary sacrifice schemes.

The group prepared early by investing in its own charging network – Arnold Clark Charge – and acquiring home installation business Bumblebee, which it has used to support both new and used EV sales.

A subsidised home charger offer has provided confidence to push harder into used EV stock, particularly sub-£20,000 models which Borrie describes as "highly desirable when the right story is told".

Crucially, the strategy extends beyond infrastructure. Arnold Clark has deployed dedicated used EV trainers across the business to address what Borrie openly calls a knowledge gap among sales teams, particularly in supermarkets handling a wide range of electric models.



“USE THE DATA WISELY, BUT DO NOT LET IT RUN THE BUSINESS FOR YOU”

RUSSELL BORRIE, ARNOLD CLARK

He said: "You need to be fit to sell used EVs. From the technology to how you drive and charge the car, staff need the knowledge and confidence to sell the features and benefits properly."

On pricing, Borrie expects the sharpest used EV value corrections to moderate as early three year cycles work through the system.

More expensive EVs are likely to see continued pressure, while cars retailing between £30,000 and £45,000 should experience less volatility as retail demand grows.

DATA AS AN ENABLER, NOT THE DECISION-MAKER

With transparency high and customers able to compare prices instantly, data discipline is central. Borrie advocates a hybrid approach, blending market intelligence with Arnold Clark's own retail performance data.

He says: "Use the data wisely, but do not let it run the business for you."

He is critical of relying solely on trade valuation benchmarks without considering retail outcomes. The group analyses colours, specifications and sales velocity in granular detail, looking at every vehicle individually rather than in batches.

The principle applies at acquisition as much as retail pricing. Paying the right price to secure stock is as important as maximising the eventual margin.

INVESTMENT IN PREPARATION AND LOGISTICS

In a market where four year-plus cars remain in short supply following pandemic disruptions, preparation capability becomes a differentiator.

Arnold Clark does not advertise a used vehicle until it meets its internal retail standard. That means full mechanical and cosmetic preparation before it goes live.

Recent investment includes approximately £8 million in alloy wheel refurbishment and

smart repair facilities, supported by in-house trained technicians and a secondary parts operation. The aim is speed without compromise. Cars must flow through the system quickly, but never at the expense of retail readiness.

Logistics is another plus. With around 150 transporters, the group can move stock between sites and allow customers to buy from anywhere in the network and collect locally.

That underpins a single national stock pool across both franchised and Motorstore operations.

A SEAMLESS DIGITAL-TO-PHYSICAL JOURNEY

Borrie is clear that used car operational resilience increasingly depends on integration between digital and physical channels.

Customers can value part exchanges, build finance deals, add products and reserve vehicles online. Once they enter the showroom, that journey is picked up within the same system without duplication. Paperwork can be completed digitally at home or in branch, with data flowing into a single order process.

Borrie says: "I do not want duplication for customers, it has to be one journey."

The strategy extends into ownership, with customers retained within Arnold Clark's ecosystem through app-based accounts, service reminders and digital documentation.

Looking ahead, Borrie believes the most resilient used car retailers will combine several factors: disciplined retail pricing tools, strong finance propositions for younger stock, significant investment in aftersales and preparation capacity, and a clear long term EV strategy.

The market may now be more predictable, with known shortages in older cars and continued disruption in the zero-to-two-year bracket. But adaptability remains essential.

Connected dealerships: Turning digital investment into standout experiences

Sky Business and Scion Interactive are helping dealer groups use connected technology to transform showroom experiences and drive smarter innovation

The next evolution of automotive retail is not another digital tool. It is the reinvention of the dealership environment itself.

For years, investment has focused on online journeys, finance platforms and back-office systems. Yet the physical showroom remains the point where brand value is tested and purchase decisions are confirmed.

The connected dealership reframes that space as an intelligent, responsive environment where connectivity, content and data work together to shape how customers feel and how teams perform.

Across many UK dealer groups, infrastructure has evolved incrementally.

Acquisitions and legacy contracts have created variation between sites, limiting consistency and central oversight.

The connected dealership proposition is about moving beyond functional systems to a deliberately designed environment that creates standout customer experiences and supports smarter operational decisions.

Simon Carter, senior business development manager at Sky Business, believes that shift requires leadership teams to treat

connectivity as a strategic asset rather than a background service.

"A connected dealership is about creating a consistent, customer-first retail environment," he said. "It is not just about installing faster lines. It is about designing an experience that supports the brand and helps the business perform better."

Creating experiences customers remember

In practical terms, that experience is shaped by what customers see and how reliably it works.

In partnership with Scion Interactive, which has worked in automotive digital signage and in-store engagement for more than 20 years, Sky Business supports dealer groups in managing showroom and lounge content through a cloud-based platform.

Screens can display product films, electric vehicle explainers, finance messaging or local campaigns. Content can be segmented by zone, from the service reception to the new car display area, and updated centrally across multiple sites.

"It is about telling the brand story and

IT IS ABOUT TELLING THE BRAND STORY AND PROVIDING PRODUCT EDUCATION, NOT JUST PUTTING SCREENS ON WALLS

**SIMON CARTER,
SKY BUSINESS SENIOR BUSINESS
DEVELOPMENT MANAGER**

providing product education, not just putting screens on walls," Carter said.

Sky Stream can also be integrated into customer areas, adding live TV, sport and entertainment in waiting spaces. For retailers, the objective is to increase dwell time in a way that feels aligned with the brand rather than incidental.

Finance approvals, vehicle configuration tools, digital test-drive documentation and CRM updates all rely on stable, high-speed connectivity. Managed WiFi must support both staff devices and guest access without creating bottlenecks.

When networks underperform, delays are often attributed to software rather than infrastructure. Slow log-ins, stalled finance proposals or buffering video content can undermine the professionalism of the environment.

For multi-site groups, consistency is equally important. A premium franchise cannot afford one location delivering a seamless digital experience while another struggles with patchy connectivity or outdated content.

Helping dealerships grow through smarter innovation

Beyond the visible showroom layer, connected platforms generate operational data.

Scion Interactive's system enables head





offices to update content in real time, monitor screen status and track engagement across an estate. Footfall patterns and customer interactions can be analysed to understand which messages attract attention and which are ignored.

This creates a feedback loop that goes beyond aesthetics. Retailers can test campaign messaging, adjust placement and measure response. Over time, that insight can inform broader marketing and aftersales strategy.

"We want to understand the outcome first," Carter said. "What are you trying to achieve across the estate? Once that is clear, we can design something that supports that."

However, implementation is not without complexity. Consolidating connectivity contracts, rationalising legacy hardware and aligning stakeholders across IT, marketing and operations requires coordination. There are also cost considerations when balancing resilience, bandwidth and backup solutions.

"You can design something that virtually never goes down, but there is a cost to that," Carter said. "It is about finding the right balance and getting it right first time."

Sky Business offers options ranging from full-fibre connectivity to 4G backup, enabling groups to assess risk tolerance against operational criticality. Dealer groups handling sensitive financial data must also consider network security and



segmentation as part of any redesign.

"Connectivity and security need to be taken seriously," Carter said. "It is about building resilience into the network and having the right support structure around it."

From infrastructure to experience strategy

The wider shift is that digital investment is moving from back-office efficiency to front-of-house differentiation.

Retailers are no longer asking only whether systems function. They are assessing whether their physical environments reflect brand positioning, support informed decision-making and generate measurable insight.

A coordinated approach to connectivity

and content governance can simplify estate management. Instead of disparate suppliers and inconsistent standards, groups can align digital infrastructure with customer journey design and performance reporting.

For large dealer groups, that alignment also supports OEM compliance. National campaigns and product messaging can be deployed consistently, reducing the risk of outdated or misaligned content at franchise level.

As margins tighten and competition intensifies, the showroom experience remains one of the few controllable differentiators. Digital screens, reliable networks and data insight on their own do not create advantage. However, when they're integrated thoughtfully, they can reinforce brand confidence, improve operational visibility and support smarter decisions.

The connected dealership is therefore less about technology as an end point and more about how infrastructure, content and data combine to shape customer perception.

Across the UK market, groups that treat connectivity as a strategic layer rather than a utility are likely to be better placed to deliver consistent experiences at scale and adapt as retail expectations continue to evolve.



To find out more visit: skybusiness.com/skybusiness-scioninteractive

Your one-stop shop for cosmetic repairs

Car dealers and customers can now get the full package when it comes to cosmetic and alloy wheel repairs.

Car Care Plan's Dent Wizard Ventures (DWV) has a team of 90 permanent mobile technicians who carry out repairs and refurbishment on vehicles across the UK, whether at the dealership, auction house, lease return depot, or at a customer's home or workplace.

That unique in-house capability, with the largest fully employed nationwide mobile SMART repair network, enables DWV to deliver a consistently high level of service with full control of the process, without having to rely on third-party repairers.

From a dealer perspective, the service prepares vehicles that have cosmetic damage on-site for sale, whether it be dent removals and repairs, alloy wheel refurbishment and repairs, or bodywork paint repairs and scuff/chip restoration.

Customers who make a claim that is approved by Car Care Plan will have their vehicle repaired by DWV at their convenience, both driving operational efficiency,



“WE ENABLE THE DEALER TO DO WHAT THEY DO BEST, AND THAT’S TO SELL CARS”

ANDREW RADI, CCO CAR CARE PLAN AND MD, DWV

and enabling a quick and transparent service, without the need to have repairs carried out at a traditional bodyshop.

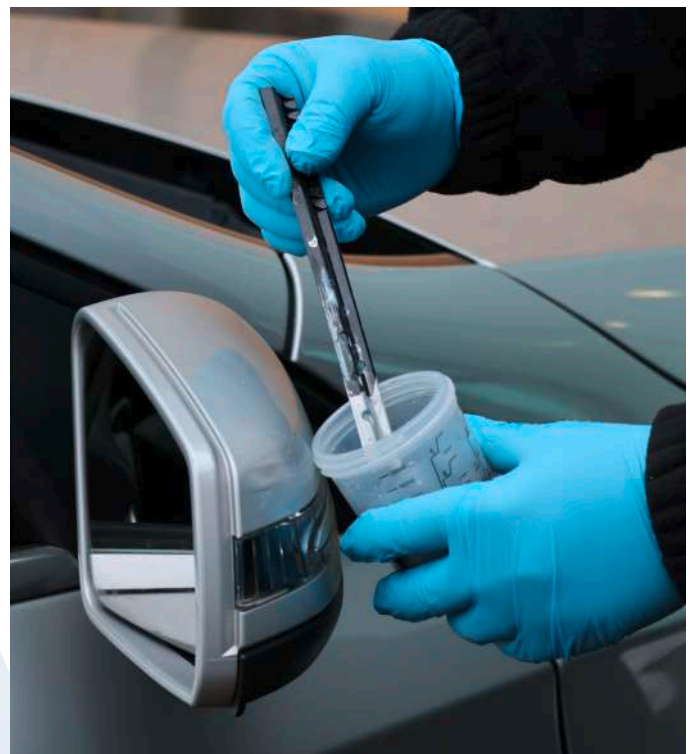
“When a dealer receives new stock it often needs washing, valeting or touching up to repair any dents, chips, scratches or scrapes,” said Andrew Radi, chief commercial officer of Car Care Plan and managing director of DWV.

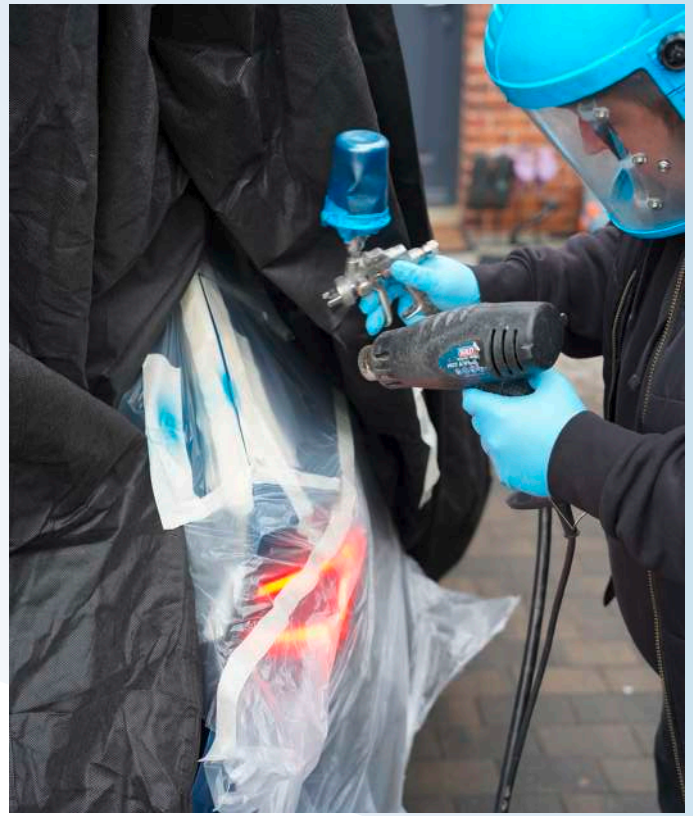
“We enable the dealer to do what they do best, and that’s to sell cars, as we have the

skillset to do all of these required jobs quickly and effectively.”

