

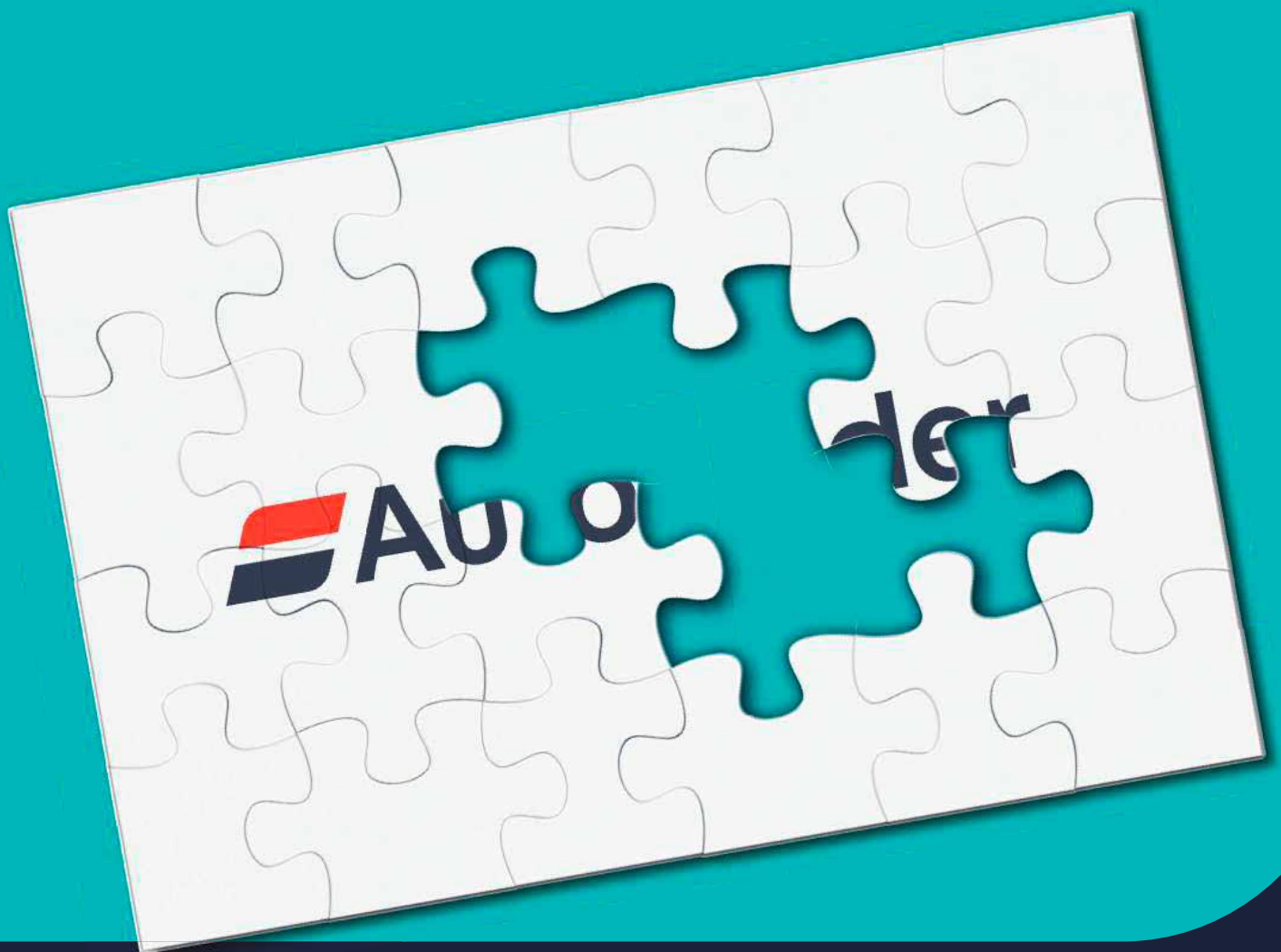


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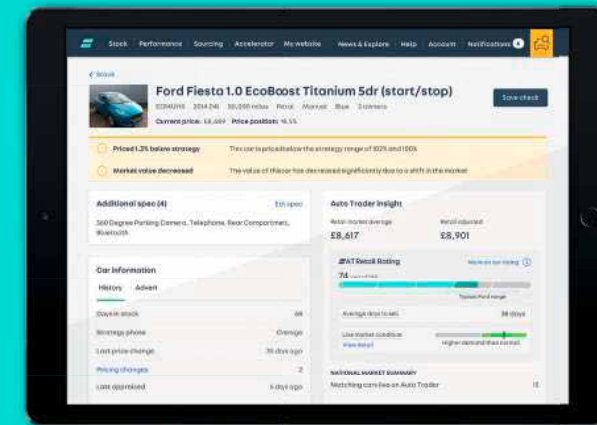
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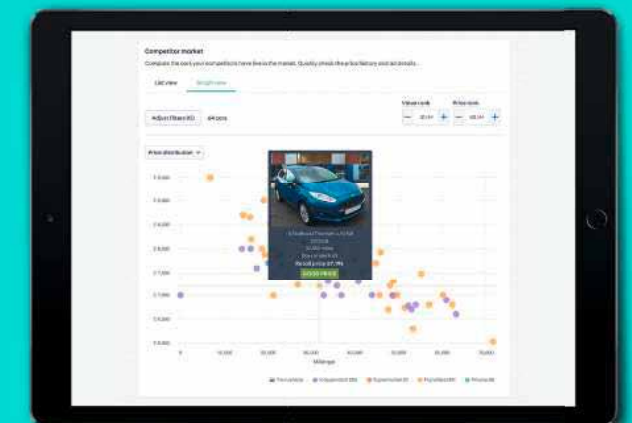
Introducing Retail Accelerator powered by our unique insight



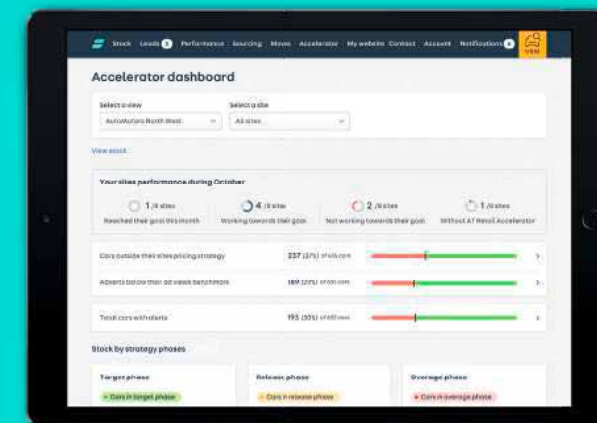
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^{*1} Source: Comscore MMX® Multi-Platform, Total Audience, Auto Trader, Average of Total Visits from Apr- Sept 2018, U.K

^{*2} Average number during the year, Company measure of the number of inspections of individual vehicle advertisements on the UK marketplace for both physical and virtual stock..

^{*3} Auto Trader internal data, 2018

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matters to help you win
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marketplace

A large white puzzle piece is shown at an angle. On the piece, the AutoTrader logo is displayed, consisting of a stylized 'A' made of two overlapping horizontal bars (one red, one blue) followed by the word 'AutoTrader' in a bold, dark blue sans-serif font.

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NETWORK EFFECTS / P6
Vauxhall's UK dealer restructuring
plan hits the half-way point

MITCHELL GROUP / P22
How MD Mark Mitchell's belief in
people helps deliver a 4.4% RoS

DACIA / P30
Why Renault's budget sibling
may benefit from Brexit Britain

A man in a dark tuxedo and white shirt with a black bow tie is smiling and walking towards the camera. He is at a formal event, likely an awards ceremony, with other people in formal wear visible in the background. The background is slightly out of focus, showing a dimly lit room with other guests.

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MOTOR RETAIL**

RRG AMONG THE WINNERS AT THE 2019 AM AWARDS -
FULL RESULTS INSIDE / P34-P81



Approved Partner

eDynamix joins the CDK Partner Programme

eDynamix, one of the UK's leading software suppliers to the automotive industry, has joined the CDK International Partner Programme, an integration which when developed will provide enhanced solutions to both mutual and new customers.

CDK Global is a global provider of integrated information technology and digital marketing solutions. Focused on enabling end-to-end automotive commerce, CDK Global provides solutions to dealers in more than 100 countries around the world, serving approximately 30,000 retail locations and most automotive manufacturers. CDK solutions automate and integrate all parts of the dealership and buying process from targeted digital advertising and marketing campaigns to the sale, financing, insuring, parts supply, repair, and maintenance of vehicles.

The CDK Partner Programme offers potential automotive tech partners an open platform using standard integration points to access the CDK core Dealer Management Systems for both reading and writing of data. Partners can improve the functionality of their products, scale up their businesses, share and manage data seamlessly, and use the Partner Programme to potentially enter into new geographical markets. From a dealer perspective, the CDK Partner Programme will open up new applications on one platform, helping them increase efficiency and deliver truly connected car buying and ownership experiences.

eDynamix provide a range of products to over 2,200 retail outlets in the UK covering all aspects of the customer ownership lifecycle, including service plans, electronic vehicle health check and online bookings.

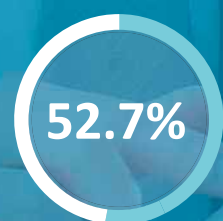
In addition, eDynamix also offer dealers a number of tools to ensure data integrity is maintained across all software platforms, including the DMS. One such application is MOTCleanse.

eDynamix MOTCleanse automatically checks all current vehicle records from a dealers DMS against DVLA and DVSA information to ensure accuracy of MOT data and vehicle ownership. With an average of 52.7% of MOT dates being incorrect in the DMS and a further 21.9% of customers no longer owning the vehicle they are attached to, dealers can cleanse their data and increase MOT sales and revenue while reducing the cost of unnecessary reminders.

Iain Nickalls, eDynamix Director, said "Our goal has always been to continuously innovate and improve the functionality of our products to deliver best in class solutions for our customers. Part of this involves the seamless sharing and management of data across all platforms used within a dealership.

"The CDK Partner Programme will allow us to do just this... This is why we are excited to be on the Partner Programme, because we want to work closely with CDK to develop solutions to provide an enhanced user experience to our mutual customers.

"It has been a pleasure working with the fantastic team at CDK to develop the integration points so far, with work having already begun on further touch points across more applications on both platforms".



MOT dates are incorrect in the DMS



Customers no longer own the vehicle they are attached to in the DMS

21.9%

To find out more, call us on 0845 413 0000, visit www.edynamix.com or email enquiries@edynamix.com

EDITOR'S LETTER

Congratulations to all the winners and finalists of the 2019 AM Awards. It was fantastic to see so many of AM's readers being recognised for their great work at our event earlier this month, and you can find out more about why they won in the 28 pages of coverage in this month's issue.

I was particularly pleased that there was such support for some of our newest award categories: Supplier of the Year, Community Hero and AM People Investor. We believe it is important to recognise the strength of relationships between dealers and their suppliers, and their work to support local communities. And, naturally, no dealer can succeed without skilled employees who are made to feel rewarded and motivated.

The AM People Investor Award is an opportunity for us to recognise just one dealer for their great employee focus. But we want to recognise dozens more. So as the AM Awards come to a close, we open our AM Best UK Dealerships To Work For programme for 2019.

Please register your dealerships for it – there is absolutely no cost and no risk to taking part. If your survey shows that your staff rate working for you highly, you will get the boost of displaying a Best Dealership To Work For logo (right) and trophy, and help change the perception of careers in motor retail. If it does not, no one else will ever know, plus you may get some insight into areas that perhaps need improving.

At a time when the industry faces ever greater challenges in attracting quality employees, we need your participation in this programme. Get involved. Show your staff – and potential new recruits – that you care. Register now at bestUKdealerships.com.



MEET THE TEAM



Tim Rose
Editor



Tom Sharpe
News and features editor



Stephen Briers
Editor-in-chief



Jeremy Bennett
Head of digital/associate editor

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Vauxhall UK managing director Stephen Norman: 'plan is nothing to be afraid of or ashamed about'

NORMAN: DEALERS ARE ALREADY DOING BETTER

Vauxhall's UK managing director says dramatic restructure is bearing fruit, in the form of higher profit, vehicle throughput and return on sales

The Vauxhall franchise has become more profitable over the past 12 months and should be "nicely established" for growth ahead of the 2020 arrival of new Corsa, Mokka and Vivaro products, according to managing director Stephen Norman.

Speaking to *AM* almost a year after the magazine broke the news of Vauxhall's plan to close about a third of its retail sites, Norman said the plan was "nothing to be afraid of or ashamed about" and that the brand would emerge in better shape.

The cull was confirmed to retailers at Vauxhall's annual dealer conference on May 1, 2018, along with an April 2020 end date for all existing dealer contracts.

By the end of 2018, the brand had reduced its network from 326 to 307 retail sites. Norman hopes to end 2019 with 259 franchised retail sites, and 48 ex-sales franchises remaining as authorised repairers.

Norman said retailers are keen to remain with the brand and that he receives an average of 20 completed contracts a week, which brought the refranchising process to the halfway point by the start of February. The speed of the take-up has prompted Vauxhall to bring forward the implementation of new contract terms from May 1 to January 1, 2020.

Norman described the four-month shift as "common sense rather than strategy".

In total, Vauxhall will part company with 12 investors (from 91 to 79),

which Norman claimed would increase throughput of cars per site by 18% between 2018 and 2020.

He said the effects of the new strategy are already being felt: "Network profit has increased by 33% between 2017 and 2018, in terms of the average per retailer."

"Return on sales (RoS) has improved from 0.4 to 0.5% and the number of loss-making retailers has reduced from 92 to 72."

"That means that over 30% of the network is still in loss, though, which is clearly unacceptable."

"We want to achieve a sustainable RoS figure of 1% across the network by 2020."

Norman said the brand's top quartile of dealers make 2.2% RoS, or an average £575,000 profit.

Putting PSA brands together

Norman said there was no plan within PSA Group to bring a certain number of Vauxhall sites into joint franchises with other group brands, but added that situations would be looked at "on a running basis".

In October, Pendragon's Evans Halshaw opened the first UK franchised site to house Peugeot and Vauxhall under one roof in Wakefield.

Norman said: "We have around six Peugeot or Citroën open points which are looking to be jointly franchised with a Vauxhall site at the moment."

Karl Howkins, the managing director of Citroën UK, said three of its new franchised partners recently signed agreements that would bring it together with Vauxhall dealerships at shared locations. Citroën's UK

VAUXHALL TO FOLLOW PEUGEOT'S DIRECT DIGITAL SALE LEAD

Vauxhall will start to introduce an online retail website based on Peugeot's existing system by the end of the year.

Norman revealed the plans for the platform when asked whether the subject of direct online sales would be too sensitive to broach with franchisees still accepting new contracts and the reduction of the physical network.

"Peugeot went online two years ago, and Vauxhall, having now joined the family, will be benefiting from their advance in

the UK, probably towards the end of this year and early next year," he said. "I wouldn't say that's a moment too soon."

"We're not ahead of the game, but it would have been foolish for Vauxhall to invest in another system when Peugeot's is already established."

Norman said Peugeot's talks with its retailers about online retail started several months before its launch in Q1 2017.

He suggested that the same terms and timescales would be offered to Vauxhall retailers.

retail network has shrunk from 156 sites to 144, with Howkins describing the current scale as "about right", despite listing Aberdeen and Cambridge among key open points.

The scale of network reduction has been felt more by Peugeot franchisees in recent years.

Following Dave Peel's appointment as Peugeot UK managing director in March 2016, the brand worked with Experian on a strategy to deliver an average RoS of 1.5% by reducing its network to 180 sites by 2020.

In 2015, franchisees' average RoS was just 0.6%.

Peugeot has completed its restructure earlier than expected. A spokesman for Peugeot UK said the re-sized network of 180 retailers had experienced its strongest profitability of the past decade in 2018, with three quarters of its network hitting the 1.5% RoS target and an average profit of more than £250,000.

The network as a whole generated average profit of more than £120,000, returning close to 1% RoS.

One retail group boss said such results would be welcome from Vauxhall's plan.

He said: "It was a brave thing to do."

It's hard to see that it won't have a network which is in far better shape."

The National Franchised Dealers Association's Summer 2018 Dealer Attitude Survey, however, showed that the mood among Vauxhall's franchisees had declined, with its overall rating falling from 4.2 to 4.1 (average: 5.7).

Other network contractions

Ford maintains the UK's largest franchised retail network, but has closed 35 franchised sites since the start of 2017 – taking its total to 435.

A spokesman said the reduction was mainly down to the loss of "smaller 'market-town' retail dealers, reflecting a natural attrition of family businesses formerly passed between generations, and their appraisal of town centre and other local prospects".

Ford franchisees have consolidated their smallest sites into single, large FordStores, and the brand has begun online new car sales and opened a Digital FordStore in Manchester's Arndale shopping centre.

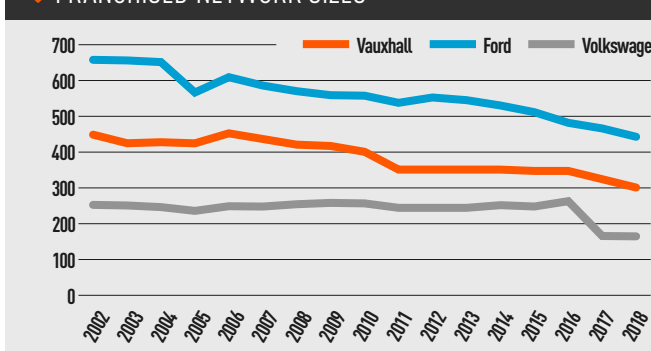
Honda reduced its total franchised sites from 165 dealers at the start of 2017 to 155 at the end of 2018.

Volkswagen, meanwhile, which outsold Vauxhall by almost 26,000 vehicles in 2018, has maintained its 188-strong representation over the past 12 months.

This was despite an indication in mid-2017 from Jürgen Stackmann, a member of Volkswagen's board of management, that the brand would have to reduce the scale of its retail network by 10% across Europe as part of its attempts to deliver efficiency improvements worth £3.2 billion a year by 2020.

TOM SHARPE

FRANCHISED NETWORK SIZES



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ADVERTISING FEATURE

Back to basics:
the presentation

You've got to sell the car before you sell the deal, says Simon Bowkett of Symco Training



When does the best presentation of a car happen in your dealership? In my experience, it's at the handover. That's often when the customer finds out for the first time about some of the amazing things the technology in their

brand new car can do for them. Why aren't we doing this early on in the sales process?

In fact, a great presentation at the right time is one of the biggest things I see not happening in car dealerships today. Or if they are done, they tend to be the "it's got... it's got... it's got..." type of 'feature dump' presentation.

We have to get back to the basics, and that's the subject of my new sales training video on the AM website this month (www.am-online.com/symcotraining, or at www.symcotraining.co.uk).