As a trusted provider, DWV works with a range of dealerships, from single to multiple sites. With its dedicated team of repairers on hand, it manages the paint booths and ensures that the customer’s vehicle receives the best possible repair service.

Owning the repair network ensures a consistent level of service and quality, as well as faster fulfilment for insurance and





warranty claims. The fact that it's mobile, reaching all corners of the country, also makes it convenient for the customer and reduces any friction, with an average repair turnaround time of 22 days.

"What makes us special is the fact that all of our people are fully employed by DWV," said Radi. "They are all incentivised in the same way, enabling us to set the culture and the consistent high standard that they work to, as well as having directors with a direct interest in DWV who meet on a monthly basis to review the company's performance, ensuring our employees are all following our designated HR, procurement and legal policies, and regional managers who support them in the field."

High volume, automated repair bookings

Due to its scale, DWV is also able to process high volume, automated repair bookings. Its market-leading online self-service platform enables customers to easily manage their repairs using a mobile, tablet or PC at any time of the day.

"The beauty of it is that the customer owns the whole process," said Radi. "They can take and upload photos of the damage and submit their claim. Once that has been approved, we will offer them an initial time to book in for the repairs, and if they can make that they can choose a time and location that suits them."

Another key benefit of DWV is its simplified fixed pricing structure, which ensures transparency of all its repair operations. As

the pricing is consistent across all sites, it also makes sure that everyone is receiving the same price for the same work.

"We have made sure that the pricing structure is fully transparent and as easy to use and understand as possible for the customer," said Radi. "That was we ensure that there's no ambiguity as to exactly what they are covered for."

Because of the link between Car Care Plan and DWV, the company can track all of the data that is shared to have full visibility of every single detail of the repair process from when the technician was first called out to the job and how long the job took for the work to be carried out. From that, they can determine the technicians' key performance indicators and move swiftly to resolve any customer complaints.

Comprehensive monthly reporting

By providing comprehensive monthly reporting on repairs completed by a multitude of metrics, including by site, by technician, by job, by number of cars repaired, and even by policy, this information enables the dealer to fully understand their repair costs across the group and in much more granular detail. That allows them to make much better informed decisions and respond accordingly.

"At Car Care Plan, we manage the entire process from end to end," said Radi. "We can help the dealer to sell the insurance product, handle the claim and carry out the repairs."

Car Care Plan is one of Europe's leading aftersales protection products providers, specialising in vehicle warranties and add-on insurance solutions for the automotive industry.

It works with manufacturers, franchised and independent dealerships, and other industry partners to deliver products that protect vehicle owners financially and help dealers increase customer satisfaction, loyalty and retention.

DWV has more than 30 years' sector experience and is regarded as a leading provider of mobile cosmetic and alloy repair solutions in the UK market. The company was acquired by Car Care Plan several years ago and is Car Care Plan's in-house mobile repair capability.

DWV was brought into the Car Care Plan Group to give Car Care Plan direct control over the customer repair experience for its cosmetic and alloy wheel insurance products. The acquisition enables Car Care Plan to deliver a seamless end-to-end service, improving quality control, customer satisfaction and operational efficiency.



Car Care Plan

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To find out more about Car Care Plan, simply visit carcareplan.com today

10 ESSENTIAL STEPS TO EFFECTIVE DIGITAL MARKETING



A practical checklist for dealership marketing teams to reach and convert in-market buyers consistently and with maximum effect.

Aimée Turner reports

Dealership marketing has always been judged on outcomes, but in 2026 the gap between activity and results is being exposed faster than ever.

Buyers move fluidly between search, marketplaces, social platforms and dealer sites, and expect speed, relevance and reassurance at every step. Meanwhile, retail teams are stretched, privacy controls are tightening and the cost of wasted leads is rising.

Contributors to this feature are Vicky Hart, marketing director, Waylands; Neil Smith, former Imperial Cars operations director and chief executive of consultancy Motorvait; Monique Limerick, future retail implementation manager, Vines Group; James Leese, managing director at Impel and Jeremy Evans, director, marketing services at Marketing Delivery.

What emerges from their insights is that they are all aligned on one core idea: effective digital marketing is not a set of disconnected campaigns. It is an operating system. It starts with the foundations, it measures what matters and it closes the loop between marketing and sales so that demand does not leak away.

Essentially, they believe marketing performance rises when teams can see the full journey, remove friction, respond fast and well, and measure outcomes rather than activity.

What follows is a 10-step checklist dealerships can run as a discipline, not a one-off project. The steps are distinct, but they reinforce each other. If a dealership gets them right, performance will become easier to repeat.

1

GET TO KNOW YOUR NUMBERS PROPERLY

The first essential step is also the simplest: stop guessing. Many dealerships know the output, but cannot clearly see the input, and that makes budget conversations harder than they need to be.

As Neil Smith at Motorvait says: "Most dealers can tell you exactly how many cars they sold last month. But ask how many leads their digital marketing actually generated – and how those leads break down by channel – and the picture often gets a bit fuzzy."

He adds: "Those numbers really matter. If you don't have a clear view of performance across your whole business and by individual marketing channels, it's incredibly hard to get the best return on your investment. How can you decide where to spend your budget if you don't know what's truly working?"

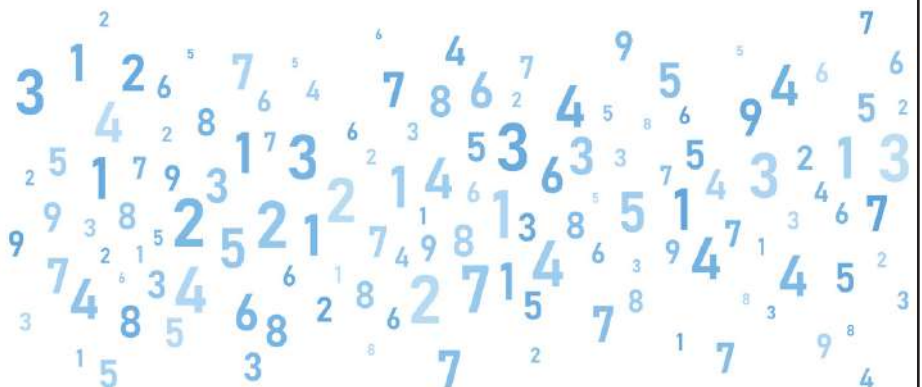
The practical point here is not to drown the team in dashboards. It is to establish a small set of

commercial metrics that make decisions obvious.

Smith highlights the two most useful anchors for channel performance: "A key metric here is CPL (cost per lead). Understanding how much each channel costs to produce a lead gives you a solid foundation for smarter decisions."

Crucially, he says, you need to understand your full journey from marketing to sale – looking at conversion and attribution. Which channels actually produce buyers, not just enquiries? That's where CAC (customer acquisition cost) comes in: how much marketing spend does it really take to sell a car through each channel?

When that discipline is in place, the upside is immediate: "By shifting spend to the channels that deliver the best CPL, the strongest conversion rates and the most efficient CAC, you'll sell more vehicles, turn stock faster and improve profitability."



2

BUILD AND MAINTAIN A CLEAN DATA SET

If step one is knowing your numbers, step two is ensuring the inputs to those numbers are reliable. Data quality is not glamorous, but it underpins everything else in modern dealer marketing, especially lifecycle campaigns, automation and measurement.

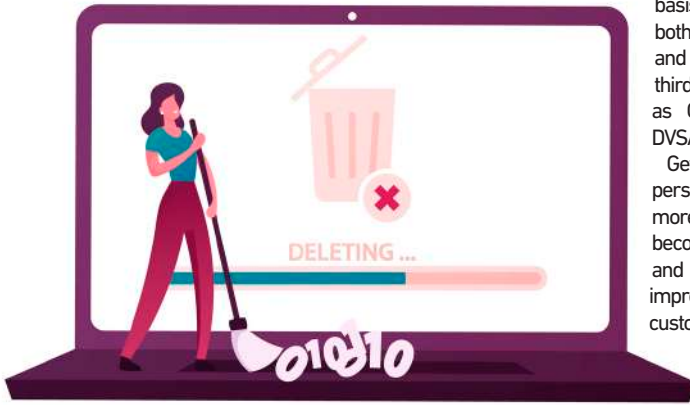
Jeremy Evans at Marketing Delivery puts it plainly: "Retailers looking to improve the effectiveness of their digital marketing must build and then maintain a clean data set."

He explains what becomes possible once data is cleansed to address inaccuracies. Retailers can overlay customer and vehicle data from back office systems to build algorithms and generate personalised, automated contact plans for sales and aftersales.

Evans is equally clear that cleansing is not a one-time fix. It is a continuous process that needs ownership and, increasingly, automation. He says: "Crucially, the accuracy of any data must be

maintained on an ongoing basis via regular checks both with the customer and with automated third-party sources, such as OEM data and the DVSA."

Get that right and personalisation becomes more precise, contact becomes more timely, and marketing ROI improves throughout the customer lifecycle.



4

REVIEW THE CUSTOMER JOURNEY FROM DISCOVERY TO CONVERSION

Visibility creates opportunity, but conversion depends on the journey that follows. The next essential step is to audit how customers actually move through your digital experience and remove friction at every stage, especially on mobile channels.

Waylands' marketing chief Vicky Hart frames the challenge through customer expectation and self-serve norms set by other sectors.

"With customer expectations increasing, and with so much self-serve functionality across other retail industries, it is important to offer customers the most seamless online experience possible."

She is clear that dealership journeys need to support real buying behaviour, not just browsing.

"With everything from online test drive and service booking, through to side-by-side vehicle comparison, finance application and even initiating online purchase – data suggests that most customers still want some physical interaction with the vehicle before outright purchase – it is important to prioritise building a journey that puts the customer in control."

Hart's point is that journey design is commercial. It affects lead rate, lead quality and footfall, because a smoother journey builds trust and reduces drop-off before the first conversation.

The discipline is to review the journey end-to-end, not page-by-page.

When a customer can quickly understand the vehicle, validate affordability, check availability and take a next step without friction, marketing spend becomes more productive across every channel.



3

MAKE ONLINE VISIBILITY FOUNDATIONAL

Dealers can only convert the customers who can actually find them. In 2026, visibility is not limited to search results.

It is the sum of your presence, your credibility and the consistency of information across the web, from local listings and reviews through to marketplaces and content.

Monique Limerick at Vines Group is direct: "Online visibility is no longer optional, it's foundational. Today's in-market car buyers are researching across search engines, marketplaces, social platforms, and increasingly, AI tools such as ChatGPT.

She believes that if a retailer isn't clearly visible, consistently referenced, and credibly positioned across the web, they simply won't make the shortlist. Her channel priorities are broad, but practical.

"Priority channels should include Google Business Profiles, Autotrader and other marketplaces, local news and community coverage, YouTube, and educational blogs that genuinely support the buyer journey."

Visibility is not only about being seen. It is also about being trusted. Limerick notes that buyers are changing how they shortlist, and that the industry is still learning how AI-assisted discovery will shape behaviour:

"While there is still much to learn about how best to work alongside AI-driven research tools, one thing is clear: this shift is already influencing buyer behaviour. Building for visibility now must be baked into digital marketing strategies immediately, especially for local search, if retailers want to remain relevant and consistently in demand."

5

ENFORCE FOLLOW-UP DISCIPLINE AS A COMMERCIAL NON-NEGOTIABLE

Even strong visibility and a great website cannot rescue weak lead handling. If leads are slow to receive a first response, if answers are incomplete, or if follow-up stops too early, a large share of marketing investment never has a chance to become revenue.

Waylands' Hart calls this out as the most important "unsexy" truth in dealer marketing.

"While not the most exciting area, it is arguably the most critical, as even the best digital marketing execution fails if it is not supported by an efficient, personalised and considered follow-up. For me, robust enquiry response disciplines are a commercial non-negotiable."

She is explicit about what good looks like: "Ensure that response time SLAs are in place

and being adhered to, and make sure that responses are within minutes, not hours." She also stresses consistency and transparency.

"Standardise customer follow-up journeys, making sure you have consistency where possible and track leads beyond simply volume and through to appointments, test drives and sales, rather than just measuring form fills or phone calls."

Some of these elements of boosting retail performance, she agrees, will require a wider review of dealer training and incentive alignment.

Even so, reporting transparency is where many groups find their quickest win, because it often requires process tightening rather than extra budget.

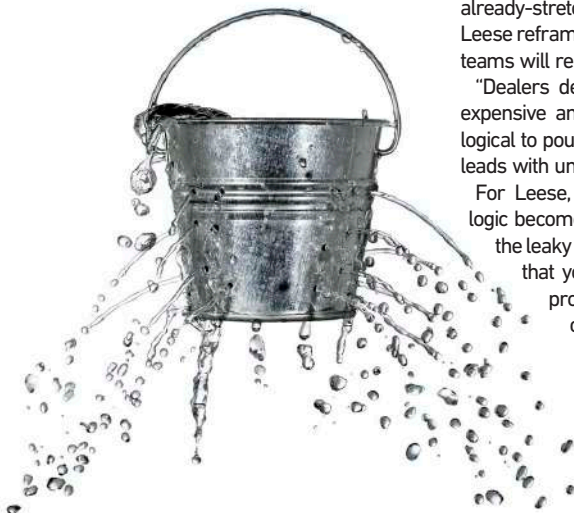
6

PLUG THE LEAKY BUCKET BEFORE YOU BUY MORE LEADS

A lot of marketing conversations start with demand generation and end with "we need more volume".

James Leese at Impel argues that this is the wrong order for many dealers, because the real issue is not always lead supply. It is lead waste.

He explains it thus – a lot of dealer marketing advice is geared around lead generation. That matters, but it's only half the story.



Most dealerships, he believes, are overlooking the diamonds under their feet by not working every lead hard enough, for long enough.

"It's not because teams don't care. Volumes are high, time and target pressure are real, so leads get cherry-picked and the long tail gets dropped."

So, the question becomes: how do you raise the standard of lead handling without asking already-stretched teams to do even more? Leese reframes the question in a way marketing teams will recognise immediately.

"Dealers default to 'get more leads', but it's expensive and not fully controllable. And is it logical to pour more in when you've already got leads with unclear or unfulfilled potential?"

For Leese, this is where his "leaky bucket" logic becomes a practical checklist step: "Plug the leaky bucket first. Get something in place that you trust will look after every lead properly. Then you can spend more confidently, because you know extra volume won't just disappear into the cracks."

The implication is simple. Fix response, persistence and conversion discipline first, then increase lead volume.

7

USE THE RIGHT TOOLS, AND USE THEM PROPERLY

The best follow-up standards in the world are hard to maintain if lead capture is incomplete and reporting is unreliable.

This is where process and tooling converge. Smith's view is that visibility is the prerequisite for improvement and the right systems provide that visibility when they are adopted consistently.

He explains: "Getting a true 360-degree view of performance isn't always straight-forward. One of the biggest issues in dealerships is simply a lack of visibility."

Modern SaaS-based CRM systems, he says, can automatically capture leads from multiple marketing channels, as well as inbound calls, giving a much more accurate picture of opportunities.

"They also help manage customer communication, so you can clearly see what's happening day-to-day in both marketing and sales."

Tools do not automatically stop the leakage. They make it visible, and that visibility is what allows leaders to enforce standards and fix root causes. "These systems are only as good as the way they're used. If processes aren't followed consistently, the data quickly loses value," he adds.

"When we look closely at dealer activity, it's common to find up to 25% of inbound leads going untouched across different channels. That's a quarter of your marketing spend potentially wasted."



AVILOO's battery certificate: A new benchmark for battery transparency

The shift toward electric mobility continues at full speed, and with it the demand for reliable used electric vehicles (EVs). Yet one concern still overshadows many purchases: the true condition of the battery. AVILOO addresses this challenge with intelligent, independent battery diagnostics – turning uncertainty into a decisive selling point. At its core is the AVILOO CERTIFIED battery certificate.

As more used EVs and plug-in hybrid electric vehicles (PHEVs) enter the market, buyers demand clearer insights into battery health – the key factor determining long-term performance and resale value. AVILOO meets this need with an advanced diagnostic solution that goes beyond standard BMS readouts. The AVILOO FLASH Test detects irregularities down to cell level, providing a reliable, verifiable result in just three minutes. If no issues are found, the vehicle earns the AVILOO CERTIFIED seal – instantly signalling quality to buyers and giving sellers a strong competitive advantage.

Independent, objective, and AI-driven

What truly sets AVILOO apart is its independence. Instead of relying on values reported by the vehicle itself, AVILOO calculates the battery's state of health (SoH) autonomously using AI-trained adaptive models. This guarantees an objective, tamper-proof, and consistent evaluation – something that conventional methods simply cannot match.

To further strengthen decision-making, AVILOO provides customers with benchmark comparisons, showing how a vehicle's battery performs relative to similar models. With coverage of more than 96% of all common EVs and PHEVs, AVILOO currently offers the broadest diagnostic compatibility on the market.



Proven market impact backed by data

The value of AVILOO's certification is not theoretical – it's measurable. Findings from the international AVILOO Remarketing Study (2024) show that buyers are willing to pay £500-to-£1,000 more for a used EV when an independently-certified battery report is included.

The study also revealed that more than half of potential buyers who previously preferred new vehicles would consider a used EV if a certificate were available. This increases the potential buyer base from 61% to about 83%.

The benefits extend to sellers and dealerships as well: certified vehicles have a 36% higher likelihood of being sold, and 81% of customers report greater trust in dealers offering certified battery reports.

Success stories from leading market players

AVILOO's impact is already visible with major partners.

- Manheim Express Europe recorded a

29.3% increase in bids per vehicle, a 22.4% rise in active bidders, and a 33.4% increase in sales conversions within nine months of implementing AVILOO diagnostics.

- BCA reported up to 50% higher click-through rates for listings featuring AVILOO certificates.
- A mobile.de survey showed that more than 60% of respondents would feel more confident purchasing a used EV if a certified battery report were available.

New level of confidence in the EV market

As AVILOO CEO Marcus Berger explains, uncertainty about battery health remains the biggest barrier in the used EV market.

AVILOO's test solutions eliminate this uncertainty – providing clarity for buyers, profitability for sellers, and trust for the entire industry. AVILOO's independent battery certificate delivers the assurance the market has long been waiting for.

For more information please contact
aviloopartner.motorcheck.org/online

8

AUTOMATE CAMPAIGNS TO KEEP ENQUIRIES FLOWING

Once data is clean and lead handling is disciplined, automation becomes a powerful consistency engine.

The goal is not to bombard customers. The goal is to use timely, relevant contact to re-engage current and lapsed customers and to create a predictable flow of opportunity for sales and aftersales.

Evans at Marketing Delivery describes the role of automation in simple operational terms: "Automating recurring campaigns is a simple way for retailers to maintain a regular flow of enquiries."

Finance renewal and retention outreach can be an ideal reason for contact that can provide

a conduit back into the sales funnel and a benefit of automating this process is that it reduces the strain on sales teams and delivers pre-warmed leads ready to convert.

"Across the last quarter of 2025, automated end-of-term finance emails achieved a 62% open rate across Marketing Delivery clients, alongside more than 650 conversions, indicating that when delivered in a timely manner, these emails are very effective for re-engaging with current and lapsed customers, driving long-term customer retention."

So, critically, automation is not only about scale, it is about timing and relevance, which is why the data foundation matters so much.



9

REACH CUSTOMERS DIRECTLY, THEN CONNECT SPEND TO TRUE ROI

Social is increasingly central to reaching in-market customers directly, reinforcing offers, and reintroducing stock or messages at the right moment. But social only becomes a "must-do" step when measurement is tied to outcomes, not just engagement.

Evans frames the need to meet customers where they are: "Retailers need to utilise all available avenues to interact with customers when and where they are researching their next car – and potentially also prompting the start of this research phase through messaging about available stock or latest offers."

"These messages can be refined to target a

customer's current phase in the car buying journey or ownership cycle, reintroducing vehicles they have previously viewed on the dealer's website or presenting available stock or latest offers to those customers nearing the end of their current finance agreement."

Evans says specialist offline conversion tools can help match enquiry and sales data to add views, giving a clearer view of ROI on digital spend.

He shares benchmarks from his client base: an average cost-per-visit to a vehicle detail page of just £0.18, achieved a 499% return on investment from social media advertising during the second half of 2025.

10

COMBINE HIGH-QUALITY RESPONSES WITH A 360-DEGREE VIEW

The final step is about joining the system together. Visibility, website experience, measurement, automation and lead handling are all limited if customer communication is slow, generic or disconnected from the customer's real context.

Here, Limerick at Vines ties together two essentials: speed and quality of response, and the CRM discipline that makes personalisation possible.

She argues: "Consumers increasingly expect immediate answers, yet a rapid response alone won't win loyalty if it lacks relevance or quality. Gone are the days when generic autoresponders are enough."

Automation technology should improve the experience, not flatten it: "Retailers that deliver responses that feel human, informed and genuinely helpful will elevate the customer experience, build trust and turn enquiries into conversions."

That only works if the data layer is strong enough to support it, and Limerick returns to this repeatedly.

She says: "A true 360-degree customer view allows retailers to understand the full context of every interaction and unlock the full potential of automation and AI-driven tools."

She also issues a warning that mirrors Evans's "clean data set" foundation: "Without disciplined data management – regular cleansing, deduplication and alignment across platforms – digital initiatives risk amplifying mistakes rather than improving communication."

She closes the loop by steering teams away from vanity reporting, adding: "Relying solely on higher-funnel metrics such as open rates, click-through rates, or other engagement measures to gauge lead quality and justify marketing investment."

"Marketing teams should focus on true conversion outcomes such as vehicles sold or aftersales invoices generated."

Leese distils the priority in a way that sits neatly above every step in this list: "The aim isn't more leads. It's fewer wasted leads, a stronger first impression, and a better use of the team you already have."



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CERAFUSE ULTRA



A TWO-TIER CERAMIC OFFERING FROM AUTOGLYM LIFESHINE

Growing your paint protection business

As customers expect and demand even more from their next car, the need to keep the vehicle protected and looking its best has never been greater.

It also provides motor retailers with a golden opportunity to upsell a product that can deliver significant margin for them.

That's where Autoglym LifeShine comes in – helping car dealerships to grow their paint protection businesses rather than simply supplying them with product, enabling them to improve both their processes and training, as well as to capitalise on upselling opportunities.

Part of Autoglym, a trusted British brand with more than 60 years' heritage in vehicle

care, LifeShine specialises in professionally applied vehicle protection and aftercare solutions for automotive retailers.

The brand, which has the largest market share in car care solutions, supports dealers with a range of innovative products, training and business tools needed to enhance vehicle presentation and maximise profitability.

"The product is designed to give the customer that added level of protection for their vehicle they are looking for," said Anna Houldsworth, global head of paint protection at Autoglym. "It's a really solid and multi-faceted proposition with a well-known and established brand behind it that gives customers full confidence and is

an easy sell for dealers. It's also safe and easy to use.

"Our true USP, though, is our people and our brand. Customers know our name and will always seek us out when they are looking for a trusted car care protection product."

Autoglym LifeShine works with a host of different car dealerships, from single-site operators to large groups, and Houldsworth noted that each has their own priority. Some, she said, focus on growing margin, while others are more concerned with improving customer satisfaction or driving operational efficiency.

"No one dealer is the same – they all have completely different needs," said Houldsworth. "But the one constant is that customer experience is at the heart of everything they do and we are here every step of the way to help support them with that."

As a trusted partner, Autoglym LifeShine can deliver on almost any dealer need. Typically, Houldsworth said its team will go into a dealership to meet with the leadership team and talk through their challenges, going through everything from their campaigns and communications to their technology, and, based on that, come up with a solution.

That can involve a range of different actions, said Houldsworth. She said that can range from putting in place a successful customer engagement strategy and improving the car-buying journey both on and offline to driving team engagement and equipping them with the best tools to sell the product.

"We need to identify what has gone wrong, whether that's a process that isn't





working properly or pricing is out of sync and then unpack that," said Houldsworth. "Or it may be that the dealer has undertaken an acquisition and has had to merge all of its people, systems and strategies, so we can help with integrating our solution while letting them get on with focusing on their core business.

"We have done everything from writing the enquiry management processes for dealer groups to doing the aftersales programmes for vehicle manufacturers that drive engagement with the network and volume, and even five-year growth plans."

Rewriting the customer journey

Houldsworth cited the example of a dealer for whom Autoglym LifeShine rewrote the entire customer journey. Working with a warranty solution provider, it looked at the company's sales process from start to finish and quickly realised that it offered an overwhelming eight different products to the customer and didn't feature anything about them on its website.

So, first the dealer agreed to streamline their offering down to the essential value-added products, including a cosmetic, tyre, alloy and paint product, all for one set price.

Then it gave its team information and a video about Autoglym LifeShine in order to better sell the product and added adverts for it on its website which are introduced to the customer early in the buying journey,

“CUSTOMERS KNOW OUR NAME AND WILL ALWAYS SEEK US OUT WHEN THEY ARE LOOKING FOR A TRUSTED CAR CARE PROTECTION PRODUCT

ANNA HOULDSWORTH, GLOBAL HEAD OF PAINT PROTECTION AT AUTOGLYM

as well as on its email footers. The new offering was rolled out in a roadshow for employees and launched at the end of last year. Already, sales and feedback have been hugely positive.

Autoglym LifeShine's focus is on putting the customer first allied with its deep knowledge and expertise of all aspects of the business, including compliance, finance and insurance, the sales process and enquiry management.

Its agile approach also enables it to deliver on a solution that is bespoke to the dealer and their customer base, Houldsworth said.

"It's all about making the customer experience as seamless as possible, reducing the sales process and making it

easy for the customer to buy, and really giving them that wow moment when you hand over the keys," said Houldsworth.

"A direct result of that is high customer satisfaction scores and retention for the dealer, so it's a win:win all round."

The company moved into ceramic vehicle protection three years ago and in September 2025 it launched CeraFuse ULTRA – an advanced professional-grade ceramic vehicle protection system designed for high-value new and used cars, offering superior, long-lasting protection for paint, glass and upholstery.

Autoglym also supplies its retail product to Halfords, Amazon, Costco and eBay, to name a few, accounting for a 32% market share – suggesting the LifeShine aftercare collection includes products of real value, that consumers are already purchasing.

"Today, the customer is more savvy than they have ever been, having done their research beforehand, they are coming into the dealership knowing exactly what they want," said Houldsworth.