Qualify the customer first

To give a professional presentation, the first thing you have to do is qualify the customer to find out what they are interested in on that car. Then follow the features-advantages-benefits structure.

- Feature – what the actual feature is.
- Advantage – the generic advantage.
- Benefit – what it means for your particular customer.

Yes, it's as old as the hills. But it works.

Here's the way I like to remember it. Every year, hundreds of thousands of half-inch drill bits are sold. But nobody really wants to buy them. What they actually want is a half-inch hole. In the same way, people don't want a heated steering wheel, they want to warm their hands up a little after they've scraped the ice off their windscreen on a cold winter's day. They want what the feature will do for them.

Best way to raise the desire

When was the last time you did a walkaround presentation highlighting features, advantages and benefits – the six-position sell – in the showroom? Go back to doing them, because it's the best way there is of raising the customer's desire for your product.

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THIS MONTH'S NEWS HIGHLIGHTS

IN DETAIL
To view the full story go to
am-online.co.uk/news



JAN

15th

FORD AND VOLKSWAGEN FORM VAN AND PICK-UP ALLIANCE

Ford and Volkswagen signed the first agreements to develop new vans and medium-sized pick-up trucks together. They also signed a memorandum of understanding to investigate collaboration on autonomous vehicles, mobility services and electric vehicles.

22nd

PREPARE FOR EVS, PEUGEOT TELLS DEALERS
Peugeot UK managing director David Peel told delegates at the brand's national dealer conference at the NEC in Birmingham to "be prepared" for EVs. Peel told retailers that 100% of the Peugeot product range would have an electrified derivative by 2023.



24th

ARNOLD CLARK ACQUIRES PHOENIX CAR COMPANY

Arnold Clark has acquired Phoenix Car Company, adding six retail sites in Paisley and one in Edinburgh from the group, with franchised partners Hyundai, Kia, Mitsubishi, Suzuki and Honda.



LYNK & CO CLAIMS TO BE FASTEST-GROWING CARMAKER
Geely's Lynk & Co brand became the world's fastest-growing car manufacturer, after 120,414 sales in China during its first year. The brand, which claims to have "made the traditional showroom experience redundant" through a combination of online sales and 'retail stores', will reach the UK next year.

25th

LOOKERS OPENS VW DEALERSHIP IN RESIDENTIAL BLOCK

Lookers has opened a new Volkswagen dealership built into a London housing development. Located beneath apartments, the £10 million Lookers Volkswagen Battersea showroom, at York Road, forms part of a partnership with Linden Homes' £100m housing and commercial development.

28th



VOLVO TO RECALL 30,000 UK VEHICLES OVER FUEL LEAK FEARS
Volvo is recalling more than 30,000 UK vehicles over fuel leak fears as part of a voluntary recall of 219,000 cars globally. News of the recall came in the same month the brand announced plans to retail cars online from April.

SWEDISH INVESTORS BUY 11% SHARE IN PENDRAGON

Pendragon attracted two major investments from Swedish investment company Anders Hedin Invest within a week. Just five days after its acquisition of an initial 9% share, the company, which owns dealerships and leasing businesses in Sweden, Norway and Belgium, took its total share to 11.25%.

GO VAUXHALL SITES RE-BRANDED AS ROBINS & DAY BY PSA RETAIL
Go Vauxhall is being re-branded alongside Robins & Day to highlight the groups' status as part of the PSA Group. All 10 Go Vauxhall sites will be re-branded as the groups are brought together under the trading name Robins & Day by PSA Retail.



JD CLASSICS CREDITOR SUES FOUNDER DEREK HOOD

JD Classics founder Derek Hood is being sued for £64 million by the classic car restoration and retail business' creditor, Charme Capital. *The Times* reported that scrutiny of JD Classics' accounts revealed alleged "financial irregularities", which led to a large write-down of its inventory by private equity firm Charme Capital. Hood denies the allegations.



MARSHALL MOTOR GROUP BUYS SANDICLIFFE ŠKODA SITES
Marshall Motor Group acquired Sandiccliffe Motor Group's Škoda franchises in Nottingham and Leicester. The move increased Marshall's Škoda representation to seven sites.

GOVERNMENT MAY REVIEW £60M NISSAN X-TRAIL PRODUCTION PACKAGE

Following Nissan's decision to abandon plans to build the X-Trail SUV in Sunderland, the Government may 'review' the £60 million funding package put in place to help fund the training of staff at Sunderland in preparation for the new model's arrival on production lines. Nissan is said to have blamed wider industry pressures on the change of plan, with Brexit "uncertainty" also hampering its future planning in the region. ■ Honda joined BMW/Mini and Toyota in making plans for a temporary post-Brexit shut-down period at its UK manufacturing plant. The Japanese manufacturer told 3,500 staff employed at its Swindon production that it will halt production for six days from March 29.



31st

FEB

4th

ADVERTISING FEATURE

How will 5G
affect you and
your video
experience?

By Alistair Horsburgh, CEO, CitNOW



This year 5G is set to become more widespread and it will affect how we use our smartphones dramatically. Retailers utilising video as a means to communicate personally and as a way to showcase used car stock online will benefit from 5G because it is set to boost quality and make it easier for consumers to watch content on their smartphones.

Faster than the current standard, 4G, 5G will enable us to stream more high-quality video content more quickly – great news for the viewer and retailer staff tasked with shooting and uploading. Professional video presentations will be taken to the next level and viewers will benefit from reduced latency (the time it takes for a video to be clicked and then to play).

In 2018, CitNOW hosted almost 9 million videos on its platform (8,986,860 to be exact) and 5G will deliver a better experience for the viewer, which in turn will enhance video communications making it more mainstream than it is already.

As retailers become more experimental and innovative in their use of video and push the boundaries even further together with even more consumers embracing video messaging, the arrival of 5G will have a crucial role to play in its wider adoption. In fact, these three trends – more diverse use of video, consumer acceptance and 5G, are completely entwined. Each is influencing the other, enabling each to gain more traction. 2019 will be an exciting year for video messaging.

■ For more information, visit www.citnow.com.





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Employees at our 2018 Best Dealerships felt supported, respected and recognised for their good work. They have strong connections with their supervisors and can share their opinions or feedback. They also feel rewarded, with chances to progress their careers, training and a broad range of staff benefits.

If your workforce feels similarly, register your dealership for our 2019 programme, run in partnership with Best Companies Group. It's totally FREE and there is no risk – if your survey results are not strong enough to make the listing, no one outside your business will ever know. But if they are, you will be celebrated as one of the best.



Benefits

What the businesses that become 2019 AM Best UK Dealerships To Work For get:

FREE use of AM Best UK Dealerships To Work For logo for your recruitment marketing

FREE Best Dealership To Work For trophy to display in the workplace, and press release templates for your use

FREE registration to our flagship Automotive Management Live 2019 exhibition at Birmingham NEC, where the awards will be presented

FREE publicity in AM magazine and AM-online

FREE The head of the overall highest-scoring dealership will receive a VIP invitation to the 2020 AM Awards, to join AM on the front tables, and to be presented with their award again on the grand stage at our flagship event

OPTIONAL You can purchase a detailed report from Best Companies Group, with your employees' anonymised responses to each of the survey's questions, verbatim comments and benchmarking data. **This is purely optional.** No purchase is necessary to take part

A risk-free way to assess and promote your dealership

SPONSOR'S COMMENT

**By Richard Jones,**
managing director,
Black Horse

Last month, I commented on the forthcoming FCA motor finance market study, in particular on commission

structures. While we still await its publication, I wanted to reflect on discussions I have had across the market. We are living in uncertain times, but they are not unprecedented.

Many influences are bringing pressure to the automotive value chain. Manufacturers face big increases in investment to deal with electric and autonomous vehicles and races in technology, refinement and emissions. Add in China's market stall and profit stresses appear – manufacturer collaborations will surely keep increasing.

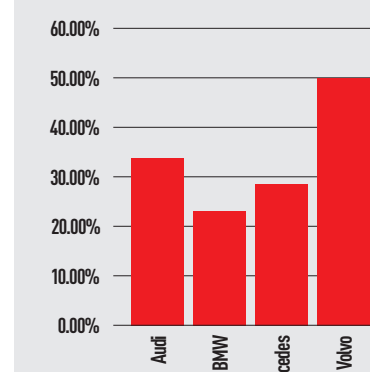
Retailers have (generally) faced declining profits as margins shrink and costs rise. They are responding with measures such as aftersales focus, the used car value chain and increasing earnings from ancillaries, in particular F&I. The latter has become so important I wonder if any retailer groups would survive without it. Therefore, high conduct standards are essential, both for customer outcomes and a viable business model – F&I partners must be chosen wisely.

For lenders, a combination of strong competition, high regulation and low interest rates have meant customers are (generally) paying less for motor finance over time – good news. However, funding costs are rising and retailers may look for a higher share, so lenders also face margin squeeze. Lenders focus on credit and RV risk, especially given the consumer credit cycle, although that is hard to predict in our current environment.

Finally, digitalisation is providing more choice and facilitating the rise of the 'middle-middle' players in the value chain – be that for cars, finance, insurance etc. Who wins from these models? Is the customer winning? Is the total value chain simply getting squeezed along the way?

Depressed yet? We shouldn't be – lenders, retailers and manufacturers need to collaborate more in these circumstances. Building strong partnerships over time is a way to navigate pressure, adapt and develop winning models together. Then our customers are well served, provided with good value and all in a model where partners make a justified return. Exciting times.

PROPORTION OF CROSSOVER SALES BY MANUFACTURER 2018



regulators. Intense pressure to reduce CO2 figures through the 2020s will make manufacturers wonder if adding bulk – to the detriment of both weight and aerodynamics – is really such a great idea. It will be interesting to see how consumers react to the pressure to make cars smaller again. There was a phrase in the skiing industry a few years ago, when skis started to change from long and narrow to much shorter and wider: "Once you go fat, you never go back" – people who bought their first wide skis never went back to narrow ones. Will crossover drivers be prepared to go back to hatchbacks? **DAVID FRANCIS**

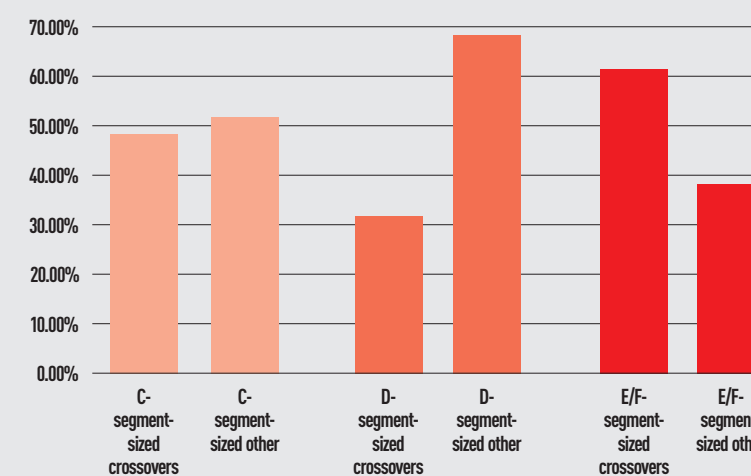
are unlikely to become the segment-leader any time soon. The supermini segment is exceptionally price-sensitive – after all, a significant proportion of customers are buying a supermini because they cannot afford a larger car. From the manufacturers' point of view, the point of selling crossovers is that they have a better margin than hatchbacks – there is little point designing a crossover that has the same transaction price as a hatchback.

However, it is possible that hatchbacks will go back to the position they held in the early 1970s – dominant only in the B-segment (a class created by the first small hatchbacks, such as the Renault 5 and Fiat 127).

In medium-sized cars, hatchbacks with strong brands (the prime example being the Golf) will continue to thrive, but there will be a lot less room for "me-too" models. Twenty years ago, every mainstream brand had a C-segment hatchback because it was the centre of the European car market. Today, who would notice if Fiat, Renault or Citroën stopped marketing such models? Even the once-mighty Astra is looking vulnerable. The UK is traditionally Opel/Vauxhall's largest market, but last year the Astra sold just 31,600 examples (down 36.1%), which was slightly fewer than the Mokka X, Vauxhall's B-segment crossover. Fifteen years ago, total European Astra sales were 500,000 per year – in 2018, they were about 160,000.

In fact, the main opposition to crossovers is less likely to come from consumers than

SHARE OF CROSSOVERS VS OTHER BODYSTYLES 2018*



* See text. Premium SUVs are combined with equivalent non-crossover models, e.g. Audi Q7 with luxury saloons

THE SUV HAS CROSSED OVER

Crossovers and SUVs are on the verge of becoming the dominant bodystyle for all cars

From the rise to prominence of the hatchback in the 1970s (e.g. the Mark One Golf in 1975) through to the mid-2000s, the dominant bodystyles were hatchbacks for small/lower-medium cars and saloons for large/premium cars.

Over time, the dividing line became sharper: lower-medium saloons such as the Ford Orion died out, and Ford's Sierra, launched initially only as a hatchback, morphed into the current Mondeo saloon. The only other choices for non-sports cars were estates (less than 10% of the total market) and the steady rise of what we used to call 4x4s. The 1970 Range Rover set off a slow-burn revolution – slow because many people could not see beyond the British Leyland quality problems to realise the full potential of the concept.

By the early 1990s, the Land Rover Discovery and the first European-spec Jeep Cherokee showed that the Range Rover concept could be expanded. Toyota then created the leisure SUV in the 1994 RAV4, and the segment started to grow significantly.

The car that added afterburners to the concept was the 2006 Nissan Qashqai, which offered an SUV outline to Nissan Almera buyers. Instead of an identikit hatchback on the drive, Mondeo Man and Worcester Woman could have something that

looked to the neighbours like a smaller brother of those swanky Land Rovers and BMW X5s. The other benefit was the higher driving position – with increasing congestion and more speed cameras, you might as well get a decent view of what is eroding your driving enjoyment.

Today, crossovers and SUVs are on the verge of becoming the dominant bodystyle for all cars larger than superminis. In the C segment, crossovers such as the Qashqai took 42.8% of the segment last year, while hatchbacks and estates took 52.4%. However, there is another segment that has to be taken into account – premium compact crossovers. These are models such as the Volvo XC40 and BMW X1, which accounted for an additional 105,000 registrations, and are the same size as a Ford Kuga. If all C-segment-sized cars are combined, 49% are crossovers and 46.9% hatchbacks and estates. Given the growth rate of more than 10% a year for crossovers, 2019 is likely to see them take an absolute majority of sales in this category.

In the next category up, it is a similar story. Combining D-segment models, such as the Mondeo, with compact executive models such as the BMW 3 Series, gives a total market share of 7.6% (down from 9.5% in 2017). Market share of D-segment premium crossovers (e.g. BMW X3 or Volvo XC60) was 4.9%, up from 4.6% last year. The residual strength of long-

term favourites such as the BMW 3 Series and Audi A4 means traditional models are putting up more of a fight in this category, but it seems likely that crossovers will nevertheless become the majority bodystyle within a few years.

In luxury cars, that has already happened. The combined market share of traditional executive and luxury models, such as the Jaguar XF and Mercedes S-Class, was 3.7%. The share of luxury SUVs, (e.g. Land Rover Discovery, Range Rover), was 6.1%. Thus, luxury SUVs took 62.3% of combined sales. In fact, this was only a modest rise on 2017 (61.4%), indicating that luxury SUVs are so well established that there is less room for further market share growth (as discussed above, the luxury Range Rover set the template nearly 50 years ago, so these are the longest-established SUVs).

If the crossover bodystyle is going to dominate medium and large cars, the question arises – how far down the segments can it go? Could it become the leading design for superminis? B-segment crossovers currently account for 31.8% of the segment, up from 26% in 2017. In contrast, hatchbacks took a commanding 66.8% share in 2018. While crossovers can continue to grow, with important new models on the horizon, such as the Škoda Kamiq, second-generation Juke, and a Fiesta-based replacement for the Ecosport, they

NEW CAR REGISTRATIONS

SMMT calls for Government diesel drive to rescue ailing registrations

New car registrations declined by 1.6% overall in January despite a 2.9% increase in the number of private buyers starting 2019 with the purchase of a new vehicle.

The Society of Motor Manufacturer and Traders’ (SMMT) data showed that 161,013 new cars were registered in the UK.

But while the private market accounted for 71,378 registrations, demand from business and fleet buyers fell by 33.5% and 3.4% respectively.

Some industry observers say unclear Government policy regarding emission-based taxes could be to blame.

National Franchised Dealers Association (NFDA) director Sue Robinson said: “The retail automotive industry is flexible and resilient, but we urge the Government to provide clarity to businesses and consumers as soon as possible.”

SMMT chief executive Mike Hawes said: “It’s encouraging to see car registrations in January broadly on par with a year ago as the latest hi-tech models and deals attracted buyers into showrooms.

“This, however, is still the fifth consecutive month of overall decline in the market.

“To restore momentum, we need supportive policies, not least on vehicle taxation, to encourage buyers to invest in new, cleaner vehicles that best suit their driving needs – from the latest petrols and diesels to an ever-growing range of exciting electrified vehicles.

“This would be good for the environment and good for the industry and those who depend on it.”

Appetite for alternative fuel vehicles (AFVs) did grow significantly during January, the SMMT said.

A rise in registrations of 26.3%, resulting in a total 6.8% market share, supported the SMMT’s latest forecast for AFV sales to rise by a quarter to about 177,000 units by the end of 2019.

Petrol demand also grew by 7.3% in January, but this was not enough to offset another month of decline for diesel, as registrations fell by 20.3%.

January						
Marque	2019	% market share	2018	% market share	% change	
1	Ford	16,629	10.33	19,654	12.01	-15.39
2	Volkswagen	13,224	8.21	12,579	7.69	5.13
	Vauxhall	12,250	7.61	12,652	7.73	-3.18
	Mercedes-Benz	12,249	7.61	11,891	7.27	3.01
	BMW	9,553	5.93	9,000	5.50	6.14
3	Audi	8,632	5.36	11,806	7.22	-26.88
	Toyota	8,575	5.33	7,975	4.87	7.52
4	Kia	8,328	5.17	7,582	4.63	9.84
	Nissan	6,969	4.33	7,917	4.84	-11.97
	Hyundai	5,778	3.59	6,429	3.93	-10.13
	Peugeot	5,653	3.51	5,276	3.22	7.15
	Land Rover	5,601	3.48	5,660	3.46	-1.04
	Seat	5,522	3.43	4,203	2.57	31.38
	Škoda	5,402	3.36	5,473	3.35	-1.30
5	Volvo	4,079	2.53	2,270	1.39	79.69
	Citroën	3,887	2.41	3,488	2.13	11.44
	Honda	3,700	2.30	4,282	2.62	-13.59
	Renault	3,365	2.09	3,747	2.29	-10.19
	Mini	3,251	2.02	2,871	1.75	13.24
	Suzuki	3,006	1.87	3,305	2.02	-9.05
	Mazda	2,724	1.69	2,861	1.75	-4.79
	Dacia	2,475	1.54	2,121	1.30	16.69
	Jaguar	2,121	1.32	2,174	1.33	-2.44
	Fiat	1,676	1.04	1,714	1.05	-2.22
	Mitsubishi	1,213	0.75	1,555	0.95	-21.99
	Lexus	1,007	0.63	887	0.54	13.53
	MG	754	0.47	475	0.29	58.74
6	Porsche	581	0.36	994	0.61	-41.55
	Smart	490	0.30	601	0.37	-18.47
7	Jeep	372	0.23	235	0.14	58.30
	Alfa Romeo	299	0.19	277	0.17	7.94
	Abarth	260	0.16	279	0.17	-6.81
	DS	253	0.16	290	0.18	-12.76
	SsangYong	208	0.13	187	0.11	11.23
	Subaru	174	0.11	155	0.09	12.26
	Bentley	130	0.08	138	0.08	-5.80
	Maserati	83	0.05	110	0.07	-24.55
	McLaren	56	0.03	53	0.03	5.66
	Infiniti	32	0.02	94	0.06	-65.96
	Alpine	16	0.01	0	0.00	0.00
	Lotus	7	0.00	12	0.01	-41.67
	Chevrolet	0	0.00	1	0.00	0.00
	Other British	222	0.14	138	0.08	60.87
	Other imports	207	0.13	204	0.12	1.47
	Total	161,013		163,615		-1.59

1 FORD

With three models in the month’s top 10 sellers (Fiesta, Focus and Kuga) Ford states its intention to fight hard in 2019. Yet its market share continues to slip, down to 10.3% from the 10.7% it ended 2018 with. Its January registrations declined by 3,025 units.

2 VOLKSWAGEN

Its growth continues, with 645 more sales than January 2018. Of its 13,224 registrations, top performers were Golf at 4,270 units and Polo at 2,963. It is now only two percentage points away from the market leader.

3 AUDI

It sold 3,174 fewer cars in January year-on-year, the largest volume drop of any brand in the table.

4 KIA

Its Sportage SUV can do no wrong – it’s off to a good start with 2,622 sales in January, beating the Ford Kuga. Kia’s total registrations for the month reached 8,328 – 746 units, or 10%, ahead year-on-year.

5 VOLVO

The Swedish brand is off to a strong start. January registrations were up 80% on 2018, an extra 1,809 units, which is the strongest increase of any brand. The XC60 and XC40 remain very good sellers for Volvo.

6 PORSCHE

It continues to feel the impact of the WLTP transition, which has held up supply of new cars. A 42% decline equated to almost 12 fewer registrations per dealership last month.

7 JEEP

A 58% rise in January registrations works out as 137 more cars sold for Jeep’s dealer network – some much-needed good news for a brand that ended 2018 down 4%.

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FINANCE OFFERS

Carmakers cut PCP prices to kickstart Q1

Manufacturers have adjusted their retail offer strategies to kickstart the year with a 4.4% drop in the average monthly prices of PCP deals, to £311.40, according to AM's latest quarterly data. The increased affordability across manufacturers' model ranges is in contrast to the 5.5% quarterly rise seen in Q4 2018. AM's analysis of 259 representative examples from manufacturer's websites display a theme of increased affordability to target customers until the end of March. More than half of all the offers collated by AM for Q1 (55.6%) are priced below that average £311.40 price point, demonstrating a push to make models across ranges more affordable in a quarter that will be critical for dealers' bottom lines in 2019.

Average deposit levels also followed suit to become more affordable this quarter, dropping by 10% on average, from £5,845.50 to £5,250.92. While not exactly affordable, the average balloon payment also fell in Q1 from £12,142, to £11,621. Manufacturer finance houses also reduced their margins in Q1 to 3.78% APR after an average of 4.35% APR in Q4 2018. AM's data tracked 63 0% offers in Q1, a big increase quarter-on-quarter, up from 41 in Q4 2018.

Dacia and Suzuki once again dominate the affordability rankings by lowest monthly payment, with the Sandero Access SCe 75 priced from just £79 a month. Dacia has four models in the top 10 most affordable list, although the brand is continuing with its strategy of a high APR at 6.9%, almost double the Q1 average, to offset the low deposits.

The best 0% offers with the lowest monthly payments are more of an eclectic mix of makes and models, with Ford, Toyota, Seat, Citroën, Fiat and Jeep all present in the top 10.

There are models such as the Ford Ka Zetec city car for £99 a month, a Fiat 500L MPV for £155 a month, Ford Tourneo Courier MPV for £159 and Jeep Renegade SUV for £169.

The Suzuki Swift is also worth mentioning due to an offer of no deposit and monthly payments of £179.54.

According to the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders' (SMMT) end-of-year data for 2018, the UK's new car diesel market declined 29.6% in 2018. While growth in petrol (8.7%) and alternative fuel vehicles (up 20.9%) replaced some of the loss, it has not been enough to offset the full shortfall.

The SMMT said many diesel owners are still

TOP FINANCE DEALS FOR RETAIL BUYERS							
Model	Finance type	Deposit	Term	Monthly payment	Final payment	APR	Offer ends
Top 10 models by lowest monthly payments							
Dacia Sandero Access SCe 75	PCP	£1,161.00	49	£79.00	£2,974.00	6.9%	01/04/2019
Ford Ka+ Zetec 1.2 Ti-VCT 85PS	PCP	£3,322.00	24	£99.00	£6,147.00	0%	31/03/2019
Dacia Sandero Stepway Essential TCe 90	PCP	£2,286.00	49	£109.00	£3,781.00	7%	01/04/2019
Dacia Duster Access SCe 115 4x2	PCP	£1,446.00	49	£109.00	£5,213.00	6.9%	01/04/2019
Dacia Logan MCV Access SCe 75	PCP	£1,414.00	49	£109.00	£2,957.00	6.9%	01/04/2019
Suzuki Ignis Dualjet SZ3	PCP	£1,912.11	48	£109.00	£5,263.00	6.9%	31/03/2019
Mitsubishi Eclipse Cross 2 Petrol Manual 2WD	PCP	£6,516.00	36	£119.40	£10,554.00	6%	27/03/2019
Toyota Aygo x-trend 1.0 VVT-i Manual	PCP	£2,901.00	42	£129.00	£4,770.00	0%	31/03/2019
Citroen C1 VTi 72 manual 5dr Flair	PCP	£2,429.00	48	£129.00	£3,868.00	0%	31/03/2019
Suzuki Celerio SZ3 Dualjet 5dr	PCP	£2,083.21	48	£139.00	£3,383.00	6.9%	31/03/2019
Top 10 0% offers at lowest monthly payment							
Ford KA+ Zetec 1.2 Ti-VCT 85PS	PCP	£3,322.00	24	£99.00	£6,147.00	0%	31/03/2019
Toyota Aygo x-trend 1.0 VVT-i Manual	PCP	£2,901.00	42	£129.00	£4,770.00	0%	31/03/2019
Citroen C1 VTi 72 manual 5dr Flair	PCP	£2,429.00	48	£129.00	£3,868.00	0%	31/03/2019
Seat Design Mii 1.0 12V 60PS	PCP	£1,269.00	48	£149.00	£3,128.00	0%	01/04/2019
Seat Ibiza FR 1.0 TSI 115PS	PCP	£1,999.00	48	£149.00	£6,813.00	0%	01/04/2019
Citroen C3 PureTech 68 manual Feel	PCP	£2,754.00	48	£149.00	£4,703.00	0%	31/03/2019
Fiat Panda Waze 1.2 70PS	PCP	£1,835.00	36	£155.00	£4,350.00	0%	31/03/2019
Fiat 500L S-Design 1.4 95PS S-Design	PCP	£3,629.00	36	£155.00	£7,542.00	0%	31/03/2019
Ford Tourneo Courier Zetec 1.0 EcoBoost 100PS	PCP	£2,963.00	36	£159.00	£6,728.00	0%	31/03/2019
Jeep Renegade Sport 1.0 GSE T3 120PS Manual	PCP	£5,897.00	36	£169.00	£6,719.00	0%	31/03/2019
Top 10 EV or hybrid models by lowest monthly payment							
Toyota Yaris Icon Tech Hybrid Petrol 1.5 VVT-i Auto	PCP	£3,896.00	42	£189.00	£7,110.00	0%	31/03/2019
Renault Zoe Dynamique Nav R110	PCP	£4,499.00	36	£199.00	£4,850.00	5%	01/04/2019
Toyota Corolla Hybrid Design 1.8 CVT	PCP	£4,964.00	42	£229.00	£9,967.50	0%	31/03/2019
Toyota C-HR Design 5dr Coupe FWD Hybrid 1.8 VVT-i Auto	PCP	£6,546.00	24	£249.00	£15,187.50	0%	31/03/2019
Lexus CT 200h with Sport Pack	PCP	£5,715.00	42	£259.00	£10,080.00	4%	31/03/2019
Ford Mondeo Titanium Edition HYBRID Electric 2.0 TiVCT 187PS Auto	PCP	£6,934.00	36	£269.00	£10,522.00	0%	31/03/2019
Toyota RAV4 Hybrid Design 2.5 FWD Automatic	PCP	£7,588.00	24	£279.00	£17,730.00	0%	31/03/2019
Mitsubishi Outlander PHEV Juro Petrol Hybrid Auto 4WD	PCP	£12,202.00	36	£287.92	£14,980.00	5.9%	27/03/2019
Toyota Prius Business Edition Plus 5 door 1.8 VVT-i Auto	PCP	£5,664.00	42	£299.00	£12,802.50	4.9%	31/03/2019
Kia Niro Self Charging Hybrid 2 1.6 GDI 1.56kwh lithium-ion 139bhp 6-speed auto DCT	PCP	£2,249.00	36	£308.93	£10,797.00	5.9%	31/03/2019
Top 10 models by lowest deposit							
Suzuki Swift 1.0 Boosterjet SZ-T	PCP	£0.00	48	£179.54	£5,381.00	0%	31/03/2019
Fiat 500 Pop 1.2 E6d	PCP	£0.00	36	£199.00	£4,846.00	0%	31/03/2019
Fiat 500 Collezione 1.2 70PS E6D	PCP	£0.00	36	£239.00	£5,656.00	0%	31/03/2019
Renault Clio Play TCe 75	PCP	£169.00	48	£169.00	£5,511.00	0%	01/04/2019
Smart Fortwo Coupe Passion 72 PS (52 kW), manual, optional metallic body panels	PCP	£169.00	48	£169.00	£3,560.00	2%	31/03/2019
Smart Forfour Passion 72 PS (52 kW), manual	PCP	£169.00	48	£169.00	£3,370.00	2%	31/03/2019
Smart Fortwo Cabrio Passion 72PS (52 kW), manual with optional metallic body panels	PCP	£195.00	48	£195.00	£4,860.00	2%	31/03/2019
Renault Captur Iconic TCe 90	PCP	£239.00	48	£239.00	£6,522.00	5%	01/04/2019
Nissan Juke Bose Personal Edition 1.6 Manual	PCP	£261.18	48	£261.18	£6,542.20	0%	31/03/2019
Hyundai i10 S 1.0 67PS petrol manual	PCP	£900.00	24	£197.77	£3,803.75	6.4%	31/03/2019

adopting a 'wait and see' approach, keeping hold of their older, more polluting vehicles for longer. Retailers have been armed in Q1 with some powerful AFV deals, with every vehicle in the top 10 most affordable offering monthly payments below the quarterly average of £311.40. The Toyota Yaris Hybrid is the most affordable on the market right now at £189 a month over a 42-month 0% offer. The Renault Zoe is the most



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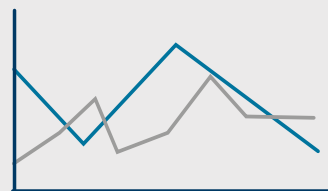
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VIEWPOINT



CUSTOMERS, NOT CELEBS, CAN REBUILD TRUST IN MOTOR RETAIL

PROFESSOR JIM SAKER is director of the Centre for Automotive Management at Loughborough University's Business School and an AM Awards judge. He has been involved in the automotive industry for more than 20 years

William Bernbach, the founder of global advertising agency DDB, once said that “good advertising does not just circulate information – it penetrates the public mind with desires and belief”.

With politicians issuing statements based more on opinion than fact and our own industry guilty of falsifying information and misleading the public, it is understandable that they become somewhat cynical about the marketing messages they receive.

Over the past five years, this ambivalence to conventional promotional approaches has given rise to the role of online ‘influencers’. Whether this is an Instagrammer who snaps a selfie with the product or a YouTuber who produces a vlog of their experience, they come at a cost, but can reach a highly engaged audience that trusts their opinion.

One of the best examples of this is Daniel Wellington, the Swedish watch brand founded in 2011. It bypassed traditional marketing by enlisting thousands of micro-influencers on social media channels. Through a combination of gifting the watch or paying the influencer, they promote the #danielwellington hashtag by showcasing the product in their Instagram posts alongside a unique discount code that their followers can use to buy it. Since 2011, Daniel Wellington has gained 4.2 million Instagram followers with 1.8m posts containing the hashtag. This has successfully

filtered down to profit – it is the fastest-growing private company in the industry, selling more than a million watches a year, with \$228m annual revenue.

However, the authenticity and impartiality of some online influencers has been called into question. Research conducted by the BBC in December 2018 showed that 82% of the people polled said it was not always clear whether the influencer had been paid or not for promoting the product or service.

At the end of January, the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) said 16 celebrities – including the model Rosie Huntington-Whiteley, musician Rita Ora, and YouTube star Zoella – had pledged to declare whether they had been paid for any endorsement or received a featured product as a gift. Warning letters were sent to other celebrities and influencers, as well as advertising and PR agencies, since the CMA began its investigation into the practice in August.

Our industry has used celebrity influencers for a long time and it has always been fairly obvious that they have been paid. But for a long time, I have believed the greatest untapped source of influence is not the celebrity, but our own customer base.

In a time of uncertainty, maybe it is time to allow our customers a bigger share of voice on our local digital channels. ‘Word of mouth’ recommendations need to move from the verbal to the digital, providing authenticity and belief to our promotional activity.

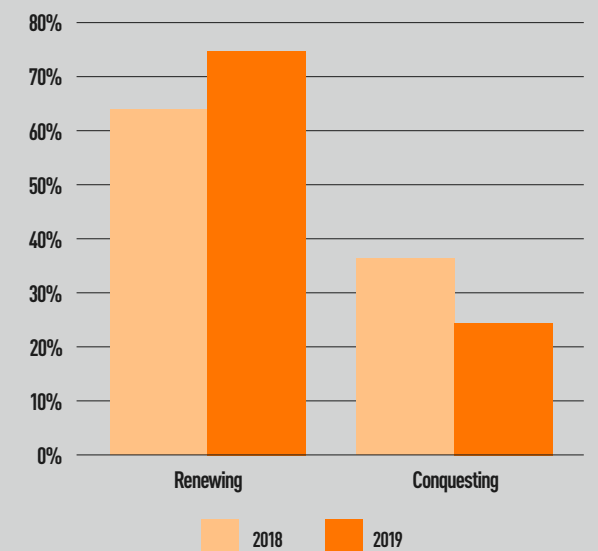
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AMPOLL

WHERE WILL MOST FOCUS IN THE YEAR AHEAD BE: ON RENEWING YOUR EXISTING CUSTOMERS OR ON CONQUESTING NEW BUYERS?



Three out of four dealers are preparing to work harder on customer retention than on tempting fresh business to their showrooms this year. As the market recovers from the WLTP supply issues of late 2018, and the Government continues to argue about Brexit, it seems dealers' new car targets, and strategies, are erring on the side of caution.

The Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders forecasts a full-year new car market decline of 2.3%. So 2019 could be a year that tests dealers' CRM activities.

In retailers' favour, the 1.2 million new cars sold in the private market during 2016 will be reaching the three-year-old point, and with most of these on PCP finance, private customers will be making the decision whether to go into another new car or refinance their balloon payment. The onus must be on dealers to contact these customers in good time with a strong offer to negate the likelihood that they will desert for another brand.

One dealer said: “Ensuring that we spend money on looking after and keeping in contact with current customers can only be better than trying to get what everyone else is trying to do.”

Nevertheless, there are brands with ambitions to grow their market share in 2019.

“We will continue to renew our own customers, but we need new blood so the majority of our focus has to be on conquest,” said another respondent.

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“EVERYONE IN THE BUSINESS IS AWARE THAT THEY WORK THE LAST HOUR OF EVERY DAY TO IMPROVE THE LIFE OF SOMEONE LESS FORTUNATE THAN THEMSELVES

MARK MITCHELL

FACE TO FACE: MITCHELL GROUP

THE RECIPE FOR 4% RETURN ON SALES? PUTTING PEOPLE FIRST

From flowers and hot bacon rolls for customers, to charitable giving and a free employee lodge in Snowdonia, Mark Mitchell's ethos is paying off, **Tom Sharpe** reports

Like many employers, Mitchell Group claims to put people first, but within minutes of the start of *AM*'s interview, managing director Mark Mitchell introduces a line-up of senior staff who support his claim.

Group finance director Julie Oliver; Mazda brand manager Brian Blanchard; Škoda brand manager Richard Macklin; group parts manager Steve Price; group service manager Mick Mills; group marketing and communications manager Ian Wilde; and Neil Crowdon, Mitchell's fellow shareholder and director, assemble in the stairwell at the heart of the group's Mazda and Škoda dual-franchise facility at Cheshire Oaks to recreate an image (see overleaf) taken 10 years earlier for a feature on the business.

Not many franchised retail groups can claim to have such continuity, or the 4% staff turnover that suggests this trend extends beyond senior positions.

"There's a real family culture here and it pays huge dividends in staff recruitment and efficiency," said Mitchell.

"A happy team, all working for one another, is always going to be more productive."

CLOSE FINANCIAL CONTROLS

A culture that creates such a loyal workforce almost certainly contributes to the group's 4.36% return-on-sales in 2018 (2017: 4.2%), an improvement on the near-4% RoS figure it posted in 2009.

But tight financial control is also key. Last year, Mitchell Group increased year-on-year turnover by 2.6%, to £49.49 million (2017: £48.24m), while pre-tax profit rose 6.5% to £2.16m (2017: £2.02m).

"It's not clear to customers, but behind the scenes daily operating controls are central to our business success," said Mitchell.

"In retail, we need to control the sales day-by-day, not month-by-month.

"We constantly look at every car invoice – new or used and trade – and review all the vehicle stock and debtors."

Mitchell holds a management meeting on the last day of every month.

"In that meeting, we convert the work in the workshops and in progress into invoices, and that's never less than £10,000. We also look closely at parts obsolescence [controlling costs and cashflow]," he said.