"We are there to help support the dealer to really grow their car paint protection offering and, subsequently, their business."



To find out more about becoming an Autoglym partner [click here](#)

How to strengthen your customer retention

Aimée Turner investigates what it takes for dealer groups to keep customers loyal in a market reshaped by disruptive new brands and fast-moving technology

Customer retention gets talked about in the motor trade with a comforting simplicity: if you can keep more of the customers you already have, you protect profit, smooth volatility and build a base that will buy again.

The complication is that "retention" is rarely one thing. It is not just a workshop metric, not just a renewal campaign and not just a score on an OEM dashboard.

It is a chain of experiences, handovers and expectations, tested repeatedly by new entrants, alternative service providers and customers whose definition of convenience is constantly resetting.

We spoke to Chris Wiseman, founder of Wiseman Automotive Insights and former managing director at dealer group Wessex Garages; Katherine McLoughlin, aftersales director at LSH Auto; Neil Addley, managing director of JudgeService and Fraser Bryce, managing director at Dicksons of Inverness.

Across four interviews, one message lands again and again: retention is not a single tactic. It is a discipline. It starts with how the business is organised, how teams communicate, and how consistently the dealership delivers on the promises it makes.

NO UNIVERSAL RULE, MEASURE WHAT MATTERS

For industry veteran Wiseman, the first step is to stop pretending the industry can agree one universal



“WE PLACE COMPLETE TRUST IN OUR TEAM MEMBERS TO THINK FOR THEMSELVES AND DO THE RIGHT THING BY THE CUSTOMER”

FRASER BRYCE, DICKSONS OF INVERNESS

number that proves whether a retailer is doing a good job. Measurement, he says, should be specific to the business or group and used to determine a measure set of actions for improvement.

He says: "Every business will have a slightly different metric and timeframe and its own set of benchmarks. It changes by location, by franchise and by factors such as how long the business has been on the site or even practicalities like the size of the car park."

That argument is not a rejection of measurement. It is a demand for measurement that matches the real operating environment of each specific site and franchise.

Wiseman's view is that retention efforts become performative when they are designed to satisfy a generic target rather than fix what customers actually experience.

"It's important to look at retention as more than service retention. You should look at it through the sales journey, the service journey, and then at resale when you're selling the second and third car," he says.

Those improvements, in his telling, can be surprisingly mundane. "It could be something as basic as people not being able to park when they arrive. But for me, contact is paramount: how and when you contact customers," he says.

Retention, then, is won by operational competence that feels personal and by communication that keeps the relationship alive between transactions.

BREAK DOWN DEPARTMENT SILOS AS ONE BUSINESS

That same point, from a different angle, sits at the heart of Katherine McLoughlin's thinking.

As aftersales director at LSH Auto, she argues that one of the industry's biggest barriers to loyalty is organisational, not motivational.

"The reality is that one of the biggest barriers to keeping customers loyal is how we are structured internally," she says. "Most dealerships don't operate as one business. We operate as several. New car sales, used car sales, service and parts all sitting in their own lanes, each with their own targets and pressures."

The customer, of course, does not care. "Customers don't see departments. They see one roof," McLoughlin says. Yet too often, the voice they hear is a summary handoff.

"How often do we hear 'that's sales' or 'aftersales will be able to help with that,' or 'I'll just pop you through to another team'? No one is being unhelpful on purpose, but what the customer hears is, 'this isn't my problem.'"



McLoughlin's view is that retention is not owned by aftersales alone because loyalty is the result of every interaction.

She prescribes a deliberate shift away from seeing roles as narrowly functional.

"Last year I made a conscious effort to begin to change how I view our people's roles. Instead of seeing teams purely as sales, service or parts, we should be encouraging everyone to think like customer relationship managers," she says.

It is not a quick transformation. "I'm a realist and this isn't a project that will complete overnight, but a start was needed," she adds.

There is a common thread here with Wiseman's emphasis on contact. Both are arguing for ownership and continuity even when a query crosses internal boundaries.

McLoughlin frames it as mindset and empowerment. "That doesn't mean everyone has to know the answer to everything, but it does mean everyone takes responsibility for helping the customer get there," she says. "It's not about promising the

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impossible; it's about starting from a place of willingness rather than limitation."

MAKE LOYALTY EASY BY STARTING CLOSE TO HOME

If internal structure is one aspect of making loyalty easy, geography is another. Neil Addley, managing director of JudgeService, introduces research findings into the conversation and offers a deceptively simple proposition.

"If you want more loyal customers, start by selling cars closer to home," he says. That is not just a marketing preference. Addley says the numbers speak for themselves, showing how distance affects behaviour, especially around service plan take-up, which, in turn, makes loyalty more likely.

"Our research shows that it is much more likely that customers will take out a service plan if they are more local than distance sales," he says. "On average 51% of customers that have bought within five miles will take out a service plan. This falls a little to 47% when customers travel between 5-10 miles, and to 40% if they've travelled 10-25 miles."

The drop becomes more dramatic beyond that: 32% if they've travelled 25-50 miles and to only 25% if it's more than 50 miles.

In other words, retention is shaped by where the customer comes from and how realistic it is for them to return.

That localness is also why Addley points to an old trade saying: 'sales sell the first car; service sells the second'.

"In other words, the way the customer is treated in looking after their 'baby' has a massive impact on whether they would choose to buy from you again."

Brand loyalty is acknowledged to have weakened in recent years, pressured by price rises, model line-up changes and a plethora of new entrants.

In that context, he argues the differentiator is not a badge, but how well a retailer looks after customers and makes ongoing ownership straightforward.

For franchised groups that have leaned heavily into distance selling, this is an uncomfortable trade-off, but it is also a clue about where to concentrate

retention effort: local search, local targeting and the intelligent use of the existing customer base.

CULTURE, TRUST AND PROACTIVE COMMS COUNT

Where Addley talks about locality, Fraser Bryce, managing director at Dicksons of Inverness, talks about culture and trust.

In his view, retention starts with how people behave when no one is watching, and whether the business genuinely empowers teams to do the right thing.

"At Dicksons, we believe retention starts with culture. We place complete trust in our team members to think for themselves and do the right thing by the customer. Empowerment isn't a slogan, it's daily practice," he says.

He gives examples that are striking because they are simple and human.

Repeat customers have been allowed to proceed with essential work even when they have forgotten a wallet or handbag, on the basis they will settle the bill as soon as possible.



Data visibility crucial to unlocking growth in automotive retail

Customers expect speed, personalisation, and consistency. Dealerships rely on a growing ecosystem of digital tools to meet those expectations. For these systems to function cohesively, two capabilities are essential: **robust data visibility and functional, purpose-built CRM platforms.**

Yet despite industry consensus about data's importance, dealerships are not capturing the full value of the vast information they hold.

A critical yet underrated advantage

There is a universal agreement on the value of data. Survey respondents from our *Time to Shift Gears reports 2025*, overwhelmingly agree that customer data (99.6%) and vehicle data (98%) are essential to meeting their business goals. However, only 26% say they currently get excellent value from customer data and only 42% say the same about vehicle data. This highlights a significant issue - dealers have the data, but not the visibility or integration to truly leverage it.

Lack of data visibility is seriously costing dealerships, with 89% of our survey respondents agreeing they're losing revenue because of poor data availability. 86% say they lack a complete view of customer data across channels and systems, while 88% say the same for vehicle data. Dealers recognise that multiple, separate systems lead to missed opportunities, duplicated work, and inconsistent experiences.

Why functional CRMs are more essential than ever

Modern automotive CRMs do far more than track leads. They serve as a hub



unifying customer interactions, automating workflows, and bridging siloed systems. CRMs have the power to centralise and humanise the customer experience.

Purpose-built automotive CRMs provide complete records of vehicle history, service interactions, communications, buying preferences, lead sources and behaviours. Having this complete picture enables highly personalised, consistent engagement, crucial when customers expect near-instant, tailored communication. With data split across DMS, marketing tools, websites, and third-party systems, the right CRM can bring everything together into one coherent, actionable view. They support faster decision-making and accurate forecasting, while eliminating manual data stitching that's slowing teams down.

Fully integrated CRMs help dealerships:

- Respond to leads faster
- Maintain consistent follow-ups
- Identify warm opportunities
- Reduce missed sales
- Improve pipeline forecasting
- Build long-term customer relationships

When combined with complete data visibility, CRMs become the engines that translates information into revenue.

What are the true benefits to the dealer?

A dealership with visibility can:

- Gain complete, real-time views of every customer and vehicle – no more incomplete histories.
- Unlock insights to drive enquiries and conversions - smarter targeting, faster responses, better personalisation.
- Eliminate redundant systems and streamline operations - less logins, lower costs, easier processes.
- Create value - better decisions, better service, revenue increases.

CitNOW Auto360: The impact of integration proven

CitNOW's Auto360 demonstrates the measurable benefits of unified systems and complete data visibility:

- 20%+ increase in recovered lost customer engagement
 - 40% faster campaign creation
 - 30% reduction in call times
- CitNOW Auto360 shows what happens when dealerships achieve integrated, real-time data visibility. Not just a CRM - it's an engine for faster growth, efficiency, and better customer experiences.



Bryce says they always do. He also describes colleagues spending time having coffee with customers in the showroom lounge without fear that senior management will question productivity.

"Building relationships is not seen as a distraction from the job; it is the job," he says.

But Bryce is not arguing for a soft, unstructured approach. In fact, he insists empowerment works best when paired with standards that keep the experience consistent.

"Empowerment works best when it sits alongside clear expectations. We embed standards around response times, communication and ownership," he

says. "Every customer should know who their contact is and they should never have to chase us for information. Trust your team, but give them a framework to operate within."

That combination of warmth and discipline leads him to the same lever as Wiseman: communication.

Bryce takes a customer-led approach to how updates are delivered, asking customers how often they want to hear from the dealership and by what method. He explicitly links this to the new expectations shaped by well-known consumer brands.

"Businesses such as Uber, Amazon and Just Eat have reset expectations around transparency and real-time updates," he says. "Our industry can sometimes behave as though it's the customer's responsibility to stay in touch with the dealer. We take the opposite view: it's our responsibility to keep them informed."

There is a tactical simplicity to his recommendation that mirrors his cultural stance. He suggests a 24-hour follow-up call after service or repair, not as a sales attempt, but as a relationship builder and an early warning system for dissatisfaction.

The question is deliberately plain: "Is everything exactly as you expected?" Bryce says that single touchpoint turns a transaction into a relationship and gives the business a chance to resolve small concerns before they escalate.

FOSTER RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN TRANSACTIONS

If there is a single conclusion that spans these insights, it is that the industry's retention challenge is not solved by one tool, one department or one number.

It is solved by aligning the business around the customer's reality: a desire for straightforward interactions, clear ownership, proactive communi-

cation and human-centred service experiences that feel trustworthy rather than transactional.

Wiseman is wary of automation which, he suspects, strips out the essential human conversation customers still value.

"You can see it with automated booking systems where customers drop their keys in and walk out," he says.

"A lot of those are being switched off now because customers don't like them, much preferring 'while it's here, can you just...' moments where they can talk to someone and feel confident that they've been listened to."

McLoughlin, too, sees experience as the differentiator. "As products become more similar and customers have more choice than ever, experience is what will set retailers apart," she says.

Addley's emphasis on local marketing and database use also fits here. Technology, for him, is not a magic retention machine, but a way to concentrate effort where loyalty is most likely to form: close to the dealership.

Underneath all of this sits a shared warning about confusing effective retention with last-minute campaigns.

Bryce calls it out directly: "A common mistake in retention strategy is focusing too heavily on renewal points. Re-engaging customers only when their finance agreement is ending is often too late. Retention is built between transactions, not at the moment of replacement."

Wiseman echoes that idea in his insistence that the work is steady and incremental, grounded in the fundamentals of measurement, capability and consistency. "It starts with setting your baseline, then building a real, manageable, measurable action plan to move forward in small increments."



“IT'S NOT ABOUT PROMISING THE IMPOSSIBLE; IT'S ABOUT STARTING FROM A PLACE OF WILLINGNESS RATHER THAN LIMITATION

KATHERINE McLOUGHLIN, LSH AUTO

Cutting complexity in the modern dealership

Digital connectivity should enhance the car-buying journey and improve outcomes for dealers. Yet the reality for many retailers is that multiple systems fulfilling different tasks have become obstacles to efficiency, impacting car sales and value-added product performance.

With more than 20 years' operating in the automotive retail space, Evolution Funding Group is now the UK's largest used auto finance platform, incorporating Click Dealer, Motion Finance, Creditas and Automotive Compliance.

Disconnected systems, rising digital expectations and the need to introduce finance earlier in the buying journey have driven Evolution in a new direction.

The company has transformed from brokers to fintech developers with its latest product – Dealer in a Box – the industry's first all-in-one digital retail, finance and compliance solution.

With 69% of dealers reporting data re-entry as a key pain-point (source: OC&C Strategy Consultants), Dealer in a Box tackles this issue head on.

The need for reliable and easy-to-use digital tools is even more acute as dealers' 'doors' remain open online long after showroom closing time. However, the transition from online browsing to in-store purchase is rarely smooth, creating friction for both customers and dealers.

Dealer in a Box has been designed to meet out-of-hours 'shopping' demand while overcoming the disconnect between the physical and virtual dealership worlds. During 2025, Evolution processed more than 104,000 out-of-hours proposals.

Given that 30% of used cars compared with 85% of new cars are bought on finance (source: FLA), Dealer in a Box creates an opportunity to boost finance penetration in the used market. In 2025, Evolution undertook 3.3 million pre-eligibility checks, illustrating the demand.

"Dealer in a Box is one ecosystem where dealers can operate everything to run a dealership," explained Evolution Funding's senior customer success manager (north) Ryan Sanderson.

"It is the DMS, website, lead management, compliance and finance brokerage management in one system but if wholesale change is too big a mountain to climb, dealers can bolt on modules or 'plug and play' while still benefiting from single portal usage."

Single package at one price

A joined-up finance, compliance and digital retail solution, Dealer in a Box provides a single package at one price. It delivers a genuine omnichannel experience for customers and removes the need to log into multiple systems to progress a deal for retailers reducing data re-entry

“THE DIGITAL LANDSCAPE FOR DEALERS IS COMPLEX BECAUSE OF THE WAY THE ONLINE SPACE HAS DEVELOPED IN THE SECTOR. MY JOB IS TO SIMPLIFY IT”

RYAN SANDERSON, SENIOR CUSTOMER SUCCESS MANAGER (NORTH), EVOLUTION FUNDING

and duplicated processes. The first step is to understand a dealer's digital toolkit with a free, no-obligation 'digital health check'.

Sanderson said: "The digital landscape for dealers is complex because of the way the online space has developed in the sector. My job is to simplify it and turn the complicated, often disconnected, purchase process into a smooth, highly efficient customer journey. We know car sales are missed because of the lack of joined-up systems, and finance penetration and leads are reduced because dealers are not offering the right customer journey early on. Often customers will buy elsewhere, or more commonly, look for funding with third parties."

Dealer in a Box also integrates with Evolution's extensive panel of lenders providing dealers and car buyers with a wide range of finance options to meet the broad breadth of consumer requirements. Evolution has embedded its finance expertise and commitment to compliance in its system – in 2025 the company blocked 3,142 cases of attempted fraud, worth £74.4m, and undertook 1,911 enhanced due-diligence checks. The organisation was also recognised as the 'Best Broker' for the 10th consecutive year at the Car Finance Awards 2025.

In 2025, Evolution's platform supported more than 4,500 dealers, funded over 106,000 vehicles and enabled £3.7 billion in advances.

In the past eight months, the company has upgraded more than 300 dealers to Dealer in a Box and the team has been





galvanised by the response to their presence at AM Live at the end of last year.

Sanderson added: "We spoke to so many dealers who, invariably, repeated the same sentiment: too many systems overcomplicate the purchase process for car buyers as well as for dealers. In turn, it makes it difficult to run an efficient business which bridges online and in-store. Dealer in a Box solves this problem and we are continually expanding the platform with additional integrations and tools."

One dealer previously running an outdated Click website with a standalone competitor calculator reported finance penetration of 27.6%. Six months after implementing Dealer in a Box, brokerage penetration increased to 36.4%, with additional finance written via MotoNovo as first-string.

Another dealer, which had been generating no finance proposals through its website, increased finance penetration from 15% to 35% after introducing Dealer in a Box and enhancing its online finance journey.

A dealer with a Click website switched to

Evolution Funding brokerage options and together with optimisation of the Auto Trader finance relationship, finance penetration increased from 24% to 56% in six months.

"We're providing dealers with the right technology to transform the automotive finance experience for consumers which drives more car sales and profitability. While it's a complex process, we keep it simple for dealers because we do the heavy lifting," Sanderson said.

Tangible results

"The impact of these improvements is often immediate. There's nothing more nothing more rewarding than finding several digital optimisations across sites like Google, Auto Trader or a dealer's own website that will generate a couple more sales each month. Dealers are always grateful for those digital health checks and recommendations when they can see such tangible results."

Evolution's commitment to digital advancement is reflected in more than 74,250 development hours invested last

year, alongside an NPS score of 75, well above the industry average of 40 (AskNicely).

Following its success at AM Live, Evolution has doubled down on its digital health check strategy and is currently expanding its team of experts to undertake these dealer audits. The company is recruiting a team of six customer success managers who will operate nationwide supporting dealers on their digital transformation journey.

Sanderson said: "It's a really exciting time to join us as either an employee or a dealer. Our ambition is to simplify the multi-system dealership environment into a single portal with integrations and automated updates to marketing channels such as Auto Trader and CarGurus.

"As part of that, Dealer in a Box replaces fragmented systems with one integrated platform, giving dealers greater control across digital retail, finance and compliance. In a market where efficiency and margin matter more than ever, simplicity is proving to be a competitive advantage."

To arrange a digital health check or for a Dealer in a Box demo call 01246 458 800 or email marketing@evolutionfunding.com



F&I in 2026: trust, tech and tighter control

Putting the customer first will pay off when it comes to success with value add-ons, finance and insurance. **Tom Seymour** reports

Modern dealerships support their finance, insurance and value-added product offerings by designing a buying journey where choice feels safe, advice feels genuine and the business can evidence it did the right thing.

Customers are better informed than ever, regulation is raising the standard of proof and retailers are being asked to run more complex operations with the same or fewer people.

That means fewer disconnected systems, fewer products that create confusion and fewer gaps in oversight that only show up when a complaint lands.

Paul Bentley, former Lookers operations director and now an advisor to the National Franchised Dealer Association (NFDA) on motor finance, frames the commercial logic bluntly: customers buy more when they feel unpressured and informed.

In his view, F&I penetration does not fall because of compliance. It falls because of poor behaviour disguised as selling.

That view matters because it is contrary to a common assumption.



“ I ADVOCATE EDUCATION OVER PRESSURE, PLAIN LANGUAGE AND AVOIDING FEAR-BASED MESSAGING

PAUL BENTLEY, NFDA ADVISOR

Many dealerships still talk about Consumer Duty, the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) scrutiny of discretionary commission models and the broader motor finance redress risk as forces that will inevitably depress F&I performance.

Bentley argues the opposite: treating compliance as an enabler, and embedding it into a clear process, can lift performance because it increases trust, consistency and staff confidence.

The focus for automotive retail leaders this year on F&I is how to build it into a modern dealership model without creating regulatory exposure, staff fatigue or customer resistance.

REPLACING PRESSURE WITH PROCESS

Bentley's experience of designing and overseeing vehicle and F&I sales processes at Lookers leads him to one basic conclusion: process is the product.

He is clear that rigid, prescribed hand-offs create friction. If finance and value-added products are only introduced at a fixed point, the customer can experience a “take it or leave it moment”.

That is when defences go up, and when colleagues resort to scripts or persuasion rather than advice. His alternative is a flexible process where finance and add-on products are available for discussion at any point in the journey.

The nuance here is important. Flexibility does not mean making it up as you go along.

It means designing an approach where key information is consistently provided, but the timing respects where the customer is.

Bentley's “golden rules” on the finance offer are not exotic.

They are the basics executed reliably: show cash and finance side-by-side, run a full needs-based discussion, and evidence what was shown and decided, including the total payable, APR, total deposit and monthly payment. The intent is clarity and trust, not persuasion.

His commercial argument is equally direct.

A fair customer rate that also pays a fair commission can outperform higher rates that look uncompetitive.

Competitive terms help staff believe in the offer, which changes their behaviour. A colleague who genuinely believes the finance is fair talks about it openly and calmly.



“ THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS A SINGLE PLATFORM PROVIDER THAT DOES EVERYTHING WELL

JAMES TEW, IVENDI CHIEF EXECUTIVE

PRODUCT RANGE DISCIPLINE

If the finance offer is about trust, Bentley sees the add-on range as an exercise in restraint.

He warns that the main threat to maximising add-on performance is offering too many products through the online and showroom journey.

Too much choice creates doubt for customers and for staff. It also adds complexity to oversight, and can create unintentional product bias.

Product bias is not always an explicit sales tactic. It often shows up as familiarity.

When time is tight, a team member defaults to the product they know best.

That product gets explained properly, while others are rushed, poorly positioned, or not offered at all. The dealership loses sales and increases risk, because it still has a duty to explain the optional products it chooses to offer, not just the favourites.

Bentley's test is practical: would you buy the product based on the information the customer sees, including the presentation and the documentation. If the answer is no, the dealership has a problem.

The implication for a modern dealership is that

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product governance cannot be separated from product performance. Rationalising the range, tightening product information, and policing price fairness are not compliance tasks. They are commercial design tasks.

THE FORGOTTEN REVENUE CHANNEL: POST-SALE

One of Bentley's most important takeaways for this year can be the easiest to neglect: post-sale add-on strategy.

He believes opportunities do not stop at vehicle collection. They get forgotten.

A well-considered customer contact strategy, delivered at the right time after the customer has settled into the vehicle, can add revenue while reinforcing that the dealership cares. The tone matters. Bentley advocates education over pressure, plain language and avoiding fear-based messaging. The objective is to provide clear options, not to manufacture urgency.

This is also where technology can support compliance. A stand-alone, self-serve journey, delivered through channels such as email, SMS or

WhatsApp, can make record-keeping and oversight easier because the content is consistent, controlled and auditable.

Post-sale contact, if done well, is not only about selling a product. It is about maintaining contact with the customer and creating reasons to return. That begins to link F&I to retention, not just deal profitability.

FEWER SYSTEMS, BETTER INTEGRATION

If Bentley focuses on process design and behaviour, James Tew, chief executive at iVendi, approaches the modern dealership through a systems lens.

His core observation is that retailers want fewer systems, not more.

AI has accelerated the number of tech providers entering the market, but the demand from dealer groups is moving in the opposite direction: better integrated systems, one source of truth and one view of the customer shared across platforms.

Tew's point is not that dealers can rely on a single supplier. He argues "there is no such thing as a single platform provider that does everything well". The goal is an ecosystem of best-in-class

components that integrate properly. This matters in F&I because financial services are inherently fragmented. Dealers may work with six-to-eight lenders, each with their own point-of-sale approach.


Add payments, terminals, open banking and buy now pay later for products that cannot or should not be funded through the main agreement, and the process becomes complex quickly.

The operational consequence is visible on the showroom floor and in the accounts office.

Reconciliation, chasing payments, switching between portals and rekeying data are still common time sinks.

Tew's argument is that automation should remove that waste, and that platforms should aggregate multi-lender quoting, eligibility checking and payments in a way that improves transparency for the consumer.

REDRESS RISK, DATA GAPS AND LIMITS OF CONTROL

When looking at F&I in 2026, it's impossible to ignore the impending launch of the FCA's redress scheme early this year, as well as an even 

greater eye on commission scrutiny and lender behaviour.

Tew reports a nervousness among retailers, with some believing the scale of redress would destroy dealer balance sheets if it were pushed back onto them.

That fear creates a paradoxical sense of safety for some, because the sums involved look unrealistic for retailers to absorb.

However, Tew also points to a more practical concern: lender clawbacks, especially from lenders that have pulled out of the market or could collapse.

He notes that agreements can include rights to reclaim commission in litigation scenarios, and he expects some clawbacks to occur.

DATA IS ANOTHER WEAK POINT

Tew highlights that retention policies often mean older data has been destroyed, especially if retention is six years.

Even when data exists, the cost and effort to retrieve it can be significant.

Credit bureaus may confirm that a finance agreement existed, but may not hold the detail needed for questions around commission or whether multiple options were offered.

These risks are not in a dealer's control, at least in the short term.

Tew says: worry about what is in your control. For retailers, that means ensuring today's processes generate robust evidence of fair, informed choice. Reconstructing history later may be impossible.

Tew is candid about the current AI market. Some offerings are, in his view, a thin veneer over general-purpose large language models. They may deliver quick wins, but may not endure.

He suggests that the most valuable use cases are those that shorten the lag between an F&I inquiry and a useful response, and those that bridge the gap between the website and the showroom.

That includes nurturing a customer who wants to understand their likelihood of finance approval, moving them from eligibility checking to the next steps, and handling actions that often fall into "after hours" gaps, such as booking appointments, taking



reservation fees or managing vehicle movements.

However, he is emphatic that guardrails in motor finance must be stronger than in other parts of the business because it is regulated activity.

Retailers should probe whether AI suppliers understand regulation and risk controls, and whether they can evidence how their systems behave.

He even points to the emerging practice of "penetration testing" for AI, essentially stress-testing whether

an AI agent can be tricked into ignoring constraints.

When using automation and AI chatbots, dealers should look at transcripts of the conversations that are happening between customers and agents, not just dashboards. They should also be testing edge cases and be wary of 'black-box' approaches, with Tew warning of particularly sensitive areas such as credit decisioning or approval prediction, where lender scorecards can change frequently.

WARRANTY AND VALUE-ADDED PRODUCTS: CONSISTENCY, COVER AND SUPPORT



THE CULTURAL EFFECT OF CONSUMER DUTY IS STILL SHAPING DEALER EXPECTATIONS ABOUT VALUE, CLARITY AND PROVIDER STABILITY

LEE COOMBER, ASSURANT

Lee Coomber, RAC client director at Assurant, brings a value-added product perspective that sits alongside F&I rather than inside it, but the strategic implications are similar.