"Management accounts reviews happen within the first four days of each month and I'll have a full set of consolidated accounts within the first six days of the start of the month." (Mitchell is true to his word – the group's 2018 financial results arrived at *AM* just days into 2019.)

The group's profitability figures are all the more impressive because they exclude a tithe of more than £230,000 into charitable projects – a pledge made as a result of Mitchell's Christian faith.

The group also runs a workplace scheme which sees staff support African children through payroll.

Payments into the scheme start at £1.80 a month and increase annually to a maximum of £18.

Every two to three years, groups of six or seven staff complete a trip to Uganda to see where their money is spent and who it has benefitted.

"Everyone in the business is aware that they work the last hour of every day to improve the life of someone less fortunate than themselves," said Mitchell.

"I think that brings my workforce an immense sense of well-being and working together to support a cause, and it also fosters an attitude which feeds into the way that customers are treated when they visit us."

TREATING STAFF FAIRLY

Following a brain haemorrhage he suffered while on holiday in France in July 2017, Mitchell is now starting to return to the business on a regular basis,

working five- or six-hour days.

"It put things into perspective and people told me to take more of a back seat, but I love the business. I couldn't walk away," he said.

"I don't really run things anyway. The team here do a fantastic job. I see myself more as someone who's here to support the workforce and maintain the culture that we want to project."

A policy of not opening on Sundays may be related to Mitchell's faith, but all 103 group staff benefit.

Other projects have been designed to ensure that staff make the most of their free time, striking the right work/life balance.

"When I was ill, all the relationships that I'd forged over the years really came to the fore and the support I received made me take stock," said Mitchell. "We all need to prioritise those around us and make the very best of our free time."

Wilde said the group invested in a lodge at Snowdonia's Brynteg rural retreat 12 months ago, with the sole purpose of encouraging staff to embrace their time away from the business.

"Any member of staff can book three or four nights completely free of charge. All they have to do is turn up and turn on the lights.

"Everyone has really embraced the opportunity. The lodge is as fully utilised as our workshops."

In order to maintain a reliable, high-quality workforce, Mitchell encourages promotion from within and rewards staff who attract a friend or relative into the workforce with a £500 one-off payment.

Wilde – who has run Mitchell's Lexus franchise and worked in marketing and communications in the past – is now working within the finance department and completing a chartered accountancy qualification through ACCA in preparation to step into Oliver's role when she retires.

Asked when that might be, she said:



The real 10-year challenge is holding on to valued staff – Mitchell Group's senior management team in 2009 and today

C "I have no plans to go just yet... Four or five years."

Despite the forward planning, father-of-two Mitchell has no succession plan and claims that his recent health scare hasn't prompted him to put anything in place.

HANDS-ON CUSTOMER CARE

During AM's visit, Mitchell's hands-on approach to the business was apparent.

As he moved through an upstairs waiting

area he greeted patrons by name, while two members of staff – full-timers who cater for both the workforce and customers – handed out hot bacon rolls.

Mitchell Group prides itself on consistently delivering the levels of customer care that other retail operators hope for, but often struggle to deliver.

For example, it hosts the biggest Mazda MX-5 annual drive-out event in Europe on an annual basis – up to 165 cars join the driving

day, with lunch and snack stops along the way.

Customers are also rewarded with a regular free car wash.

Blanchard said: "We do wash and go, which very few retailers can replicate. Anyone who has bought a car from us can come back and get a car wash on a Saturday for free. We have 18 valeters washing about 200 cars."

"Customers have their car checked over by us and we ask if we can service it when the time comes."

"From 8.30am to 12.30pm the showroom's packed. There can't be another showroom in the country that has that situation."

"It's too easy for other retailers to simply look at the costs involved and overlook the benefits, but that's a good thing, because it's something that we've become known for."

Mitchell is not shy about the cash he invests in keeping customers happy, revealing that an auditor once questioned the group's annual spend of £73,000 on flowers, which he places in every vehicle purchased from the business.

He reasons, however, that the retention value of the goodwill gesture, amounting to about £25 per customer, far outweighs the burden on the business's bottom line.

During AM's visit, Mitchell heard that a family member of one of his suppliers had received bad news and, within minutes, had instructed his PA to send a hamper to let them know "our thoughts are with them".

Other customer-related goodwill gestures also serve to fulfil Mitchell's charitable giving objectives, its drive to conquest new customers and a community spirit among loyal patrons.

Each year, the group hosts a Christmas carol concert at Chester Cathedral, with about 1,600 attendees, which raises more than £25,000 for local charities.

Mitchell's work for charity was central to his selection for the posting of Deputy Lieutenant of Cheshire and he will assume the ceremonial role of High Sheriff of Cheshire following a ceremony this month.

SINGLE-SITE BENEFITS

Economies of scale are at the heart of Mitchell Group's make-up and both Mitchell and fellow director Neil Crowdon – who was appointed chairman of the Lexus dealer council in February this year – are acutely aware of the efficiencies that its single-site format delivers.

Crowdon, who has been with the business from the start, having worked in the Mobil petrol station operated by Mitchell ahead of the move into franchised retail, initially with Mitsubishi, in 1996, said: "There is a leadership team which leads certain areas of the business and then everyone else is part of the rank and file."

"We have one warranty person, one dealing with health and safety, one [performing] the accounting function of the group as a whole, one person for site maintenance. None of those roles need to be replicated because the three franchises are all on the one site."

Mitchell added: "We don't have a HR manager, either, as we only recruit two or three members of staff a year."

Mitchell is fairly adamant that there will be no growth away from the prominent Cheshire Oaks location, which has good visibility and ample customer parking.

Mitchell has invested about £1.5m in the group's facilities in the past two years and he



Mitchell Group's used Lexus sales return just under £2,000 per unit

is happy with the set-up, which has brought the group to a place where its "£5m in land, £5m in stock and £5m in buildings" are fully paid for, reducing its gearing to zero.

He said: "Eight million shoppers visit Cheshire Oaks each year and we're right here, right on the roundabout and within sight of the M52. There's no doubt that we have a fantastic location and a really efficient set-up for the scale we are dealing with."

"I'm very content with our turnover and I don't think that I'd be able to replicate the hands-on customer care that makes us such a success if we grew the business elsewhere."

WORKING THE MARGINS

Mitchell believes the philanthropic perception of the business is only possible due to its operational successes.

While its staff are well cared for and supported, their continued work-rate is relied upon by the business.

Mitchell said: "Just 40 of our staff are income producers. There are 20 sales executives and 20 technicians and the rest of us support them."

"Their performance is very public and they are very accountable. The techs do earn £35,000 to £38,000 and the sales executives £40,000 a year and they are accountable because their earning affects the whole business."

As well as the sales staff, a spacious workshop provides room for five bays devoted to Lexus aftersales work, five for Mazda, 10 for Škoda and one for MOTs.

Price said: "Workshop labour sales are now in excess of £200,000 a year, with an 80% margin, and we're fully absorbed."

"The workshops are 100% booked most of the time, but some days that

can rise to 120%. Nobody in the business works on a Sunday, the workshops operate between 8.30am and 5pm through the week and on Saturday mornings, though we have considered longer shifts. It's cheaper to sweat the asset than to build, after all."

Macklin is Mitchell's used car acquisition specialist and sources about 450 of the 950 used cars sold by the group each year.

At any one time, there are about 150 used cars displayed on-site, with a further 20 awaiting preparation. Off-site storage provides space for a further 60 vehicles.

Macklin has the freedom to use his gut instinct when acquiring stock from a variety of sources as he targets a return on sale of 10%.

Used Škodas return an average of £1,350 in profit, he said, with Mazda at £1,625 and Lexus just under £2,000 per unit.

Average stock turn for the group is seven or eight times a year.

Macklin said: "We price pretty accurately. Over 85% of our used cars sell within £95 of their advertised price."

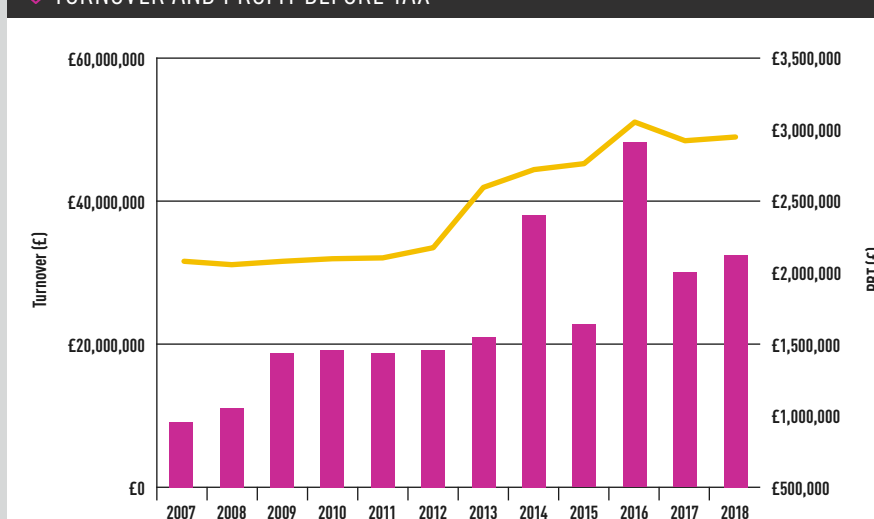
Mitchell said: "We don't tend to discount our cars. Genuinely, we aim to give customers the very best service possible and nurture our relationships with them, but all the warmth we deliver does come at a cost."

"I think our customers place real value in the service they receive from us and that's what keeps them coming back."

FACTFILE

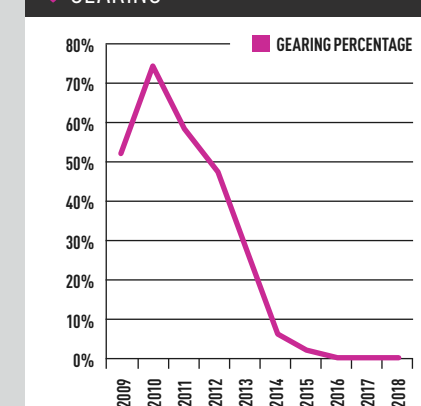
TURNOVER £49.5 MILLION
PROFIT BEFORE TAX £2.16M
ROS 4.4%
FRANCHISES Mazda, Lexus and Škoda
STAFF 103

TURNOVER AND PROFIT BEFORE TAX



Mitchell Group's turnover and profit rose in incremental fashion to a peak performance in 2016, when RoS reached 5.9%. Reduced sales and Lexus corporate identity investment in 2017 and 2018 have brought little added pressure to a business which has maintained a strong return-on-sales and reduced its gearing percentage to zero (see graph opposite), however.

GEARING



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- Operating across the UK and ROI

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Helping 27 million customers fund their purchases responsibly.



30 COUNTRIES

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BNP PARIBAS
PERSONAL FINANCE



INTERVIEW
SUPPLIER



MINUTES WITH...

Martin Forbes, chief executive,
Cox Automotive UK



What were your immediate priorities after being appointed CEO in July?

I have a 'do less, execute well' mentality. Cox was trying to do too much. We needed to redefine and focus on what I call 'core plus'. Core is our B2B wholesale business; the plus is our adjacencies, the businesses that drive the core – Nextgear, our funding arm for dealers to buy stock, and Movex, our de-fleet and refurbish services.

We created confusion in the past. Now we have a simple structure – Dealer Auctions, our new joint venture with Auto Trader; Manheim, our auction centres, inspect and collect, and de-fleet; NextGear; and Modix, our digital marketing solution.

We had to simplify what Cox Automotive means – to our people internally and externally to the trade.

What do you want Cox to mean and how do you plan to further evolve?

We should be seen as an automotive leader, the go-to company in the B2B marketplace. We need to provide solutions to problems, whether that's for dealers, buyers, sellers, manufacturers, fleets or leasing companies. We pull together services to create efficiencies to maximise our customers' profits and make them more viable commercially.

We are seeing immense change in our industry. If we continue with the strategy we have, we will become irrelevant.

Manheim and remarketing is our bread and butter, even though we have a portfolio of services. But it is under attack and evolving from many angles. Vendors are placing cars further upstream and avoiding the auction. Others are moving to digital platforms – either their own or via

REMARKETING IS OUR BREAD AND BUTTER... BUT IT IS UNDER ATTACK... WE HAVE TO EVOLVE, AND THIS IS THROUGH DIGITAL

**MARTIN FORBES,
COX AUTOMOTIVE UK**

a third party – and we see less going through physical auction.

We also have buyers looking at different ways to buy stock. There is not enough of the right stock in the market and they are becoming savvy and going to the source, missing out the middleman. Physical auction is not dead, but we have to evolve, and this is through digital.

We need to be a remarketing service that is omni-channel and channel-agnostic. Vendors shouldn't care about which channels we use, just about getting more value and how quickly we sell the stock. This was our core focus as we moved into 2018. Now we have to execute the plan.

How does the Auto Trader joint venture feed into this strategy?

Auto Trader has years of digital experience and platforms and it has the data. But it doesn't have the understanding of the wholesale market or the ability to move metal. We've seen players come in with excellent technical platforms, but

then they realise that the metal has to be collected, moved from A to B, refurbished and stored. They have all come and gone.

We have seen leasing companies using their own platforms and manufacturer captives using third parties so we have had to be brave because we are now disrupting our industry and our own business by shifting from physical to digital.

Dealer Auction will allow us to aggregate stock in the marketplace. Right now, it's a fragmented market for buyers. They log on to the auction websites to see stock with different contracts, different grading and different photos, and a lack of data – it's too much art and not enough science.

We are trying to create an environment where stock is put into an aggregated pool so buyers can see everything that is available. If they want to transact online they can, but, if they don't, they can still go to the auction centre, whether that's one of ours or a rival business.

There is no reason why any leasing company with a solus remarketing agreement from a physical environment wouldn't want to put their vehicles up on a digital environment first where you have 13,000 dealers, especially if that reduces the days in stock and increases values. We can provide that service.

What other benefits does Dealer Auction offer buyers and sellers?

The average buyer fee on Dealer Auction today is £60; at physical auction it is £200-£250. From a vendor perspective, the car can go up within hours. For physical auction, it can take up to 14 days. We are seeing sales prices go up on Dealer



Auction by a couple of percentage points because dealers are taking the buyer fee into consideration, so they are able to bid more for the car.

What does your future strategy mean for your 16 UK auction centres?

We have to be open and honest – will we have 16 in two or three years' time? The answer is no. Physical auction isn't dead and buried – just come to Colchester on a Friday night to see that – but there is stock that is relevant for digital, such as manufacturer and fleet/leasing stock with a younger age profile, and an element that suits the physical lane, such as dealer part-ex. We will reconfigure our locations. We will have fewer sites, but they will be placed around the country. We will have to complement digital sales by going into de-fleet and refurbishment in a much bigger way. The journey starts now, but it will be 2023/24 by the time we have reconfigured with the right capabilities in the right locations. We will need to stay fluid and agile because we don't know the speed of movement to online.

What proportion of sales are digital today and how do you see the shift evolving?

Including Simulcast, we sell 25-30% of stock in an online environment. If I look at Dealer Auction, every month is a record month. In 2019, we will be close to selling 100,000 vehicles online. It was the lower end of the stock profile, but we are seeing cars getting younger and prices rising. We predicted that 80% of wholesale stock would be sold online by 2023, but I'm not hung up on the details. Whether it's 60% or 80%, 2023 or 2025, our statement shows the direction of travel.

What does a great end-to-end remarketing service look like?

We collect the car from the manufacturer, fleet or leasing company; it goes online; we store it at our de-fleet centre; we recondition it ready for wholesale; the car is bought by a dealer; we offer the dealer a service to make the car retail-ready; the dealer puts the car on their website – they could have even sold it already – and we move the vehicle to their forecourt or do the handover at the customer's address. Our world is not about going to the consumer – it's either a full end-to-end proposition that allows the dealer, fleet and leasing company to keep pace with the market, or it's offering component parts, such as a part-exchange service, digital marketing strategies, live chat and

WE HAVE TO BE OPEN AND HONEST – WILL WE HAVE 16 [AUCTION CENTRES] IN TWO OR THREE YEARS' TIME? THE ANSWER IS NO

**MARTIN FORBES,
COX AUTOMOTIVE UK**

finance to the point that the consumer buys the car.

Will you have to put greater resources into de-fleet to accommodate this level of service?

Yes, that will be a big focus in 2019. We will have to invest heavily to increase our capabilities. Reconditioning to retail-ready is where we don't have sufficient capacity. We want to be able to offer those services at scale by the end of 2019.

Could those centres offer alternative services as well?

When we look at Mobility as a Service (MaaS), having supercentres where you can manage, service and maintain those cars will be key. Where will an autonomous vehicle go for maintenance? We are an expert in dealing with metal, so we see that as an area of potential as we grow our capability. Having de-fleet centres with duality of purpose will increase our footprint as MaaS, transport as a service and subscription models start to take hold.

How will mobility services change the dealer and remarketing environments?

We see a massive shift into mobility. I see the industry going the same way as the mobile phone, where people buy credits and different packages. It's not ownership, but a rental model where people can shift in and out of cars depending on their need. I also see a world where there is no subscription – it's simply a click of a button and a car turns up to collect you. We already have this in big cities, with the likes of Uber.

What does this mean for dealers? Do subscription models mean an end to the used car market?

There is still some way to go before that happens. Our US modelling shows a drop in the used market around 2025, but

it won't disappear. We see a used market for the foreseeable future, although there will be a slight rise in mobility services in 2023/24 versus ownership of cars.

Dealer consolidation will continue, more so because margins are thin and you can improve them with the economies of scale and efficiencies offered by consolidation. We don't see the death of the dealer model – there is still a lot for them to play for. But the tension between dealers and manufacturers needs to be worked out. The requirement for gin palaces and huge investments when manufacturers are trying to move sales online brings into question the role of the dealer.

Are they a shop window with the customer buying online and going back to the dealership for the handover and repair? Do they become a facilitator, making their money from servicing? But if we move to electric vehicles, how much servicing will they see?

There are a lot of unanswered questions, but it's not something that will change for 12, 18, 24 months. The dealer is still important to the consumer.

What about the threat posed by the likes of Amazon, Google and Facebook?

They have enormous wealth and talent. Will it change where cars are advertised? Do they go to sites known for selling cars or do the cars go to the sites where the eyeballs are, such as Snapchat? We have to watch them with a laser eye to understand how they might disrupt because of their resources and understanding of logistics. Google, with its focus on technology and autonomous vehicles, plays into our strategy because it won't want to move into a world of complexity when it comes to storing and moving metal. But Amazon could be a threat to dealers – they are the ultimate disrupter. Disruption is coming from all angles and it comes down to the ones that can evolve and adapt the quickest.

A straight question: do you want to be the biggest remarketing company in the UK?

The B2B market is worth £500 million today. We have the number two share of that, with 400,000-450,000 vehicle transactions. We do have an ambition to be number one and we've not ruled out acquisitions as well as organic growth, both physical and digital and also adjoining businesses. But what's important is that we also have to be a disrupter – if we don't do it, others will.