He said dealers have become more focused on product reliability and consistency, especially following disruption in the GAP market and the wider "fair value" focus for insured products.

While maintenance and repair warranties are not FCA-regulated in the same way as certain insured products, the cultural effect of Consumer Duty is still shaping dealer expectations about value, clarity and provider stability.

Coomber suggests the return of GAP has been slower than some expected, partly because dealers expanded other product areas while GAP was off sale, and partly due

to a lingering nervousness that the rules could shift again.

The more enduring trend he highlights is the growth in warranty term lengths, with average terms now over 12 months, and a tendency to align warranty duration more closely with finance terms.

There is also an operational detail that often gets overlooked in strategic discussions: field support.

Coomber describes geographically-based field agents who work directly with dealers on product selection, cover levels by vehicle profile, and training on how and when to introduce products.

Product performance is not only about the product. It is about the support model, the claims experience, and the ability to tailor cover to the vehicles being sold.

Embrace efficiency.
Ignite loyalty. Propel profits.
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Experience-First delivered through technology.



Why convergence is automotive retail's next operating model

Fragmented systems and siloed data are constraining dealer performance. Keyloop's Chief Strategy Officer Tim Smith believes convergence, underpinned by AI, is now essential for growth and control

Automotive retail has spent three decades layering technology on top of technology. Dealer management systems were followed by more digital tools, digital retail platforms, workshop applications, marketing automation, finance integrations and specialist aftersales software. Each promised incremental gains.

According to Tim Smith, Chief Strategy Officer at Keyloop, the cumulative effect has been something very different.

He said: "The automotive retail industry has given birth to a really complex set of technologies.

"The feature sets looked great in isolation. On a case-by-case basis they created marginal gains. But, over time, the systems have compounded complexity."

For dealer groups operating across multiple franchises, the result is familiar. Data silos, duplicated processes, rekeying of information and teams toggling between systems never designed to work as one.

Smith believes the industry has reached an inflection point where groups are naturally searching for solutions to

reduce complexity and get a unified view on customer and vehicle data across one system.

Convergence as an operating principle

Keyloop's response is Fusion – the first Automotive Retail Platform. Rather than bolting on further functionality, Fusion unifies core dealer operations into four connected domains: Demand, Supply, Ownership and Operate.

“ BEING ACROSS DEVELOPMENTS ON HOW THINGS WILL EVOLVE WHEN IT COMES TO AI REGULATION AND LEGISLATION IS FUNDAMENTAL

TIM SMITH, KEYLOOP CHIEF STRATEGY OFFICER

Demand covers customer acquisition and sales workflows, from websites and lead management to deal structuring and retention.

Supply focuses on inventory sourcing, management, distribution and price optimisation.

Ownership brings together aftersales and lifecycle engagement.

Operate underpins accounting, HR, vehicle movements and general ledger.

Smith said: "If you can pull enough of those capabilities together and deliver value in one place, you reduce complexity and unlock optimisation."

He points to aftersales solution Service Hub, sitting within Fusion's Ownership Domain as an example. Historically, workshop operations have been split across DMS modules and third-party tools. Bringing those processes into a single hub enables end-to-end visibility of job cards, ramp capacity, technician skill sets and parts availability.

The same principle applies on the sales side. A unified Sales Hub connects lead management, quotation, finance processes and a customer's purchase journey. Data flows without rekeying. Customers can move between online and showroom interactions without resetting the clock.

Smith said: "Convergence is about answering output-orientated questions. Does it improve workshop yield? Does it improve technician productivity? Does it speed up vehicle throughput? Does it create a better customer experience? If the answer is yes and you can measure it, that is value."

The AI inflection point

Convergence alone is not the end goal. Smith sees it as the prerequisite for the next computing cycle.

He said: "AI is probably the most meaningful compute cycle we have had so far.

"Things are moving faster than anything before and there is a growing acceptance and inevitability within UK automotive retail that AI will have a seismic impact, but there's also a lot of noise you need to cut through."

He is candid that automation will likely change labour dynamics in some areas. Tasks such as moving data between systems, manual lead qualification and





repetitive administration are obvious candidates.

But he draws a distinction between automation and optimisation.

He said: "Most people view AI as automation, but the end state is optimisation. Optimisation only occurs when you have the full contextual layer of data and situational awareness of your ecosystem."

In automotive terms, that means matching the right vehicle to the right customer at the right time, aligning stock profiles to demand signals, and tailoring retention offers to real-world usage rather than blunt time-based triggers such as a service reminder at month 11.

Measurable efficiency at group level

For directors looking at new technology and AI with interest, but also great scrutiny, there has to be a focus on return on sales and return on capital.

Smith believes convergence and AI deliver compounding gains rather than incremental tweaks.

Keyloop has commissioned its own time and motion studies across sales workflows, tracking the journey from initial opportunity through to vehicle handover.

Smith said: "Just in terms of rekeying information and moving data correctly, we saw 30%-to-40% time saving.

"Layer in AI-driven lead response, qualification and propensity scoring, and the gains increase.

"Faster responses improve conversion. Marketing spend becomes more efficient as lower quality leads are filtered earlier."

Agentic AI and regulatory caution

As AI evolves towards more autonomous or agentic models, questions around governance intensify, particularly in regulated areas such as motor finance.

Agentic AI refers to AI systems that act autonomously to achieve goals, rather than just responding to direct commands.

These digital agents can set their own objectives, make plans, use tools and learn from their actions to improve over time.

Smith is clear that caution is required: "When we get towards regulated services and compliance, we need diligence and human validation.

"AI can do heavy lifting and support workflows, but it is not perfect."

He references emerging legislation such as the EU's AI Act and extensions to data protection frameworks. For a provider operating across multiple jurisdictions and working with major lenders, compliance is not optional.

Smith said: "Keyloop is governed by Consumer Duty, financial regulation and data protection frameworks.

"We transact billions through our systems every year. Safety and security have to be fundamental and being across developments on how things will evolve when it comes to AI regulation and legislation is fundamental."

Managing change, not just technology

Technology transformation ultimately depends on people. Unifying systems will only succeed if organisations adapt culturally as well as technically.

Smith said: "Change management, training and socialisation are critical as part of this process."

He encourages dealer leaders to remain open minded and invest time in understanding new tools. That investment in time, as well as money, will only help organisations understand how these connected technologies apply to their specific business needs.

Automotive retail has adapted to every previous computing cycle, from the rise of the DMS to the shift online and the growth of mobile.

AI is different, both in pace and in scale. Deployed onto fragmented systems, it risks accelerating inefficiency.

Smith added: "With Fusion we are building what the industry has been crying out for. A fully connected technology stack that links retailers, OEMs, finance and fleet providers.

"Deployed onto structured, connected and secure data, it can optimise pricing, stock flow, customer engagement and operational capacity in ways the sector has not previously seen."

The automotive retailers embracing convergence won't just enhance business performance, they will define which businesses capture the value of this next technological cycle.

To find out more visit: <https://keyloop.com/contact>

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Turning Data into Action and Insight

No modern motor retail business can succeed without effective management of the customer relationship throughout the sales and ownership cycles – qualifying and fielding enquiries from multiple sources, keeping prospects engaged, converting leads into sales, nurturing relationships through the aftersales journey, and then directing customers back into the top of the sales funnel again.

Significant technological developments have made it possible for retailers to issue timely, relevant and personalised communications, at scale, by harnessing the power of automation and artificial intelligence.

This ensures customers feel like they are being engaged with in the right way at the right time, while sales teams can

be left to focus on the business of selling.

However, any communications strategy relying on automation will be significantly hampered by missing or poor-quality records, so it is imperative to establish and maintain highly accurate customer data, and secure the appropriate consents.

During the fourth quarter of 2025, Marketing Delivery's VoiceBox platform issued 3,112,439 emails on behalf of its 500-plus retailer clients. Within this dataset, 9% of records were missing an email and 7% were missing a mobile number, highlighting missed opportunities for contact with thousands of customers.

Maintaining data integrity is a constant effort; records will age unavoidably as vehicles are sold to new

owners and the personal circumstances of the individual change. VoiceBox can automate the time-intensive task of checking data accuracy, both with the customer and via third-party sources such as OEMs and the DVSA. Doing this at scale is only possible via automation, which can continuously cross-check and reconcile different data sources to maximise marketing ROI throughout the customer lifecycle. With the help of critical system integrations, such as with Keyloop's DMS, updates from customer interactions can be automatically fed back into VoiceBox.

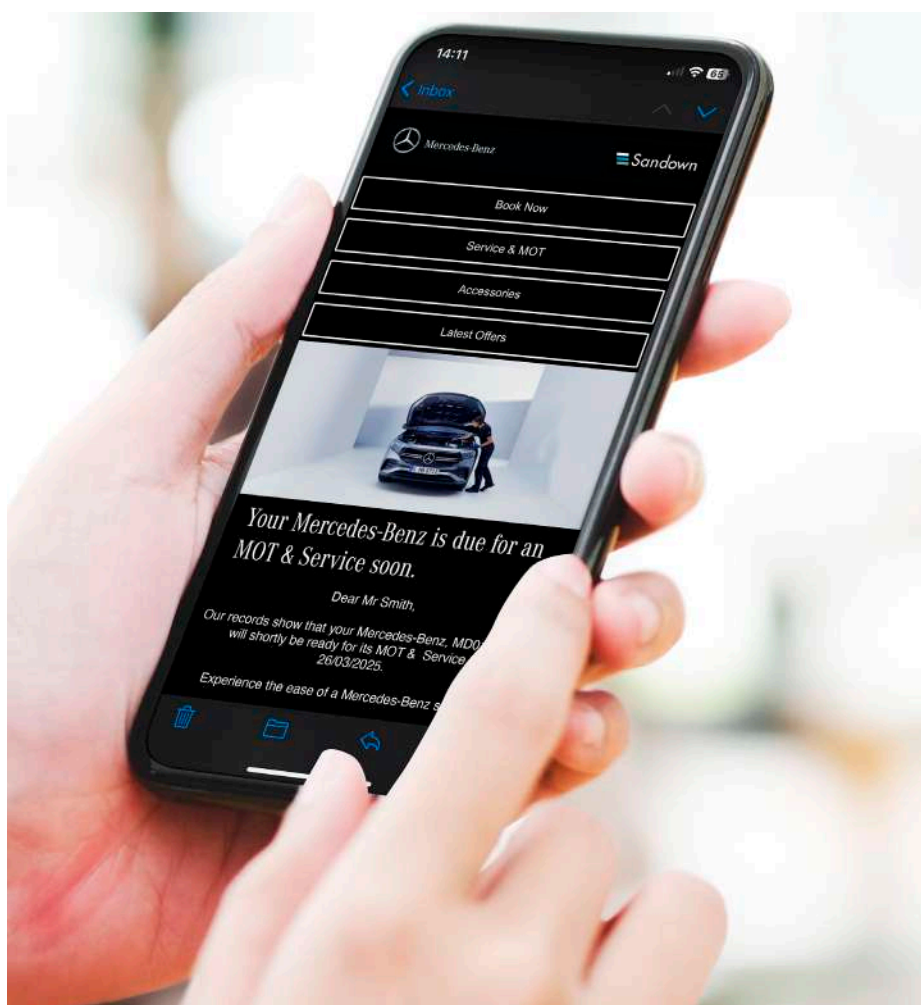
Leveraging warm leads

Once an enquiry is logged, the VoiceBox platform does the heavy lifting, nurturing warm leads and moving them along the sales funnel with carefully timed and hyper-targeted messaging.

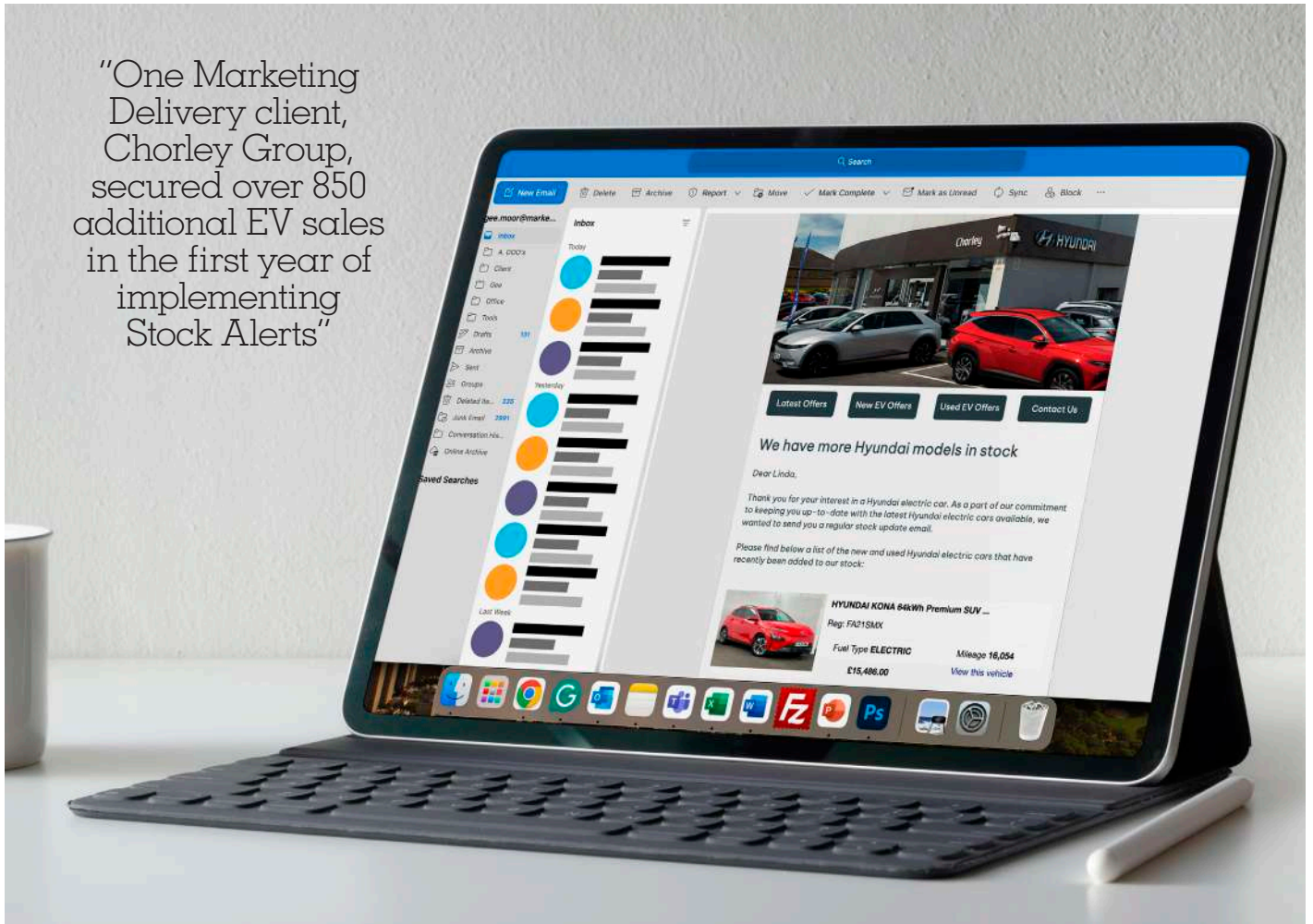
This type of personalised interaction has become essential. A consumer survey commissioned by Marketing Delivery found that 63% of car buyers would be more likely to remain in contact with retailers that emailed them about stock if they were initially unable to find what they wanted. Quarterly industry benchmarks derived from Marketing Delivery retailer customers supported this; in the final quarter of 2025, automated enquiry follow-up emails achieved a 63% open-rate and a 16% click-through rate.

Stock Alerts emails are designed to keep prospects warm, automatically showing them vehicles that are similar to the one that they initially enquired about. The ability to further tailor communications based on factors such as powertrain delivers an average open rate of 53% and a click-through rate of 16%. One Marketing Delivery client, Chorley Group, secured over 850 additional EV sales in the first year of implementing Stock Alerts, delivering messages that were aligned with the EV-specific buying journey of each prospect.

Targeting customers via social media continues to grow in importance, and Marketing Delivery's latest



“One Marketing Delivery client, Chorley Group, secured over 850 additional EV sales in the first year of implementing Stock Alerts”



developments allow retailers to attribute a cost-per-enquiry to social ads, showcasing the savings possible compared to other marketing methods.

Enhancing aftersales

AI-enhanced VoiceBox tools also benefit aftersales teams, sending automated emails at scale informing customers of seasonal campaigns or when vehicles are due a service, health check or MOT. Unopened emails can be automatically followed up with an SMS a few days later. Both the email and SMS communications include a link to book an appointment, as well as the option to value their vehicle, helping pique the customer's interest and allowing the retailer to offer a test drive while their vehicle is in the workshop.

2026 will see the introduction of a VoiceBox Rich Communication Services (RCS) tool. This makes use of RCS as an agile, customisable and cost-effective solution for sending visually-rich content within mobile messages, such as stock

catalogues, and is more acceptable to many customers than a business-related WhatsApp message. Importantly, RCS messaging supports the kind of two-way interactions that boost sales conversions and enhance retention.

Combining retailer and OEM data to drive customer comms

It is now possible to develop communications that draw both on the retailer's own data (via Marketing Delivery's VoiceBox platform) with OEM data (via TekCor4's Catalyst for Aftersales solution). With VoiceBox as the interface, this means the retailer can alert customers to regular service and maintenance work, as well as critical OEM-mandated jobs, such as brake fluid or gearbox oil changes. Data shows

customers expect the retailer and OEM to be 'joined up' in this way, and they respond best when these various jobs can be combined into fewer workshop visits.

This integration makes it possible, for example, for a retailer to access a list of cars due for a routine appointment, such as an MOT or service, and in parallel, highlight any other aftersales work the vehicle is likely to need in the immediate future based on previous vehicle history and additional maintenance prompts from the OEM.

With this type of automation in place, retailers can give breadth and depth to their marketing activities, and ensure that all customers are contacted at all critical touchpoints in the buying and ownership cycle.

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 **TekCor4**

Contact: Jeremy Evans, Director, Marketing Services, jeremy@tekcor4.com



Getting more buy-in from the workforce

Leaders who listen, support and share their vision will motivate dealership staff to deliver, finds **Debbie Kirlew**

A

great business culture will only emerge when good leaders live and breathe the values laid down by the organisation. Mostly, one cannot exist without the other.

"To use a north-east expression – 'it is better felt than told,'" says Eden Motor Group chief executive Graeme Potts.

"Culture and ethos need to be lived and discernible, particularly from senior team members."

His words are echoed by founder of the Automotive 30% Club Julia Muir: "The leaders of the organisation need to identify exactly what their business purpose is, and the values and behavioural standards they want the people in the business to have, and they need to fully embody them."

Rachel Clift, chief executive at Ben, adds: "Senior leaders need to understand what positive culture in an organisation looks like and 'walk the walk'. When leaders are aligned and walk the walk, culture can be consistent, even in multi-site organisations."

Former Harwoods group sales and marketing director Clare Freemantle heads up consultancy Clarity Automotive and draws extensively on her senior team leadership experience when supporting dealer groups and suppliers.

She says: "It's all well and good saying things to your teams, but the best way to lead is by example."

CAN YOU 'CREATE' A POSITIVE CULTURE?

Theories and models can provide structure and certainly helps when pinpointing a business' ethos. President of the Institute of the Motor Industry (IMI) and emeritus professor of Loughborough University's business school, Professor Jim Saker says: "In reality, you can't change culture because it's not an independent variable. When somebody says they are going to change the culture, it's a nonsense, you can only change things that go into making that culture."

Saker looks at separate elements to identify a culture. Stories often told by staff are revealing; as too are symbols such as the size or location of a person's office or the car an employee drives; the organisational structure (often illustrated in a waterfall chart) can differ from the power structure, for example, the parts team that doesn't fulfil its obligations could bring the workshop to a standstill; identifying who has control is also a determining

factor and not necessarily just of people. For example, data has become increasingly important; and finally, rituals and routines tell much about a company's culture such as the Monday morning sales meeting or the dress code.

Often, though, the culture of an organisation (good or bad) is much more tangible and very easily understood by staff and customers.

Freemantle says: "Housekeeping is one of the biggest barometers of a business. No one person can keep a business really tidy and make it look as though there is pride in the business. That comes from everyone caring and that means everyone is engaged and if they're engaged, you've probably got pretty good leadership."

Likewise, Muir believes a positive or a negative culture is apparent within a few minutes of entering the business. She looks for a clean and tidy appearance in all areas and the demeanour of staff will quickly reflect engagement or 'a sense of fighting in the trenches'.

Behind-the-scenes polite language in emails and on signs is telling while positive group dynamics in meetings enable all to contribute views and ideas rather than a command and control approach.

She says: "A really critical area is the way that

humour is expressed. A company culture can be playful and humorous, but when it tips over into damaging the dignity of a colleague then it starts to have a negative impact.

When verbal aggressions and microaggressions become the norm, each one is like dropping litter on the floor of the dealership that the staff become accustomed to wading through and are oblivious to it, but customers, visitors and new recruits see the piles of 'litter' straight away in the toxic culture.

Ben's emphasis on staff wellbeing helps drive businesses forward, Clift says: "Organisations with strong cultures respect and value the unique traits each individual brings and enable people to be their real selves at work. When people feel safe to do that and feel supported, engagement increases, collaboration improves and performance follows."

The position is echoed by Freemantle: "I am a real advocate of congruence. People who are genuine in themselves get a lot more out of the teams around them because it can feel as if people mean what they say."


EFFECTIVE LEADERS EMBODY BEHAVIOURS EXPECTED OF ALL

So, what makes a good leader? Saker says: "It is someone who does not think they know it all. They are inclusive and embrace diversity, not only in terms of who they employ, but in diversity of thought. Being honest and transparent with people, they are prepared to listen, they treat people with respect and there's no bias."

Muir's definition is similar: "An effective leader embodies the required behaviours and shows empathy, dignity and respect to everyone in the business, irrespective of rank or time served, because they are all important members of the team."

Good leaders also need substance and to meet business objectives, they need to recognise the importance of strategy.

Saker adds: "If you want to build trust with customers, you have to build trust with the staff first and the staff understand how to treat customers. Then the business becomes value-driven."

Good leaders and a positive culture go hand-in-hand for Potts: "Both team leadership and the establishment and maintenance of corporate culture require a number of elements. However, in my view, primary among them is 



“IT'S ALL WELL AND GOOD SAYING THINGS TO YOUR TEAMS, BUT THE BEST WAY TO LEAD IS BY EXAMPLE”

CLARE FREEMANTLE, CLARITY AUTOMOTIVE



setting strategy and objectives in a non-hierarchical way, with the absence of jargon, such that colleagues at every level can understand what we are about. The other major factor is that regular communication around progress towards objectives is vital.”

Freemantle agrees: “Once you have good culture in a business, you will generate those leaders who hold the same values, beliefs and outlook who then influence the culture further.”

After a 40-year career in automotive retail, Stephen Whitton founded his global movement for what he terms ‘mental wealth’ in automotive – [M]enable. He now works with dealer groups and suppliers to foster an environment of wellbeing in organisations which, in turn, drives individuals to perform better – resulting in improved business outcomes.

He says: “Leaders are recognising that positive culture is more about engaging your teams, making sure employees’ wellbeing is front and centre. People perform well when they feel good about themselves and if you create a culture that fosters and nurtures that then I think it makes the job of effective leadership quite easy, but the leaders themselves have to lead with clarity confidence and purpose.”

The reality, though, can be different with the sector particularly prone to promoting the top performing salesperson into managerial positions. Whitton points out that part of the problem is that managers can see themselves as managers of the process.

He says: “If you have manager in your title and people responsibilities, your job is the people, your job is to understand, to empathise, to be compassionate and to know that individuals need to be managed differently.”

Feedback through engagement surveys, face-to-face sessions and everyday conversations provide insights while customer satisfaction scores are also an indicator of a good culture. Sustainable culture change happens when inclusion is embedded at every level of an organisation from attraction and recruitment through to onboarding, performance management, engagement and exit processes.

Ongoing investment in leadership development, training and support is critical to maintaining a strong culture together with clear communication channels, investment in support for health and wellbeing and regularly reviewing processes to ensure they genuinely support people.

Clift said: “Importantly, employee experience and



“ A COMPANY CULTURE CAN BE PLAYFUL AND HUMOROUS, BUT WHEN IT TIPS OVER INTO DAMAGING THE DIGNITY OF A COLLEAGUE THEN IT STARTS TO HAVE A NEGATIVE IMPACT

JULIA MUIR, AUTOMOTIVE 30% CLUB

culture are everyone’s responsibility, not just HR or senior leaders. They are shaped daily by managers, colleagues and teams across the organisation so it’s about bringing people together on the journey.”

Muir’s KPI of 30% female representation in leadership roles is a critical indicator of the health of the culture and effective leadership.

She says: “If women are not attracted to the employer brand, or do not stay or progress in the organisation, there is likely to be an outdated narrow set of leadership criteria being used, and the culture is probably one in which many people, not just women, can’t thrive or even survive.”

In Whitton’s workshops and through his consultancy, he focuses on his five ‘critical success factors’ to develop a more inclusive and positive business culture rather than ‘wholesale change’. The first step is commitment from the management; followed by communication; then training; recruitment with an emphasis on looking beyond ‘your own image’; and finally, purpose. Purpose is perhaps the hardest to define but could be as simple as delivering the best brand experience in a region but at the other extreme, Whitton has been working with a group that once salaries, operational costs and dividends have been paid, ploughs money into charitable works and its own training academies.

For 120 years, Ben has supported the automotive industry’s people to overcome life’s toughest challenges and for Clift, this is key.

She says: “The health and wellbeing of employees, as well as leaders themselves can be overlooked. Leaders under sustained stress and pressure can struggle to support others, which can impact culture and performance. Investing in mental health, wellbeing, resilience and support for managers and leaders is closely connected to long-term success.”

The AI shift: Is your dealership's 'new front door' open or locked?

The traditional car-buying journey has officially become a relic. Today, the first impression of your dealership doesn't happen on your forecourt it happens online.

Recent data reveals a seismic shift in consumer behaviour: **one in four car buyers** are now using AI tools like ChatGPT to research models, compare local prices, and even simulate negotiations before they ever set foot in a showroom.