STEPHEN BRIERS

**FACT
FILE**

COMPANY:
COX AUTOMOTIVE UK
HEADQUARTERS:
LEEDS
TURNOVER:
£328.5M (2017)
STAFF:
2,600
SITES:
16

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Most of Dacia's UK sites are shared with Renault, but the budget brand is starting to strike out on its own

DACIA UK

Brand boss Louise O'Sullivan believes Brexit could benefit Renault's budget sister brand, she tells **Tom Sharpe**

It may not seem like the best time for a small car manufacturer to flex its muscles, but according to its former UK head of brand, 2019 is the year that Dacia will start to "think 'big brand' and 'act big brand'".

Louise O'Sullivan, who was promoted to network operations director, Renault UK, in January, said: "With bigger volumes come bigger budgets and [the] new Duster is really helping us to drive that."

Thinking and acting "big brand" may seem like a strange aspiration for Renault's Romanian budget partner to embrace after it ended 2018 with registrations down 3.9%, at 24,169 – Dacia's lowest UK total since 2014. But it is clear that O'Sullivan has been listening to the analysts and felt emboldened by suggestions that consumers made wary by Brexit will tighten their purse strings.

"We know what we are at Dacia," she told *AM* during a visit to the Maple Cross headquarters the brand shares with Renault UK, Nissan GB and RCI Financial



Dacia's Logan is the last estate in its segment

Services, Renault's financial arm.

"We are a budget brand, we're the cheapest in the market and we very much see ourselves as competing with the used car market."

"I see us as being aligned to Aldi and Lidl and see Dacia very much as a Brexit brand. With the current uncertainty, people are maybe thinking that they should think more carefully about their next choice of car and we are well placed to take advantage of that."

Taking on used cars

O'Sullivan wants Dacia's franchised partners to fully exploit the opportunities presented by placing their used stock next to new cars from a range that starts at just

£6,995 for the entry-level Sandero hatchback and offers its new Duster – launched in June, 2018 – for less than £10,000, with PCP deals featuring monthly repayments as low as £109.

Recent changes to the Sandero's basic trim level, such as introducing DAB radio and air conditioning, but dispensing with alloy wheels, reinforce the desire to maintain its no-frills appeal.

About 50% of Dacia's customers previously bought a pre-owned car – with 85% still deemed as 'conquest' – and it encourages the display of used vehicles next to priced-up examples of its new vehicles on dealer forecourts.

O'Sullivan said: "Displaying cars in a way



Sandero

The cheapest new car on the market in the UK – at £6,995 – the Sandero is Dacia's best-selling car. The more rugged Stepway derivative starts at £9,595. Despite suffering a 17% dip in sales during 2018, the budget hatchback still racked up 13,348 registrations – 55.2% of Dacia's total.



Logan

The compact estate car occupies niche territory. Dacia is alone in a sector that once featured estate versions of the Renault Clio and Peugeot 207. The Logan suffered a 22% decline in registrations, to 1,861, in 2018. Prices start at £7,295.



Duster

Dacia's SUV flagship was updated and re-launched in June, generating the brand's only volume growth during 2018 – albeit up by a sizable 34.5% to 8,960 units. Prices start at £9,995. New Blue dCi diesel and TCe turbo-charged petrol engines were introduced in H2 2018.

KEY PRODUCTS

that directly shows their value against used alternatives was one thing that immediately stood out to me as best practice in the network and made sense.

"Dacia encourages a used car mentality. It's a cash approach, with a high proportion of customers who don't want to take out finance." The finance cash split is about 50:50.

Described by O'Sullivan as a "customer-driven, retail brand", Dacia's 2018 registrations total was split between 21,309 private sales and 2,860 fleet.

The average ages of its customers run from 45 for the Sandero family, to 54 for the Logan family and up to 59 (but falling) on the Duster.

How delivery delays helped with WLTP

O'Sullivan claimed that the UK's six-month delay in getting new Duster deliveries, compared with mainland Europe, had reduced the impact of WLTP by ensuring the new deliveries were compliant with the new regulations.

During September, the Duster's 1,142 registrations were down just 1.74% year-on-year, while the Sandero and Logan fell 69.9% (to 1,147 units) and 36.7% (to just 181) respectively.

"[The] new Duster arrived in June and we built enough cars to get us through that first six months," said O'Sullivan.

"The Duster has doubled its market share from H1 to H2, which is what we saw in Europe. In all of Europe, Dacia is continuing to grow."

In March last year, Dacia celebrated breaking the five million registrations barrier in Europe since sales began in 2004.

It has also proved a hit with UK owners, finishing top in a YouGov survey of car brands, which asked "would you recommend the brand to a friend or colleague?" More than 120,000 Dacias have been sold in the UK since 2013.

Having stock in the UK is central to Dacia's desire to compete with instantly available used cars. To ensure dealers can provide vehicles quickly, without relying on retailers paying to keep a wide range in their showrooms and forecourts, Dacia streamlined its trim levels and established an online portal 18 months ago to provide a view of cars held in stock.



I SEE US AS BEING ALIGNED TO ALDI AND LIDL AND SEE DACIA VERY MUCH AS A BREXIT BRAND
LOUISE O'SULLIVAN,
NETWORK OPERATIONS
DIRECTOR,
RENAULT UK

O'Sullivan said: "There were clear parameters of funding for our dealers and the portal allowed swift access to stock without placing strain on that."

"They can 'call off' a vehicle and when it's sold, we replace it. Available stock of the right mix and engine is vital."

On average, Dacia retailers are able to provide a new car within a week, said O'Sullivan.

Dacia's UK stock mix has been affected by anti-diesel consumer sentiment following the dieselgate emissions cheating scandal, however. Sales of the Duster went from 80% diesel to just 20% within nine months



The latest additions to Dacia's network have been built to the 'Renault store' corporate identity

of the 2015 scandal, with the Sandero dropping to 5% diesel.

Sibling rivalry

Dacia is battling to emerge from the shadow of the Renault brand at shared sites across the UK.

Dacia encourages its retail network to appoint dedicated brand champions to drive sales, but O'Sullivan acknowledged that it is sometimes a challenge to commit a member of sales staff who may previously have been able to operate across both brands at the same site.

Dacia defies budget brand expectations that its network will be operated by many owner-drivers due to a close tie-in with Renault guaranteed by joint franchise agreements.

Just five Dacia dealerships in the 157-site network stand alone from their sister brand, and two of those have opened in the past year – WJ King's site at Dartford and John Banks Group's Cambridge franchise.

Stoneacre will open a new franchise in Burnley later this year.

The latest additions have been built to the 'Renault store' corporate identity (CI), which is now 70% complete across the network, said O'Sullivan, and gives

BUYING ONLINE

Dacia's soft launch of its Buy Online retail programme not only added "50 million new retail outlets across the UK" – but 36 sales in its first two months.

The new online retail platform registered 2,500 site visits before the start of a planned marketing push, with sales delivering 70% finance penetration – higher than the brand's network average – and service plan take-up of near 35%.

"We see online very much as another channel for our dealers. They receive a full margin and the full finance commission on each sale. That was one of the most important decisions we made in developing the platform," said O'Sullivan.

"I'm relying on them to deliver a high level of customer service, whether it's a home delivery or a showroom collection."

Dacia's Buy Online customers are offered a

two-week delivery guarantee on their new car purchase, mirroring the fast delivery targets of its network.

O'Sullivan said cash deals are encouraged online – as they are in dealerships, where the brand covers franchisees' credit card charges – and do not share the restrictions on finance offered by other manufacturer platforms.

"What is interesting is that many online customers are still doing the whole dealer piece, going into the showroom to look at and test drive the car, before completing the process online," said O'Sullivan.

"We've had retailers actively referring customers to the online platform to complete their purchase because they know they've offered good customer service and will still benefit from the full financial benefit of making the sales."

ADVERTISING FEATURE

On the money

By Andrew Brameld, managing director,
BNP Paribas Personal Finance



According to a recent study, many motorists now change their cars as often as their phone – making the decision to upgrade to the latest model every couple of years. But what should you consider when selecting a motor finance partner for your business to ensure you offer the best solution for your customers?

A good suite of products

Each of your customers is different, and they will all need a plan that works for them and their lifestyle.

By having access to as many options as possible you will stand a better chance of being able to recommend a solution that works for them and increase your chances of making a sale.

The latest technology

By partnering with a finance provider that is able to offer digital-first solutions, you will ensure a great customer experience and increase the chances of them returning when it's time for their next upgrade.

A track record

The track record of a company will give you an excellent idea of the type of service you can expect to receive, and help you to understand how they can improve the journey for your customers – in turn boosting sales.

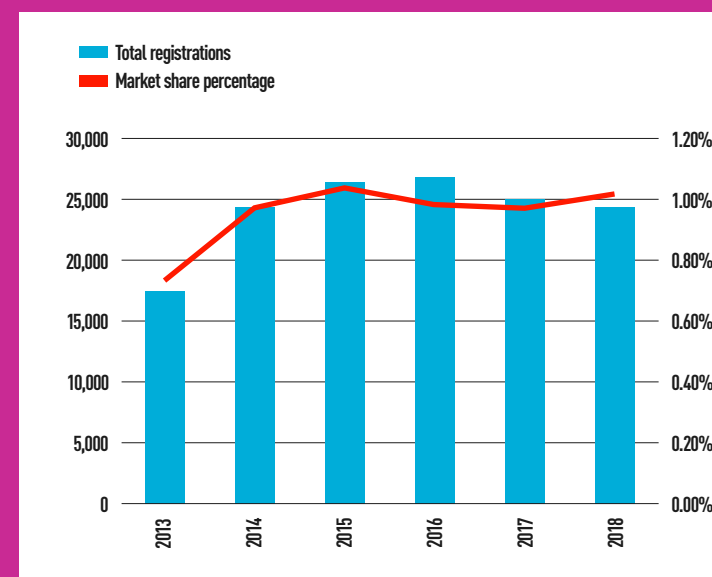
Late last year, BNP Paribas Personal Finance launched a new motor finance product that was built to excel in each of these areas.

The consumer finance provider, part of global bank BNP Paribas, has a wealth of motor finance experience and offers a range of dynamic, competitively priced products including hire purchase, personal loans, stock financing, personal contract purchase, personal contract hire and value-added products.

■ For more information on BNP Paribas Personal Finance, visit www.bnpparibas-pf.co.uk/our-solutions/motor-finance



DAKIA UK REGISTRATIONS AND MARKET SHARE %



◀ Dacia greater prominence with new signage and totems.

Never the dealer survey's darling

For a brand with such a budget product range, even a modest investment in facilities can affect the attitude of the network.

In the National Franchised Dealers Association's Summer 2018 Dealer Attitude Survey, Dacia finished mid-table, in 14th. When dealers were asked to give the manufacturer an overall rating out of 10, scoring 5.9 (average: 5.7). A 4.7 (average: 5.6) average score across all questions placed it sixth from bottom.

The CI investment appeared to be a factor in retailers' discontent, with the brand scoring just 4.1 (average: 6) when asked if their manufacturer's dealer standards were "fair and reasonable". Only Jaguar, Citroën and Alfa Romeo fared worse.

When asked about their "current bonus and rebate rates on new car sales" dealers scored Dacia 3.1 (average: 5.3), meanwhile.

"I do take the NFDA survey seriously," said O'Sullivan. "But in terms of a bonus scheme, Dacia really doesn't have one and, as a result, we're never going to finish top."

O'Sullivan said this did not mean Dacia retailers were not profitable and said she had worked with Renault Group to ensure UK retailers made money.

Dacia dealers average 0.8% return-on-sale, with the best performer delivering 2.8%. It said it is working with the network to increase the average RoS, for example through things such as introducing simplified service packages starting from just £5 a month.

"We've broken the model specifically for the UK, to make things work and make our dealers profitable," said O'Sullivan.

"So is there a bonus scheme? No. But is

there profitability? Absolutely."

O'Sullivan said Dacia retailers earn standard finance commission, adding that she "really pushed" RCI to achieve that.

Dacia's dealer conference in early January was focused very much on the "push for profitability", according to O'Sullivan, and she said the new Duster would boost dealer margins, adding £150 to the bottom line of each, on average, per sale.

Making a mark with marketing

Dacia UK's aim to "think 'big brand' and act 'big brand'" in 2019 will extend to more than just a new CI.

Marketing of its Buy Online platform, (see panel overleaf) has yet to start, but other activities are underway.

On Boxing Day, the brand launched its '#GoDuster' campaign with a television advert to the theme tune of the 1980s *Ghostbusters* movie franchise and it will also sponsor the TV channel, Dave, with 'ident' slots during advertising breaks.

Having been involved with Rugby League since 2016, as the official car partner of the Rugby Football League and title sponsors of the Dacia Magic Weekend and Dacia World Club Series, it added sponsorship of the England Rugby League national teams in June last year.

The five-year deal will see Dacia branding feature on the front of all the national teams' shirts, with the Rugby League World Cup heading to England in 2021.

"The sport aligns really well with the robust branding of Dacia and with the World Cup coming to England this is a really great opportunity for us," said O'Sullivan.

"It's part of a pattern. We've really been hiking up our marketing investment because we're expecting to grow volume."

"It's a big year for Dacia and its retailers."

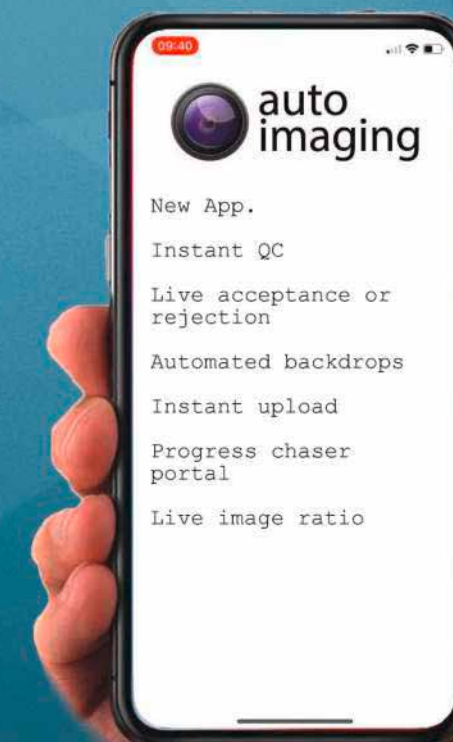


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The best of British motor retail: the winners of the 2019 AM Awards

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE 2019 AM AWARD WINNERS

The AM Awards is our annual opportunity to celebrate superb businesses and individuals in the UK's motor retail industry.

It is the culmination of dozens of you submitting entries, reader votes on some, audits of certain categories by BDO, and the careful deliberation of each submission by our panel of judges.

This year, our judges were Professor Jim

Saker, the director of Loughborough University's Centre for Automotive Management; Steve Nash, the chief executive of the Institute of the Motor Industry; Steve Young, managing director, ICDP; industry veteran and former Perrys managing director Ray Sommerville; industry consultant Piers Trenear-Thomas; AM editor-in-chief Stephen Briers; AM editor Tim Rose and AM head of digital Jeremy Bennett. Christopher

Macgowan OBE again served as independent chairman of the judging panel.

On the night, we were joined by model, TV and radio presenter Lisa Snowdon, our celebrity host for the evening, and then entertained by comedian and actor Hal Cruttenden.

Over the next 46 pages, you will learn more about why our AM Awards winners stand out.





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Lee-Ann Edison, head of communications, Arnold Clark Automobiles, accepts the award from Freddie Hunt, Texaco Havoline brand ambassador, right, and AM Awards host Lisa Snowdon, left

THE COMMUNITY HERO AWARD

Winner: Arnold Clark Automobiles

Arnold Clark has put charity at the heart of its business, supporting a number of community-based causes throughout the UK and making more than 500 charitable donations in 2018.

A main initiative it supports is the Kiltwalk in Scotland, which helps hundreds of Scottish charities to raise money every year.

Some 95 Arnold Clark employees took part in Kiltwalk 2018 and managed to raise a total of £140,000 between them for 54 charities in Scotland.

Since 2016, Arnold Clark has been the Kiltwalk's platinum sponsor. Alongside financial support, it provides lots of services free of charge – such as vehicles and printing services – to the Kiltwalk organisers, which means all of the money raised by participants goes straight to the charities.

In its award entry, Arnold Clark said: "Our ambition to support communities and give back ties in with the values that drive Arnold Clark as a business, and we are proud to use the scope and profile of the company to help wherever we can."

In 2018, in partnership with Cash for Kids, the business launched the Sir Arnold Clark Summer Camp Fund, which was set up to honour Sir Arnold Clark's legacy.

The aim of this initiative was to give children living in poverty across Glasgow and the west of Scotland a life-enhancing and memorable experience during the school summer holidays.

"Arnold Clark supports its communities because there are things that need to be done, not because it wants to be seen to do so. It's in its DNA," said the AM Award judges.

HIGHLY COMMENDED

TrustFord

FINALISTS

Aston Martin Cambridge

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Tim Holden, chief executive, Holden & Holden, accepts the award from Michael McVeigh, chief operating officer, AutoProtect, right

AM PEOPLE INVESTOR OF THE YEAR

Winner: Holden & Holden

A happier workforce breeds a healthier business, according to Holden & Holden, and the group turned its approach to business on its head in 2015 to prove the point.

To celebrate 10 years at the helm of the Norwich-based Honda, Renault/Dacia and Volvo dealer group, chief executive Tim Holden put his employees at the heart of the business's philosophy.

"Our purpose became clear – how could we help employees to create the lives they want?" it said.

Holden & Holden established a management development scheme, providing a structured career progression, followed in 2017 by the re-appropriation

of a non-mandatory training budget to staff – with each member receiving £150 to learn a new skill.

So far, employees have funded scuba diving lessons, computer skills, driving lessons, accounting and HR/training qualifications. One staff member even learned sign language to better serve the needs of a deaf customer.

The business established a 'learning zone' intranet offering a library, assistance with personal development plans and the ability to feed back praise for colleagues via a weekly 'Good Egg' email.

Employees are also encouraged to embrace a work/life balance by taking extra holiday days rather than annual salary increases. A five-day

working week has already been implemented.

In 2018, Gavin Drake, a life coach who runs twice-monthly counselling clinics, was appointed to the board to ensure employees remain a key focus.

Holden & Holden said its "learning culture" had benefited employee engagement – staff turnover fell from 27% in 2015 to 10% in 2017 – and its results.

"With sources predicting that each resignation costs a business £30,000, our employee turnover costs have reduced from £600,000 in 2015 to £240,000 in 2017, saving £360,000," it said.

The AM Awards judges praised Holden & Holden for "genuinely trying new things", despite being a "small group with modest resources".

HIGHLY COMMENDED

Arnold Clark Automobiles
John Clark Motor Group

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Rawdon Glover, UK managing director, Jaguar Land Rover, collects the award from David Paterson, marketing director, Supagard, right

NEW CAR OF THE YEAR

Winner: Jaguar I-Pace

As the electric car world evolves and grows, Jaguar has beaten its main competitors to market with the I-Pace.

It's a brave step for the brand, but one that appears to have paid off, as the I-Pace collects yet another award for its growing trophy cabinet.

The car has secured 17 major awards since its introduction, including German Car of the Year, Scottish Car of the Year, *Sunday Times* Car of the Year, *Auto Express* New Car of the Year and *Autocar's* Game Changer title.

Built from the ground up to be electric, the futuristically styled model fits in somewhere between a luxury saloon and an SUV, with seating for five and a large boot.

Prices start at £60,995 (inc Government grant) and the I-Pace comes with an eight-year battery warranty. Two electric motors – delivering a combined 400PS and providing all-wheel-drive – enable the I-Pace to silently accelerate from 0-60mph in just 4.5 seconds.

Its aluminium construction keeps weight to a minimum, meaning handling is nimble and befitting

of Jaguar's sporty image. It also allows for a large 90kWh battery pack to be integrated into the floor.

On a full charge, the I-Pace can cover up to 292 miles and recharging the battery to 80% can be completed in as little as 85 minutes.

A contemporary interior houses a trio of screens where one would ordinarily expect to see traditional analogue dials and physical buttons.

With a five-star Euro NCAP rating and promising residual value predictions, it's clear to see why AM readers voted the Jaguar I-Pace as their Car of the Year.

FINALISTS

Ford Focus
Kia Ceed
Peugeot 508

Volkswagen T-Roc
Volvo XC40

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THE WINNERS

AM
AWARDS: 2019



Simon Hetherington, commercial director, Kia Motors (UK), accepts the award from Philip Morrison, head of corporate sales, Car Care Plan, right

USED CAR OF THE YEAR

Winner: Kia Sportage

For the fourth consecutive year, the Kia Sportage has won over *AM* readers to be named Used Car Of the Year.

The popular family SUV is praised for its seven-year warranty, economical engines and excellent drivability.

An all-new model was introduced in 2016 and early examples are already beginning to change hands for as little as £11,000, making it a strong contender against the class-dominating Nissan Qashqai.

The previous generation car continues to draw in buyers too, with many examples still covered by

the manufacturer's warranty. It was named the fastest selling used car by Auto Trader in 2017.

Demand for the new Sportage remains high, with the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders (SMMT) naming it among the top 10 most sold cars in 2018.

It accounts for more than a third of Kia's annual registrations in the UK and its future success in the used market is unlikely to be affected by a shortage in demand.

A wide range of engines and trim levels means there is a Sportage to suit almost all tastes. Cheaper and more frugal models are preferred

by the budget-conscious, while range-topping all-wheel-drive versions provide a fitting alternative to the premium-badge models.

Bolstered by keen growth in demand for SUVs, Kia's aggressive pricing policy when the Sportage was sold as new means the sat-nav, leather seats and panoramic glass roof often specified for many Sportages are attracting buyers seeking premium-level comforts at a reasonable price in the used car market.

Fuel economy for the fourth generation of the Sportage ranges from 36mpg with the 1.6 T-GDI petrol to 61mpg with the 1.7 CRDi diesel.

FINALISTS

Audi A3
Ford Fiesta
Nissan Qashqai

Volkswagen Golf
Volvo XC60

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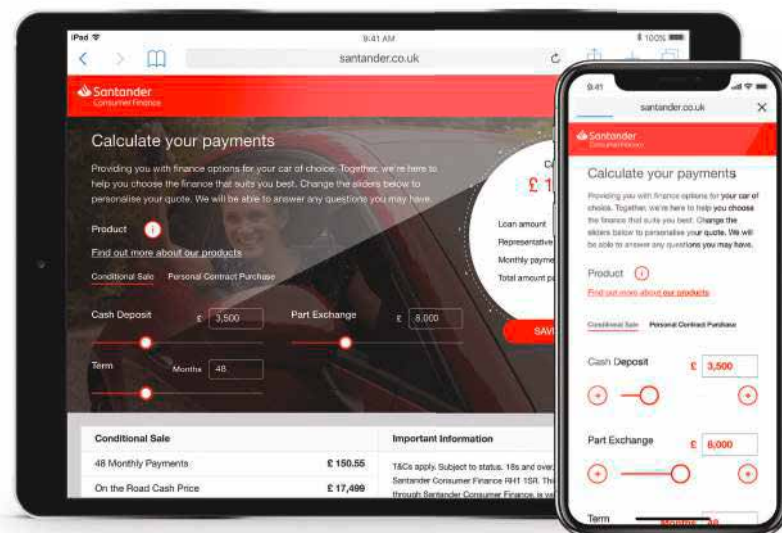

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BEST USED CAR DEALER – INDEPENDENT

Winner: Imperial Cars

For the past three years, Imperial Cars' principal focus has been on improving service levels. In 2018, this came to fruition with an overhaul of the sales process, reducing the pressure on customers to buy a car.

The transition to the "soft, less pressured 'meet and greet'" was accompanied by giving sales staff access, via a tablet computer, to historic data on a customer's contact points, such as live chat, email enquiries, finance calculator, car searches and shortlisted vehicles, as well as their journey on imperialcarsupermarkets.co.uk.

It means staff at the company's 11 locations don't repeat a process a customer has already been through, or recommend a car they have already dismissed. Advice on alternatives is only offered if the customer is undecided after a test drive.

The consumer appetite for a more accelerated buying process has led to the introduction of the 'Click, Call and Collect' service. This requires the customer to be present at the showroom with their part-exchange only for the test drive and paperwork signing, before driving away. Of customers using the service, 98% buy a car from Imperial Cars.

It also claims to have more details online about its cars than any other dealer, including documentation such as the V5, MOT status and service history. Stock displays are accompanied by a condition report and extensive images.

Imperial Cars' three-year strategy has led to a 22% year-on-year increase in turnover, 344% increase in profit before tax and average unit margin per used car sold up 23%.

Its CSI rating has gone up from 81% to 88% and an average JudgeService score of 4.3 out of five. Some 90% of customers would recommend the business.

HIGHLY COMMENDED

Thame Cars

FINALISTS

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THE WINNERS

AM
AWARDS: 2019



Paul Philpott, president and chief executive, Kia Motors (UK), accepts the award from Martin Dew, digital solutions director, Autoweb Design, right

FRANCHISE PARTNER OF THE YEAR

Winner: Kia Motors (UK)

Shortlisted last year, but losing out to Suzuki, Kia received emphatic support from AM magazine readers this year, rewarding the Korean brand with the ultimate dealer accolade for the second time (it also won in 2017). Kia gained 40% more votes than its nearest rival.

The online reader vote preceded a milestone in Kia's history in the UK, the sale of its one millionth car in January – by Scottish dealer Flear and Thomson – 18 years after the brand first went on sale.

Kia revealed its new Ceed and Optima at the

2018 Geneva Motor Show, later launching both into the UK market. Last July, it announced details of the facelifted 2019 Sportage, the success of which will be crucial. The SUV has been a smash hit throughout Europe, with its current third-generation model the most successful, with more than 100,000 registrations so far.

The brand is also looking to secure a strong future. It revealed this year that the Kia apprenticeship programme has placed at least one apprentice in 95% of its 191-dealer network in the 13 years it has been running, providing an attractive alternative to "high-cost" university education.

Kia has also made a commitment to electric-powered cars, promising that all of its retail network will sell them from January. All sales outlets were required to add fast-charging facilities, specialist tooling and to train all sales staff on Kia's electric vehicles and hybrid cars from the start of this year.

It is therefore no surprise that as well as winning the AM Award, Kia was voted the best manufacturer overall in the summer 2018 NFDA Dealer Attitude Survey. Dealers rated their current profit and used car margins on the brand particularly strongly.

FINALISTS
Ford of Britain
Volvo Cars UK

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Automotive Digital Solutions



Russell Borrie, group franchise director, Arnold Clark Automobiles, accepts the award from Martin Ward, managing director, Autoclenz, right

BEST USED CAR DEALER – FRANCHISED

Winner: Arnold Clark Automobiles

1 It's a clear winner, steps ahead of the other entrants," concluded the judges in awarding Arnold Clark Automobiles the title of best franchised used car dealer.

In its latest financial results, Arnold Clark achieved a record group turnover of £3.93 billion (up 7.3% year-on-year), mainly due to the increasing success of its used car operation, with units sold up 10%, from 197,842 to 218,888. New branch openings, such as a Motorstore in Doncaster, have helped, but like-for-like sales increased an impressive 7.5%.

Enabling the success has been the expansion of

its delivery centres to 12, bringing a greater choice of vehicles with customer delivery "closer to home"; the sourcing of stock from other areas of the business, such as its contract hire and leasing division, internal de-fleet, 26 manufacturer franchised partners, Motability and auctions; as well as the pioneering use of technology and empowering its people.

Arnold Clark customers can use a free online valuation tool at all branches. With an expected 18,000 cars bought from customers via the instant tool last year (with 30,000 targeted for 2019) it is now a sustainable sourcing channel, meaning customers spend more time in showrooms

"building their relationship with our brand".

An app launched in August enables customers to take a picture of a car anywhere in the UK and get an exact match in Arnold Clark's average 20,000-vehicle stock – or the nearest equivalent, with a finance breakdown.

Staff satisfaction is also critical and examples of the business's focus on employee welfare and development include the introduction of a five-day week for sales staff, less formal uniforms, an internal communication app called ACE, staff mentoring for an employee's first 90 days with the group and training at Arnold Clark's GTG training division.

FINALISTS

Lookers Skoda Newcastle
 Perrys Vauxhall of Canterbury
 Roadside Garages

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Gerry Kouris, head of marketing, second from right, and Nick Hunt, head of partner training, second from left, Alpha Financial Services, accept the award from AM editor Tim Rose, right

BEST NEW PRODUCT OR SERVICE

Winner: Alpha Financial Services

An innovative F&I sales accreditation programme secured the win for Alpha Financial Services this year.

The BMW Group's independent financial division did not simply drive growth in 2018 – although it grew at a rate 13 times greater than the wider independent car finance sector in 2017, according to the Finance and Leasing Association – but rolled out an "industry first" automotive F&I sales accreditation in partnership with the Institute of the Motor Industry (IMI).

"Alpha is addressing a major challenge and a risk to the sector. In times of increased FCA scrutiny, allowing dealers to sell F&I without

worry is commendable," the AM Awards judges said.

Where there was previously no universal scheme to ensure high minimum standards regarding the sale of car F&I products, Alpha worked closely with the IMI and its partners to help sales professionals gain the industry-approved qualification, which effectively helps dealers 'self-regulate' to support compliance with FCA regulations.

A dedicated business development manager provides field support and training to dealer partners, with an in-house support team also on hand to help dealers whenever needed.

Alpha's accreditation not only aids FCA compliance, but also puts "sales specialists in a better position to educate their own customers", it said, "empowering them to make an informed decision".

The IMI has been approached by several manufacturer brands interested in taking part in the scheme.

Despite only launching the F&I accreditation pathway in June, 2018, Alpha has already signed up 60% of its UK partners.

In July 2018, Aston Martin enrolled business managers from its 19-strong UK dealer network on the programme.

HIGHLY COMMENDED

David Utting Engineering
 EMaC

FINALISTS

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THE WINNERS

AM
AWARDS: 2019



Wendy Swaine, head of sales (retail), Cap HPI, accepts the award from Julia Pennington, managing director, Copeland Automotive Recruitment, right

SUPPLIER OF THE YEAR

Winner: Cap HPI

Whether vehicle clocking, the challenge of accurate vehicle valuations or the introduction of the Worldwide harmonised Light vehicle Test Procedure (WLTP), Cap HPI data and innovations helped retailers to tackle various market squeeze points in 2018.

So confident was the business about the success of the used car valuations data behind the buying decisions of 400 of the UK's 535 largest retailers that it commissioned a study by the Institute of Transport Studies at the University of Leeds to look at the impact of data on profit margins.

Cap HPI said: "The research found that larger dealers could be losing over £117,000 a year due to inaccurate valuation data.

"If the dealer group purchased petrol stock three years old or under it would be over £247,000 a year better off with Cap HPI."

HPI's provenance checks, meanwhile, claim a 99.8% match rate, reassuring retailers who need to be confident about their due diligence processes.

A Cap HPI dealer appraisal app launched in 2017 allows retailers to complete provenance checks, valuations and image-backed appraisals,

which estimate the value of potential repair work, via a smartphone or tablet.

The Supplier of the Year award is voted for by both judges and car retailers in AM's database.

In dealer testimonials, Darren Ardron, managing director, Perrys, said: "I think the biggest thing for me is better data capture, because this is, in effect, real-time through Cap HPI. That's the real big plus for me."

Alex Jones, head of marketing and digital at Carbase, said Cap HPI's data and technology had helped to "expedite the part-exchange process, making it efficient and profitable while building trust with the customer".

HIGHLY COMMENDED

Alphera Financial Services
Rapid RTC

FINALISTS

Aston Barclay
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THE WINNERS

AM
AWARDS: 2019



Ashley Andrew, managing director, Hyundai Motor UK, accepts the award from Hasan Nergiz, head of OEM and agency strategy, Carwow, right

MANUFACTURER OF THE YEAR

Winner: Hyundai

Hyundai gained favour with the judges for its pragmatic approach to both alternative fuel vehicles (AFVs) and taking an alternative route to market.

The brand launched both its Nexo crossover fuel cell vehicle and Kona electric vehicle (EV) during 2018 to reassert its position as one of just two manufacturers to offer hybrid, plug-in hybrid, EVs and hydrogen fuel cell vehicles in the UK.

"Hyundai is innovating, investing in all powertrains, across hydrogen, hybrid, petrol and diesel, and it has piloted new channels to get its cars to market, through its shopping centre

stores and Click To Buy service," judges said.

Tony Whitehorn, the outgoing president and chief executive of Hyundai Motor UK, told the Vision of the Future seminar at Automotive Management Live 2018, through use of the Click to Buy online retail platform, the near-300-mile range Kona EV had immediately become the network's most profitable vehicle.

The first 700 orders for the car were "full-up" versions sold without customers having seen the car, Whitehorn said, adding: "Customers have to go to the dealership to pick up the car and there they have the chance to sell a service plan and

accessories and the dealership receives the full margin."

Hyundai also brought the operation of its innovative shopping centre stores into the franchised dealer network during 2018.

Kent-based Motorline Group now runs the sites at Bluewater and Westfield, previously operated by Rockar, which sold about 1,000 cars annually from the zero-pressure, customer-focused stores.

During 2018, Hyundai achieved a record 3.8% market share, despite a 3.7% decline in registrations (from 93,403 to 89,925), as its private sales grew 0.7% to 32,841 (2018: 32,615).

FINALISTS

Kia
Seat
Volvo

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Philip J Deacon, head of marketing, Marshall Motor Group, accepts the award from Jeremy Evans, managing director, Marketing Delivery, right

BEST USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Winner: Marshall Motor Group

Since its first instance of social media usage in 2009, Marshall Motor Group has cultivated an engaged audience that now informs and contributes to its content strategy.

With an objective to showcase the company's people, products and services with in-house content, Marshall has generated more than 1 million engagements (likes/interactions etc.) on Facebook and more than 9m impressions on Twitter. The company achieved this exposure with reported spends of less than £1,000 for graphics and competitions.

The group has no dedicated social media resource and instead uses its 4,000 colleagues and 1 million customers to inform its content, mainly through the hashtag '#MarshallMoments'. In what it refers to as "focusing on the people behind the M of Marshall", the content gains the highest engagement levels across its 26 different dedicated brand Twitter accounts.

In the first nine months of 2018, Marshall's social profiles generated 248,121 calls directly into the site, while free link-backs to its website saved an estimated pay-per-click (PPC) spend of £155,000. It employs a reactive approach to growth and

reach by monitoring follower activity and trends, alongside analysis of its in-house data to generate leads and address customer service issues.

This combination of informed and reactive response resulted in campaigns going viral, such as the Lost Bunny campaign, which gained coverage from the national press, while its use of tagged tweets has resulted in celebrity influencers, such as Ricky Gervais, retweeting content.

AM's judges said: "It's building a social community. It showcases the company, the people and the products in a non-salesy way, and engages all staff and customers."

HIGHLY COMMENDED

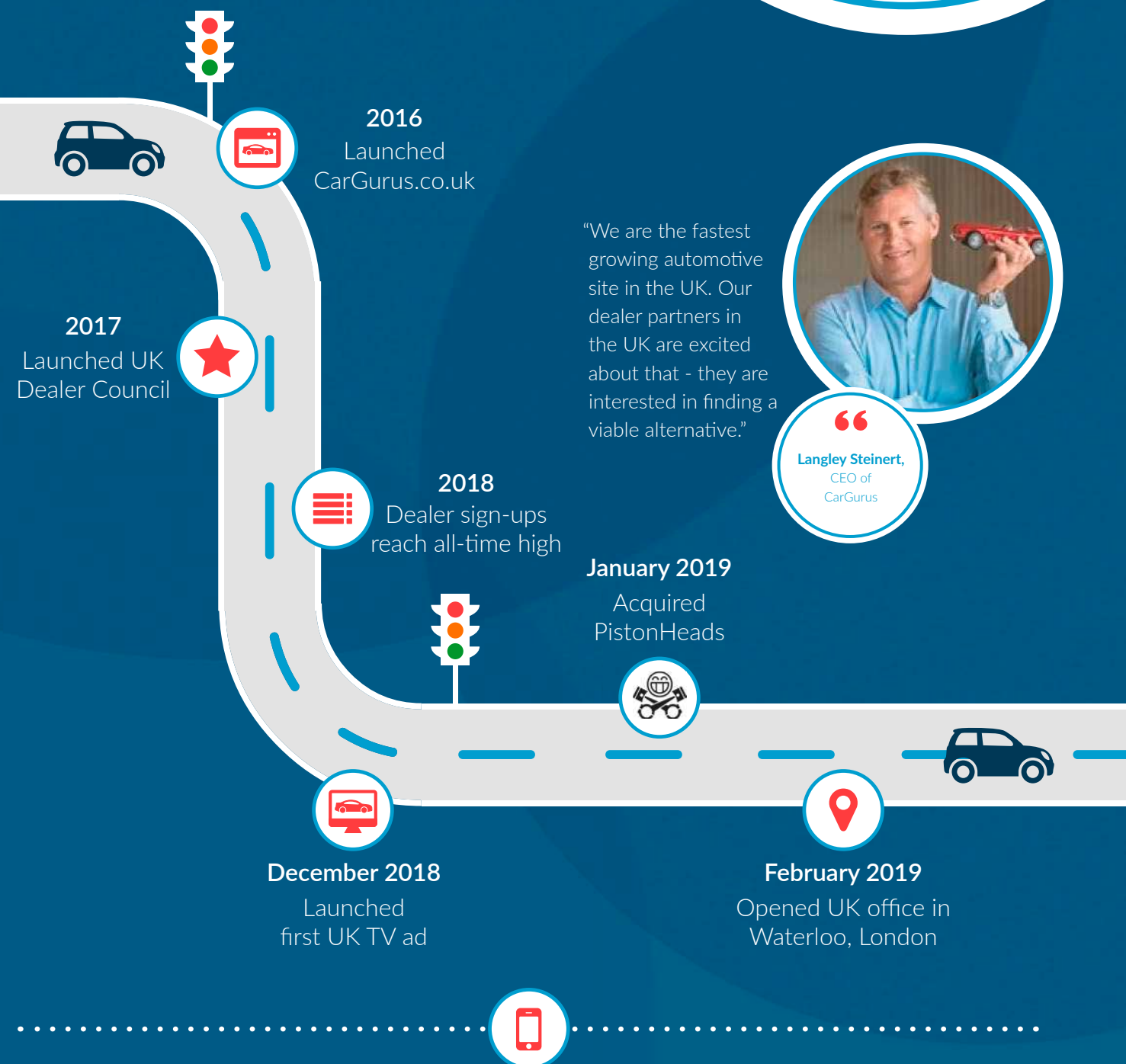
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Russell Borrie, group franchise director, Arnold Clark Automobiles, accepts the award from Wendy Harris, vice-president European sales, CarGurus, right

BEST WEBSITE

Winner: Arnold Clark Automobiles

Arnold Clark's website, launched in 2015, uses data to inform its users' needs and has tailored its design strategy accordingly. The company is continuously optimising its functionality to improve conversion rates and the customer journey, resulting in significant growth in year-on-year traffic.