The algorithm is your new sales manager

In this AI-driven landscape, your "front door" is an algorithm. These systems are fed by a constant stream of public feedback: Google reviews, social media sentiment, and star ratings.

Essentially, the customer experience (CX) you deliver today directly dictates your visibility tomorrow.

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The danger of CX blind spots

Despite the mountain of data available from CSI and SSI scores to organic reviews, most UK dealer groups are flying blind.

More than 80% of groups lack a comprehensive CX strategy, often trapped by siloed tools that don't talk to one another.

When data is fragmented, insights get buried. Your teams end up acting on "partial truths," unable to connect a negative review to a specific operational root cause. These blind spots don't just hurt your pride; they hurt your bottom line.

Enter the Reputation Flywheel

The answer isn't more tools, it's a unified strategy. **Reputation** is the AI-native platform designed specifically to break down these silos for OEMs and dealerships.

We call it the **Reputation Flywheel**:

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- Analyse:** Our AI distills raw data into actionable insights, showing you exactly where to improve.



3. **Act:** Better operations lead to better experiences.

4. **Grow:** A 5-star reputation improves search visibility, attracting new buyers to your service bays and showrooms.

Why the UK's leading automotive brands trust Reputation

Beyond price and location, the experience is what closes the deal. Reputation helps you master the three pillars of modern automotive retail:

- **Drive growth:** Move from being "α" choice to "the" only choice by dominating local search.
- **Increase efficiency:** Automate workflows to save your team hours of manual monitoring, allowing them to focus on what they do best - selling cars.
- **Eliminate guesswork:** Turn fragmented feedback into your most valuable strategic asset with a clear view of what's working and what isn't.

The AI journey is here. Don't let your dealership get left in the manual era.

Reputation

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There's a lot to think about when running a car dealership...

...stocking loans, auctions, pricing, advertising, finance, warranties, the list goes on... and on. So when something unexpected does go wrong with a vehicle you've sold, the last thing you need is having to deal with repairs and all the admin that comes with them.

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- Exclusive Warrantywise VAPs
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Join dealers just like you who are already earning monthly rewards from their warranty sales and spending them at over 250 household-name brands - from fashion and travel to sports and supermarkets! All you have to do is become a Warrantywise partner dealer to get access to the platform and start earning.

So, what would you spend your rewards on?

*estimated value over a 12 month period, Feb 25-Jan 26.



Over
£169,000*

credited to our dealers
in the last 12 months!

With over
100+

dealers a month
cashing in.

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A vulnerable reality for motor retailers

Motor retailers and OEMs must do more to ensure staff are aware of the risks and know how to protect every digital doorway, experts tell [Aimée Turner](#)

Cyberattacks on automotive businesses cause crippling harm for them and their broader base of suppliers and customers, as was witnessed when criminals attacked JLR last summer.

A common perception, maybe spread by Hollywood portrayals, is of ingenious hackers breaking in to supposedly secure systems thousands of miles away to cause chaos. But often it's a much simpler storyline in reality.

Mark Rodbert, co-founder of Idax Software, makes the point that the attacker does not always need to break in through a technical back door if they can talk someone into opening the front one.

Idax's focus is not the flashing red alert that something suspicious is happening right now. It is the slow, largely invisible drift of permissions that creates the conditions for a major incident.

Rodbert's team uses pattern-finding analytics that spot anomalies without needing prior knowledge of how a business is structured.

When cyber incidents hit household names, attention tends to land on the hackers' tactics. But Rodbert argues that the more enduring lesson is about access and about people.

Many recent cases that have come to light have included an element of psychological manipulation, often described as "social engineering". He dislikes the term. "It's really just conning people," he insists.

This is where access rights become the accelerant. The more people who have "just in case" permissions, the more chance an attacker has of landing on an account that can do real damage.

LOCKS VS ALARMS: PREVENTION FIRST, THEN DETECTION

Rodbert divides controls into two camps: detective and preventative. Many well-known cyber tools, he notes, are designed to detect unusual behaviour on networks, then raise an alarm. That matters, but it can prove too late.

"Alarms are much more sexy and exciting than locks," he says, using the simple analogy: "Locks stop the crime. Alarms tell you it has happened."

Preventative control, in Idax's world, is about reducing blast radius. "You have to assume the 'bad' guys are already inside," Rodbert says, so the best way to reduce the potential impact is to limit what any one set of credentials can reach, and to

constantly review those permissions as roles change.

The examples he gives are uncomfortably mundane. People move departments and keep access from their previous jobs. People get rights by accident. One case, he says, involved a non-executive director who ended up with business-critical access because she shared a surname and first initial with a board director.

It is the sort of mistake nobody intends, and one which can sit unnoticed for months, if not years.

DEALER RISK SHIFT: CUSTOMER DATA, FINANCE PRODUCTS

Those are precisely the cracks a hacker can exploit. Rodbert describes a plausible scenario where someone rings an employee and claims to be from IT support.

The hook is simple: they'll tell someone that they have access they should not have, and that they need to give their username and password to fix it. If the employee does not even realise they have that access, why would they question it?

For automotive retailers, the consequences are not abstract. Dealer groups hold dense pools of customer data and many now sell finance products at scale.

Rodbert frames the risk of the evolution bluntly: "A car dealership used to sell cars, now it sells a lot of financial products, but it hasn't undergone the same kind of culture shift necessarily that the banks have."

High staff turnover is a further risk signal. "Turnover is a leading indicator of vulnerability," he says, pointing to leavers who exit with data access rights and new joiners who may not appreciate the severity of contractual and regulatory boundaries.

Retailers worry about data theft and resale, he says, but, increasingly, they fear operational paralysis more.

Criminals can make more money by stopping the business than by quietly siphoning records. In that sense, a dealership's biggest nightmare may not be a leak, but a scenario where systems fail, phones light up, and nobody knows where stock is, what orders are pending or what work can be completed.

That nightmare scenario hit AM100 retailer Arnold Clark when a cyber attack waged in late December 2023 saw the car retail giant forced to shut down internet access to protect its data.

Arnold Clark customers had their addresses, passports and national insurance numbers leaked on the dark web, leaving the group unable to complete vehicle handovers at a critically important trading period.

ARNOLD CLARK: THE COST OF DISRUPTION AND DATA EXPOSURE

The cyberattack ultimately cost the company £50 million, triggered major customer data and privacy concerns with accompanying legal challenges, and forced a complete rebuild of corporate systems. That saw its IT budget that had been around £9 million almost doubling to £16 million.

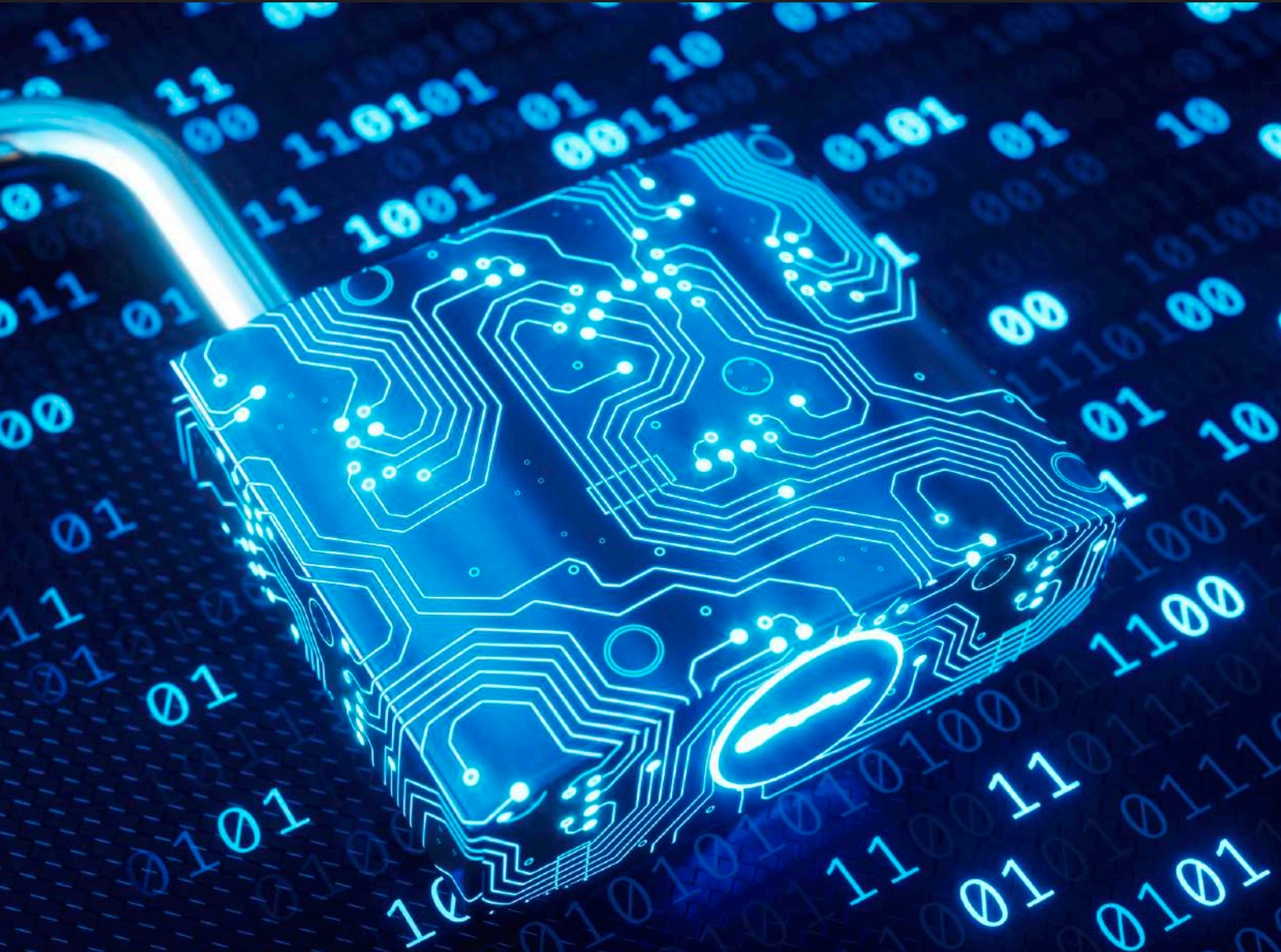
Rodbert's advice for when the worst happens is pragmatic. Do not rush into panicked action at 3am. Have a business continuity and disaster recovery plan in place that names who to call, including specialist legal support – and practise it.

Know your stance on ransom demands in advance and make sure your back-up strategy can return you to a point you trust.

One of the hardest truths, he says, is that attackers can sit inside an organisation for a long time, meaning that even an IT back-up from, say, the previous month may still be infected.

Lisa Ventura at the Cyber Security Association supports that, referencing the attack on JLR: "With that level of access, she says, "the attackers had the keys to JLR's entire kingdom", and then sat hidden inside for weeks or months, "just watching, learning and waiting for the right time to strike."

Eddie Hawthorne, the former Arnold Clark chief who had to manage the impact of the 2023 attack has also expressed the shock at discovering that the retailer's cyber defences had actually been breached some time before the business became aware of suspicious activity.



Speaking at AM Live the year after the attack, he said that the attackers had been hiding “in his attic” for months, simply waiting for the business to be at a busy trading period – and therefore at its most vulnerable point.

Little surprise then that in mid-January after securing its IT networks, the dealership group was targeted once again by the ransomware gang. “This was a gift that kept on giving,” Hawthorne told FutureScot last year. “I got a little email from the dark web telling me that they’d stolen some data, and they were going to release it.”

While Arnold Clark had no way of knowing what or how much had been taken, the business had by then re-engineered its security and, on advice, ignored the demands for payment from what was suspected to be a criminal group with Russian links.

BEYOND IT: CONNECTED SYSTEMS, FIRMWARE RISK

Ignoring the ransom may have been the right call, but it does not remove the underlying exposure.

Increasingly, the most serious risk lies not in stolen data, but in compromised code, firmware and the processes used to deploy them.

Cyber security specialist Shaya Feedman, a former head of information security at Porsche Digital and co-founder of technology expert Deep Specter, highlights one particular risk as especially concerning in the car manufacturing environment – the process of flashing software which overwrites existing firmware or data. He fears that if that process is manipulated, the potential damage would have “no limits” especially if applied to over-the-air updates with which many new cars are equipped.

What worries him most is a scenario where a malicious actor could affect vehicle safety at scale – and generate huge reputational damage as a result. “I’m afraid that someone, somewhere has a red button and when they push it, 100,000 cars somewhere in the world will stop functioning safely,” he says, offering braking as an example of a safety-critical function that could be targeted.

That is, arguably, the worst scenario, one that has chilling implications.

But on the ground, dealer groups are balancing data security with operational reality: the need to keep customers moving through the showroom and workshop.

For Hawthorne at Arnold Clark the impact was profound: “Forcing everything offline had an immediate impact on the business: it meant no phones, no emails, no access to vital systems, and no list of people who you would actually phone, because everything had been computerised,” he says.

“It was a big game of giant Whack-a-Mole,” he recalls. “It was man versus machine and by 2:47am we were losing control of our system: we were about to be locked out.”

While that tension is constant, Rodbert argues that maintaining a disciplined access governance posture is where the battle can be won quietly, before the alarms ever sound and uncomfortable decisions have to be taken at 2:47am.



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