The in-house team, through live chat data and entry point analysis, identified users' needs when buying a car and created Deal Builder. The tool serves as a one-stop-shop for instant online trade-in valuations, finance quotes, and test-drive bookings.

The feature has the company's highest sales conversion rate, at 35%, and Arnold Clark is continuing to conduct A/B and multivariate testing to make it "better with every release". Trials are already in place to introduce instant reservation functionality, with plans to deploy it across the entire group.

Arnold Clark's 'fail fast' philosophy has enabled improvement to popular areas of the website and the implementation of new features, while data analysis has driven efficiencies to the online experience.

Optimisation of the website by improving search and nurturing leads has resulted in one in three

of its 300,000 online enquiries converting to sales.

Following a management restructure, Arnold Clark has developed the connection between digital and physical, which allows it to be there for users, beyond the confines of the forecourt and the restrictions of traditional car sales. The consideration and prioritisation of customer touchpoints boosted its user numbers by 19% to more than 11.9 million, increased page views by 18% to more than 352m and attracted more than 11.4m new users.

Its online presence is now run in ways some small tech firms would envy, thanks to an army of about 100 in-house developers.

HIGHLY COMMENDED

SandicLiffe Motor Group

FINALISTS

Bridgend Ford
BuyaCar.co.uk
Carbase

Gates
Imperial Cars

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Stuart Foulds, chairman and chief executive, TrustFord, accepts the award from Phill Jones, managing director, Motors.co.uk, right

BEST MARKETING STRATEGY

Winner: TrustFord

TrustFord has reacted to shifts in online consumer behaviour by branching away from the industry's traditional marketing methods with TrustFord Now.

TrustFord decided to "focus on its purpose and not the product", promising to support today's consumer with rapid purchase and delivery.

The brand started by offering customers the ability to drive away their new car within the hour, and quickly added delivery within 24 hours and the ability to order vehicles online.

The TrustFord Now campaign integrated offline and online marketing with physical, digital and social channels brought together under the same theme. The campaign's traffic-to-lead conversion rate hit 10% in 2018, generating 20,042 leads, three times more than equivalent pages, thanks to rigorous inclusion of links to the site in emails and direct mail.

The group's social presence has grown thanks to its digital marketing, specifically its Astronaut video, which reached 629,000 Facebook views, and its Strongman video, which gained more than 800,000

Facebook views as well as 682,000 on YouTube.

Impressively, the core marketing budget has consistently dropped year-on-year, but results have improved. TrustFord wanted to achieve an uplift in enquiries and sales, and the campaign exceeded expectations.

AM judges said: "A unanimous decision. [TrustFord's marketing strategy was] broad in scope, holistic and coordinated, making use of traditional and non-traditional channels, and seriously profitable. There were process and people changes to accompany the marketing strategy."

FINALISTS

Barretts
Kia Motors UK

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John Keogh, sales director, Rygor Commercial, collects the award from Alex Watt, regional sales director, Barclays Partner Finance, right

BEST SALES TEAM – NEW OR USED

Winner: Rygor Commercial

Rygor has been bolstering and enhancing various aspects of its van sales team over the past 12 months to further improve sales figures.

It formed a dedicated team within van sales, allowing for a more streamlined and improved approach, and saw a 164% increase in sales on the previous year.

To complement this, the introduction of a centralised sales funnel, reporting and lead analysis

tool created by its sales marketing team contributed to a 14% increase in van sales from 2016 to 2017.

The increased sales have benefited the rest of the team by boosting service contract uptake. The Rygor sales team sold more than 900 retail service contracts on new vehicles in 2017. This increased the number of workshop hours sold by more than 10% year on year, from 405,153 hours sold across all workshops in the 2016/17 financial year, to 447,405 in 2017/18.

In 2017, the sales team registered 4,288 new vehicles, making it the top Mercedes-Benz Vans UK dealer for retail sales.

A spokesperson for Rygor said: "Selling vehicles is not about a 'quick sale' – it's about a joined-up approach. Not only does this benefit our customers, as we can offer them a seamless sales journey, with information relevant to them at the right time, but a team who works in unison is always good for the business."

FINALISTS

Alexanders Prestige
BuyaCar.co.uk
Perrys Vauxhall of Dover

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Tony Hodgson, aftersales manager,
J Edgar & Son, accepts the award from
Amy Davis, head of marketing, Gtechniq, right

BEST AFTERSALES TEAM

Winner: J Edgar & Son

When faced with a flatlining aftersales business, J Edgar & Son took drastic action to improve its workshop throughput and profitability.

By working with its aftersales staff, the family-run group was able to come up with a robust plan to iron out the inefficiencies and take its workshop into the 21st century.

One of the first dealer groups in the UK to do so, J Edgar & Son invested more than £100,000 to adopt Hyundai Workshop Automation – a digital platform that provides management of the customer journey from the point of initial booking to collection.

Staff members were redeployed into new roles that drew on their strengths, improving service level and morale.

A new back office function to handle service calls was set up, so service desk staff can concentrate on customers in the showroom.

Technicians utilise tablet computers and customer deadlines are displayed on digital displays within the workshop, encouraging the highest levels of professionalism.

The changes led to an increase in workshop efficiency, with utilisation rising from 67% to 93%. Hours sold increased by 22% and aftersales profit grew by almost £100,000 in 2017.

Customers now enjoy a fully transparent aftersales experience. All vehicles that enter the workshop receive an electronic vehicle health check, which provides customers with automated menu pricing and the ability to authorise work from a mobile device.

By embracing technology, J Edgar & Son has streamlined its operation without damaging the traditional values that earned it such a loyal customer base.

As the dealer group enters its 100th year of trading, it enjoys excellent staff retention and has long-lasting customers, some of whom have returned to buy more than 10 cars.

HIGHLY COMMENDED

Milcars Mazda

FINALISTS
Thame Cars

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THE WINNERS

AM
AWARDS: 2019



BEST IN CUSTOMER SERVICE

Winner: Arnold Clark Automobiles

In keeping with its mission statement 'to offer genuine value for money and customer service of the highest level', Arnold Clark launched an internal customer service initiative, Think Customer, in 2014.

It created a dedicated team to promote the ethos of Think Customer and create a customer-centric culture, while guiding the organisation on how to achieve strategic goals.

Branches and departments across the company formed Think Customer working groups, which

meet monthly to act upon feedback from customer satisfaction index (CSI) surveys, direct complaints and social media. Responses to CSI surveys have risen from an initial 35,000 in 2010 to about 350,000 in 2017.

The groups also have access to funds from a 'goodwill pot', with no direct cost to their branch, for anything they feel will genuinely improve the customer experience, and a 'hub' where employees can share best practice and suggestions.

Since the introduction of Think Customer, the

number of complaints to Arnold Clark has fallen 15% year-on-year, while customer retention has increased.

The group has a TrustPilot score of 9.3, based on more than 37,000 customer reviews, and it believes this is the highest score of any UK-based large dealer group.

The strategy has been referred to as the "DNA of the organisation from the boardroom to the showroom" and employees have embodied the ethos of the initiative, with more than 12,500 recognised as Think Customer ambassadors.

HIGHLY COMMENDED
Westcars of Tiverton

FINALISTS
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THE WINNERS

AM
AWARDS: 2019



Louise Baker, head of fleet operations, Johnsons Fleet Services, accepts the award from Declan Gaule, chief executive, MFG Group, right

BEST FLEET OR LOCAL BUSINESS DEALER

Winner: Johnsons Fleet Services

Johnsons Fleet Services have experts and infrastructure to support any business user or company, regardless of size, funding or individual needs.

Having grown orders from zero to 8,500 units in 10 years, fleet now represents more than a quarter of all cars sold by Johnsons Cars.

In April, the business will open a new 10-acre fleet preparation centre that will be able to handle 15,000 vehicles a year.

"When a fleet customer enters our showroom, we believe they should not be treated any differently

to a retail customer. Beyond the initial enquiry, however, it is then vital that they have access to the fleet expertise required to ensure they make a fully informed decision," said Louise Baker, head of fleet operations at Johnsons Fleet Services.

To ensure fleet customers receive the best possible experience, the dealer group operates a 'generous' reward system to encourage retail staff to refer fleet customers to the fleet specialist team.

Handovers are a key part of the service offering and recently the firm has begun fitting seat and steering wheel covers during delivery, so the

customer has the excitement of being the first person to fully experience the car they have ordered.

According to the company's awards entry, it has grown more than 18% year-on-year over the past four years, with 2018 stabilising in a "decreasing and very challenging marketplace".

Despite this, Johnsons Fleet Services' customer satisfaction scores, manufacturer scorecards and leasing company scoring have not suffered.

Since 2013, 98.8% of customers have given a satisfaction score of nine or 10 out of 10 upon delivery of their vehicle.

HIGHLY COMMENDED

Norton Way Corporate Sales
TrustFord

FINALISTS

Clive Brook Volvo

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CONGRATULATIONS

TO THE WINNER OF THE 'MOST IMPROVED DEALERSHIP' AWARD

AM
AWARDS: 2019



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BNP PARIBAS
PERSONAL FINANCE



THE WINNERS

AM
AWARDS: 2019



Gordon Veale, general manager, Carbase, second from right, and marketing manager Alex Jones, second from left, collect the award from Robert Hutchinson, sales director motor finance, BNP Paribas Personal Finance, right

MOST IMPROVED DEALERSHIP

Winner: Carbase

Independent used car supermarket Carbase is rapidly putting on the pounds. Operating profit has more than trebled in two years and revenues have doubled, to almost £80 million. Average days in stock dropped from 52 to 45, but not at the expense of profit per unit.

The proportion of customers who would recommend the business to a friend has risen to 96%, from 93%. Driving the results at the Bristol business, owned by Steve Winter, is a new strategy, supported by processes and technology. A new

digital attribution platform is helping its marketing to become more efficient, and custom code allows it to monitor product search levels and clicks to monitor vehicle advert performance, something previously only available through major classified portals. Coupling these measures with a new pricing algorithm has powered Carbase's reduction in stocking days and tackled the issue of over-age stock without affecting profitability.

"We constantly adapt our systems through the measurement of data to produce best-practice predictions. These result in a higher-quality experience for customers. We have incrementally improved the experience throughout the purchase journey online, right through to the physical store visit," said its entry.

Prospective customers can get a part-exchange valuation more easily, through a customer smartphone app linked to Cap HPI, which also allows them to look up the details of any car in stock while in store.

For 2019, Carbase will step further away from its old focus on sales conversion to one on customer experience, and will enhance employee benefits and its stock preparation process.

FINALISTS

Marshall Volkswagen Newbury
MB Motors Ballymena

Mercedes-Benz of Preston
Westcars of Tiverton

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Arran Bangham, group vice-chairman, RRG Škoda, accepts the award from Darren Preddy, director – dealer sales, Rapid RTC, right

BEST NEW DEALERSHIP

Winner: RRG Škoda of Bolton

The challenges came not single spies, but in battalions for RRG Škoda of Bolton when it opened in 2018 – and even before.

On top of the difficulties presented by the new Worldwide harmonised Light vehicles Test Procedure (WLTP) on vehicle supply, the ongoing emissions issue affecting Volkswagen Group, and the negativity surrounding diesel, the dealership, a new-build on the site of a former school, had to deal with local council planning restrictions that mean car transporters have to be unloaded two miles away.

Despite opening on June 1, by the time the

dealership's entry was submitted at the end of September, it was number two for sales on Škoda's national scorecard and 10th out of 146 dealers for used cars.

Before its official opening, the business operated as an authorised repairer with three staff – "to look after live customers".

For its launch, the dealership teamed up with Tower FM radio, broadcasting live from the site with a karaoke competition.

New car registrations to the end of September were 41 against a Škoda target of 21 and it had sold 216 used cars, 76 more than target.

Sold workshop hours increased from 915 a

month to 2,031 and the business achieved an overall workshop utilisation of 69.3% – despite the level of brand and equipment training the new team needed.

Turnover was almost treble that expected in its first four months and the start-up losses budgeted for were reduced by two thirds.

In choosing RRG Škoda of Bolton, the judges concluded: "It has faced adversity, but this dealership shows the results of a well planned and executed launch. It's done things in the right way, getting local people engaged early and ensuring the team work together well before going live."

FINALISTS
Perrys FordStore Chesterfield

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THE WINNERS

AM
AWARDS:2019



Gary Wood, brand manager (second from left), and Ben Gilbert, brand director (second from right), Swansway Wrexham Volkswagen, accept the award from Bertrand Scheenaerts, European business development manager, Rhino Events, right

BEST DEALERSHIP

Winner: Swansway Wrexham Volkswagen

Number one for CSI scores in the Volkswagen UK network, a trebling of profits in the past three years and staff conscientious enough to tell customers they would be better off to stick with their current car, led the judges to a unanimous decision for 2019's Best Dealership.

Swansway Wrexham Volkswagen was judged as "clearly living the Swansway values of caring, honest and proud". "The staff have a real ambition to succeed," said awards auditors BDO.

Wrexham is not an affluent area, the business acknowledged. It's easier to sell a used car than new. But there were numerous areas the business

knew it needed to – and could – improve upon.

New car volumes were below VW and Swansway targets, there was not enough focus on renewing finance customers, and aftersales was underperforming. While used car volumes were on target, opportunities were not being fully exploited. Staff retention was also poor, leading to customer satisfaction levels below aspirations.

Now, the site has 30-40 new cars in stock on Auto Trader at all times, with the maximum number of pictures and videos. Sales staff focus on renewals, and while a new pay plan incorporates a monthly, incentivised new car sales target, staff are told to advise customers not to change their car where

appropriate ("We would rather make £100 profit five times than £2,000 once while upsetting a customer").

Swansway Wrexham Volkswagen retails used cars that are 'too good to auction' and the business introduced a more experienced service adviser team that increased red and amber work. An electronic health check is required for every car alongside a customer video of each car inspected.

The dealership analyses customer satisfaction by individual adviser, upsell by each adviser and retail hours sold.

"Focusing everyone's minds, every day, means things become second nature," said the business.

HIGHLY COMMENDED

Milcars Mazda

FINALISTS

Newmans Suzuki
Perrys Ford Chesterfield

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THE WINNERS

AM
AWARDS: 2019



Richard Gough,
general manager,
Mercedes-Benz of Preston,
accepts the award from
Andrew Landell,
managing director,
LTK Consultants, right

DEALER PRINCIPAL/GENERAL MANAGER OF THE YEAR

Winner: Richard Gough, general manager, Mercedes-Benz of Preston

The fortunes of Mercedes-Benz of Preston have been transformed under the leadership of Richard Gough. In three years, its turnover has risen by almost half, to £34 million, and it has moved from making a loss in 2016 to being securely in the black in 2018. Its customer service scores have also improved by five percentage points, to 95% in sales, and morale has risen.

Gough leads the business as one team, not separate business units, and emphasises that if sales have a great day, this spurs on aftersales

and vice versa. His team is kept informed of their results, and he believes honest communication is crucial – if there are poor practices they must stop, and great ones must be encouraged.

Regular one-to-ones and personal training plans for each team member have improved engagement and productivity, yet Gough is keen for staff to also have fun at work. "It's a key driver behind peoples' behaviour and the key 'flavour' to our performance," he said in his entry.

Suggestions for improvements, no matter how small, are welcome from everyone. Gough is a

believer in the benefits of a thousand small changes, as much as the next big idea. He has placed extra emphasis on used car sales at the dealership, which is part of Marshall Motor Group, and it has increased sales volume by 46% since 2017. Stock is now managed carefully, the speed to market has improved, and his team recognises that stock presentation – on the forecourt and online – has to be right.

"I lead a great team, and we have been able to create an environment that flourishes," said Gough.

HIGHLY COMMENDED

Gary Wood, Swansway
Wrexham Volkswagen

FINALISTS

Lee Gibbs, Imperial Cars Southampton
Steve Puttock, Westcars of Tiverton

Chris Ward, Milcars Mazda
Karl White, Thame Cars

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THE WINNERS

AM
AWARDS:2019



Jonathan Gravell, managing director, second from right, and Ian Gravell, general manager, second from left, of Gravells of Kidwelly, accept the award from Lance Boseley, marketing director, Jewelultra (manufacturers of Diamondbrite), right

BEST DEALER GROUP – UP TO 10 SITES

Winner: Gravells of Kidwelly

If you are looking for a great example of a proud, professional, local business, then Gravells is it. This group, with a Renault/Dacia dealership and five Kia showrooms in South Wales, plus another site about to open, is in the top 10% of the UK's largest 200 dealer groups for profit per employee.

Its return on sales, slightly more than 2% in 2017, was double the average among the UK's franchised dealerships.

Gravells claims to be the oldest Renault franchisee in the UK, having represented the

French brand since 1954. It has won that brand's dealer of the year award on several occasions, including its latest trophy last month, and developed such a strong local market for Dacia that it was among the first to separate the brand from its Renault showroom.

It has also expanded steadily across south Wales in the past 12 years with Kia, replicating its strong operations with great success – all four new car sites are within the top 10 of Kia's network, and its Narberth branch delivers the highest retail market share of the UK.

Gravells has long had a bilingual policy – English and Welsh – at its dealerships, which prompted Kia to implement the same policy for all its franchisees in Wales from 2017.

Gravells has loyal staff and develops their careers – all its current general managers joined the business as sales executives.

The AM Awards judging panel said: "This was a tightly contested category. Gravells deserves the win for its consistent strength. This family-owned business is clearly very well run and well respected in its marketplace."

HIGHLY COMMENDED

Porsche Retail Group

FINALISTS

John Banks Motor Group

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THE WINNERS

AM
AWARDS: 2019

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Stuart Foulds, chairman and chief executive, TrustFord, accepts the award from Mark Gow, sales director, DSG Finance, right

BEST DEALER GROUP – MORE THAN 10 SITES

Winner: TrustFord

TrustFord has returned “to the good old days” as it innovates to meet changing customer needs.

The AM Awards judges said the Ford Motor Company-owned retail group “is performing strongly and is run well” under chairman and chief executive Stuart Foulds.

Operating 61 sites across the UK, TrustFord expanded its Long Marston fleet preparation hub to 33 acres, its fleet delivery team to 50 drivers and introduced an in-house vehicle graphics service in 2018.

The developments will aim to build on a 99%

retention rate among its fleet customers and an increase in commercial vehicles volume from 16,000 in 2014 to about 30,000 last year.

More than one in four new Ford commercial vehicles is currently supplied by TrustFord.

A new initiative, TrustFord Now, has improved the group's consumer offering, meanwhile, allowing customers to order their vehicle online, purchase a vehicle within an hour, or facilitate delivery to the nearest dealership within 24 hours.

TrustFord has also invested heavily in FordStore facilities at Cribbs Causeway, Staines, Newtownards and Lisburn in 2018.

In the first half of 2019, it plans to grow an existing mobile servicing division to 50 units and it will launch 19 QuickLane fast fit aftersales locations – including five in Scotland. The move north will include the creation of PartsPlus wholesale parts hubs.

TrustFord grew turnover by 6.5% (from £1.63 billion to £1.74bn) and profit-before-tax by 70.9% (from £9m to £15.4m) between 2015 and 2017.

TrustFord prides itself on a five-day working week and flexible working hours and it rose two places to 20th in *The Sunday Times* Best Big Companies to Work For in 2018.

FINALISTS
Imperial Cars

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THE WINNERS

AM
AWARDS: 2019



Russell Borrie, group franchise director, Arnold Clark Automobiles, accepts the award from Richard Jones, managing director – motor finance and leasing, Lloyds Banking Group, right

DEALER GROUP OF THE YEAR

Winner: Arnold Clark Automobiles

To choose a group worthy of our ultimate business award, our judging panel scrutinises the winners from the two Best Dealer Group categories (up to/ more than 10 sites), plus Best Used Car Dealer (independent and non-franchised) and Best Used Car Dealer (franchised) – and Arnold Clark Automobiles was the judges' unanimous choice for 2019.

In an increasingly difficult market, the group's turnover reached a record high of £3.9 billion, while increasing its staff numbers by 23% since 2014. It opened new sites in 2018, including a secondary head office in Glasgow, bringing its branch total to 200.

The opening of new branches (including a Motorstore car supermarket in Doncaster) contributed to a 10% increase in used car sales in 2018 (up 7.5% like-for-like). The expansion of its delivery centres – offering customers a wide choice of marques in their local area – has allowed the 12 sites to sell nearly 8,000 cars in 2018, up more than 100% year-on-year.

Arnold Clark is also one of the most people-focused groups in the motor retail sector. In 2018, after declaring 2017 the Year of the Employee, it created its five core values – family, community, communication, progression and recognition – as it strives to build a two-way relationship between

management and staff. It is determined to achieve a better gender balance in the business, employ a greater diversity of people and reduce staff attrition.

Arnold Clark has one of the largest apprenticeship schemes in Scotland, with more than 300 vacancies attracting nearly 3,000 applications in 2018.

On the technology front, the group pioneered the use of image recognition in its first consumer app. Users can take a photo of any car's registration plate, and see the exact specification of the photographed car if it's in stock (with a finance breakdown), or closely matched alternatives if it is a non-Arnold Clark car.

FINALISTS

Imperial Cars
TrustFord

Gravells of Kidwelly
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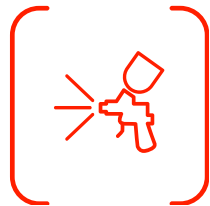
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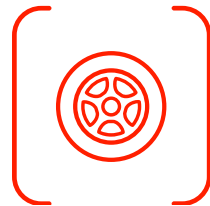
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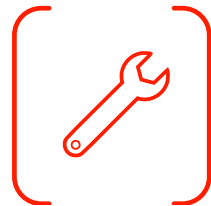
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Mark Lavery, chief executive, Cambria Automobiles, accepts the award from Ian Simpson, sales and marketing director, Premia Solutions, right

BUSINESS LEADER OF THE YEAR

Winner: Mark Lavery, chief executive, Cambria Automobiles

Given the senior management experience he gained at AFG, Hartwell and Reg Vardy, Mark Lavery's decision in 2006 to lead his own business was a logical one, and Cambria Automobiles was born. Lavery and his leadership team defined the four pillars of the business – delighting customers, employees, manufacturer brands and stakeholders – and set out with a strategy to 'buy and build', acquiring underperforming or broken businesses and turning them around. Steady growth led to its flotation on the Alternative Investment Market (AIM) in 2010.

More recently, Lavery, still the group's largest shareholder, has evolved that strategy. Historically, Cambria had a small number of premium and luxury franchises and was heavily weighted towards mainstream brands such as Ford, Fiat and Mazda. In the past few years it has acquired more high-end brands, including Bentley, Lamborghini, Land Rover and McLaren, bringing higher value transactions and more balance to the group's portfolio, albeit in return for high capital investment. In 2018, it also reduced its exposure to Fiat and its sister brands, Alfa Romeo and Jeep, as their market share continued to drop. Profitability at

the group remains above the industry's average. Lavery has structured Cambria to allow its general managers at each branch a level of autonomy and entrepreneurialism. They can drive their business, while receiving the support of group-wide functions, such as HR and digital marketing, and of processes, such as its used car 'velocity' programme, which has brought days in stock down to 27, half the industry's average. Support functions, and even board directors, are based around the group, removing the need for a head office – Lavery prefers for him and his leadership team to be out among the branches, visibly leading and helping to solve problems.

PREVIOUS WINNERS:

2018 Darren Edwards, chief executive, Sytner Group
2017 Andy Bruce, chief executive, Lookers
2016 Gary Savage, chief executive, Mercedes-Benz UK

2015 Ray Sommerville, managing director, Perrys Motor Sales
2014 Eddie Hawthorne, chief executive, Arnold Clark Automobiles

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THE WINNERS

AM
AWARDS: 2019



Tony Whitehorn, former chief executive, Hyundai Motor UK, accepts the award from Katie Rugen, UK automotive sales team lead, Shell UK, right

AM HALL OF FAME

Inductee: Tony Whitehorn

After leading a decade of growth for Hyundai Motor UK, its former president and chief executive, Tony Whitehorn, is still known for his energy and innovation.

AM Awards judges were keen to recognise the transformative tenure of the man who spent 13 years as a central component of a franchise often cited as one of the UK automotive sector's stand-out success stories.

When Whitehorn joined Hyundai from Toyota in 2005, the brand was ranked 23rd in the UK, with just 28,000 cars sold.

But he seized the opportunity presented by the

Government-backed scrappage scheme of 2009 and has since led a push into online retail, with the Click to Buy online retail channel, and stores located in shopping malls.

Hyundai's scrappage scheme success outstripped that of all other brands, taking registrations from 28,000 in 2008 to 56,000 in 2009.

In 2018, Hyundai defied a market that shrank by 6.8% – following 2017's record registrations of 93,403 – with a 3.7% decline in registrations (89,925), but securing a record 3.8% market share.

Whitehorn's push into online new car sales and high-footfall shopping mall store locations, at

Westfield and Bluewater, was carried out in partnership with Rockar.

Annually, about 250,000 people visit the stores, which are now operated by Kent-based Motorline.

Central to Whitehorn's success has been a desire to adapt quickly to meet new challenges head-on.

At the Vision of the Future seminar at Automotive Management Live 2018, he urged delegates not to rest on their laurels.

"We're going through a period of exceptional change," he said. "The key is that we've to work together in the industry and the key to doing that is to remain flexible."

PREVIOUS INDUCTEES

2018 Jack Tordoff MBE, JCT600
2015 Michael Smyth, Swansway Group
2016 Mark Squires, Benfield Motor Group/NFDA

2015 Gerard Nieuwenhuys, Sytner
2014 Peter Jones, Lookers

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MEET BRITAIN'S BEST PERFORMING CAR MANUFACTURER



Take a look at SsangYong – the easy to operate franchise with no upfront costs

On the back of the hugely successful launch of its new Musso pick-up, SsangYong is continuing its major push to attract new dealers. "We want to make it easy for dealers to acquire and operate the franchise," says David Rose, franchising manager, "and have removed the barriers to ensure representing our brand is highly appealing and easily assessable."

"We have changed the traditional way people view a new vehicle franchise, and SsangYong will be known for the quality of its products, its industry beating warranties, the ease of operating a dealership, and it now comes with free start-up costs! Our new approach means there is no investment in signage, special tools, vehicle diagnostic equipment and other set-up costs when joining the SsangYong family. Not only that,

but SsangYong gives you industry leading margin retention on new vehicles, so all in all, highly compelling!"

Adds Nick Laird, managing director of SsangYong Motor UK, "The brand is committed to long term investment in new product, and we will be seeing at least one new model launch a year through to 2022. We offer a very clear product portfolio of SUV, 4x4 and pick-up models - all sectors of the market in growth, and we are committed to ongoing investment to build great relationships with our dealers and customers."

"Our big launch in 2019 will be an all new C-segment SUV to replace the Korando. Arriving in showrooms towards the middle of the year, it will give the brand a significant new player within its five model range. In the meantime, South Korea's third largest vehicle manufacturer has a number of other changes lined up that include Euro 6D engines and smaller petrol engines. EVs haven't been forgotten either,

SsangYong is Britain's best performing car manufacturer according to the Honest John Satisfaction Index 2018.

Model featured is Musso Rhino. Fuel consumption figures in mpg. Musso: Urban 25.9-29.1, Extra Urban 39.2-40.9, Combined 32.8-35.8. CO2 emissions in g/km 226-211. *Warranty covers 7 years or 150,000 miles.

and expect to hear news about electric and other new models in the coming months.

"We shape our customer offers to what dealers need, and having introduced a 7-year/150,000 mile warranty when we launched Musso and retrospectively on all new Rextons, this has now been extended across the range giving SsangYong the best warranty in the motor industry by some margin."

"We are looking to recruit a further 20 dealerships in 2019," says David, "with open points available in both urban and country locations; I am keen to talk to both experienced new vehicle franchisees, and operators who are considering their first franchise. Indeed, SsangYong is an ideal "first step" into new vehicle franchising, as it's very easy to operate and enjoy incremental income from sales and service from day one."

About the SsangYong range

While it might still be a small brand, SsangYong has just been named 'Best performing car manufacturer' by HonestJohn.co.uk and top for owner satisfaction, beating names such as Porsche, Lexus and Jaguar.

It offers dealers a five model range of cars so there's something for almost every customer: B & C segment SUVs, a large 4x4 and a crew cab pick-up, which means that whatever your dealer profile, there's a product you can offer.

Tivoli compact SUV

Available with either a 1.6 litre petrol or diesel engine, the new Tivoli is extremely well equipped and depending on model, includes a smart audio with DAB radio, Apple Carplay/Android Auto, Bluetooth connectivity, autonomous emergency braking and an auto close function added to the remote keyless central locking, as well as air conditioning. On the road prices start from £14,495.

Tivoli XLV

Sharing the same platform and wheelbase as the Tivoli, the XLV features a lengthened body and an expanded load capacity of 720 cubic litres of space. Comprehensively equipped, it also comes with a choice of either a 1.6 litre petrol or diesel engine, and with the option of a 6-speed manual or 6-speed Aisin automatic transmission. Retail prices start from just £19,745.

Korando crossover

Italian designed and Korean built, the Korando crossover is powered by a 2.0 litre petrol or 2.2 diesel engine, and comes with a 6-speed manual or Aisin 6-speed automatic transmission. Comprehensive equipment includes heated

front and rear seats, automatic air conditioning, rear-view reversing camera, cruise control and alloy wheels. Prices from £17,495.

With a 2-tonne towing capacity, the SsangYong Korando SE 4x4 won the award for vehicles under £24,000 in The Caravan and Motorhome Club Towcar of the Year 2018.

Rexton 4x4

Rexton has already been awarded '4x4 of the Year 2018' and 'Best Value 4x4 2019' by 4x4 Magazine, and heralds major advances in style, quality, safety and technology. It is a large D/E-segment four-wheel drive offering a prestige cabin, while disguising its tough and rugged off-road capability.

An authentic 4x4, it is powered by a 2.2 litre turbo Euro 6 diesel engine delivering maximum power of 181PS and maximum torque of 420Nm, with a 6-speed manual or 7-speed Mercedes-Benz automatic. It has a 3.5 tonne towing capacity, essential for those who tow large caravans and trailers.

Built using a modern and strong body-on-frame construction, it is extremely safe and equipped with a comprehensive suite of electronic safety aids and up to nine airbags. Latest connectivity and technology includes Apple Carplay and Google Android Auto, an HD 9.2" navigation screen and 3D 'around-view' monitoring. Prices from £28,995.

Musso pick-up

The all-new SsangYong Musso pick-up is already disrupting the fast-growing pick-up market and has won a raft of awards, not least the What Car? 'Best Pick-up for less than £25,000' award, and the 'Best Value Pick-up' in 4x4 magazine's Pick-up of the Year awards. Built using an extremely strong body-on-frame construction, it delivers excellent off-road driving performance and safety from its quad-frame and four-wheel-drive system.

A highly competent multi-purpose truck, Musso carries passengers in comfort and loads securely, and combines a five-seat crew-cab with a workman-like load deck that takes a full-sized Euro pallet. It also carries a payload of over 1-tonne and tows trailers of up to 3.5 tonnes concurrently, the highest total load capacity in the segment.



**SSURPRISINGLY
SSANGYONG**

**For new dealer
franchising enquiries,
call David on:
07964 806938**



Four reasons why effective lead management will be essential in 2019



2 019 is set to be a tumultuous time for the automotive retail sector. Economic uncertainty and continued consumer concern over diesel are expected to continue to create headwinds for new car sales.

In this environment, it is crucial to make sure every lead coming into your dealership is optimised. Here are just four ways in which a robust lead management process will ensure better sales this upcoming year:

Fewer missed sales

Are your sales teams responding to each lead quickly and efficiently? They should be – in our survey of 1,200 motorists, 25% expected a response to an enquiry within 30 mins and almost half within an hour. An effective lead management system (LMS) can record every lead coming into your dealership, ensuring each is assigned to a sales contact, and helping to ensure that a tailored response is sent, giving you an instant advantage.

Ensuring better CRM

The pillar of a successful sales strategy is

a robust and accurate CRM to ensure all prospects are being addressed and all leads are being recorded and nurtured at the right time. According to research from Marketing Donut, 63% of people requesting information today will not purchase for at least three months – and 20% will take more than 12 months to buy. A dedicated LMS is therefore essential to ensure that all leads coming in are automatically entered into the CRM/DMS, guaranteeing not only that all customers and prospects are recorded accurately, but making it possible to map and report on the customer journey from enquiry to sale.

Time-saving

It is a misconception that ensuring every lead coming into your dealership is responded to and managed takes up valuable time. The opposite is true – with a truly integrated system, you can pull in leads from all your different sources (think email, website and third-party classifieds) into one system.

When the lead progresses through the



sales process, an LMS with decent integration will allow you to export and pull in from essential automotive sales systems, including DMSs, vehicle evaluation services, FCA systems and finance.

All this reduces the headache of system-switching and double-keying, meaning you can make the customer and dealer experience as seamless as possible, leaving more time to ensure every sales opportunity is maximised.

Effective performance monitoring

A good LMS will enable managers to see live metrics on all aspects of a sales team's performance (preferably in real time) as well as the effectiveness of different enquiry channels and sources.

This can include enquiry logs, outstanding offers and lost-sales analysis. This allows for a full-spectrum sales funnel analysis that enables you to identify key improvement areas in your dealership affecting sales performance. After all, if you can't measure it – you can't fix it!

Founded in 2003, Dealerweb is the market-leading provider of enquiry management systems in the UK, helping retailers sell more vehicles, more profitably and with excellent customer satisfaction.



FIVE LEAD CHANNELS AND HOW TO HANDLE THEM

With leads coming from a growing variety of sources, particularly online, keeping track can be a difficult task. **Debbie Kirlaw** looks at some potential channel-tracking solutions

2 WEBSITE



Dealers are not yet equipped to manage omni-channel communication with customers, according to GForces.

With consumers wishing to communicate digitally in real time and many even willing to purchase online, Paul Stokes, GForces' head of online retailing, said: "A paradigm shift – from a lead-generation model to an end-to-end e-commerce model – is required."

Lead conversion rates can be increased if dealers allow customers to take a natural online journey at their own pace and in their own time. To that end, GForces has launched its e-commerce platform, Auto-e, to increase interactions with demographic groups that have historically been hesitant to enter the showroom environment. Its live chat, provided by Gubagoo, uses artificial intelligence to provide answers or automated holding responses, or the chat can be transferred to an adviser.

Dealerweb advises bringing as much of the showroom experience to online channels as possible. Hill said: "The use of engaging media, such as

videos, infographics and social media should be integral to all marketing communications, but is worth extra effort when it comes to lead-nurturing strategies. At all stages of the buying journey, buyers will inevitably be 'shopping around'." However, a Dealerweb study of 1,200 motorists showed, a quarter (25%) of consumers expect a response to enquiries in less than 30 minutes and almost half (49%) in under an hour.

But, as Nathan Tomlinson, dealer principal at Devonshire Motors, points out, immediate action should not be confused with an immediate response. To nurture the lead successfully, the right information should be provided by the dealer, laying the foundation for the lead to develop subtly.

The GForces' platform logs every interaction and provides automated follow-ups created at various points in the customer journey. Messages can also be triaged to the right person or department, diaries and call centre lists populated, with each individual contact point tracked, followed up and escalated.

1 EVENTS



Meeting new customers at events or pop-up locations is a great way to cast the net wider than the usual channels, according to Dealerweb. The follow-up should be personalised, including providing a direct contact so the customer feels more valued.

Martin Hill, managing director of Dealerweb, said: "Our research shows a blended retail strategy is a crucial part of today's dealership. The approach relies on a strong link between the customer's online journey and their physical one."

Events provide a means to

combine the two, bringing the physical dealership to the customer or enticing the customer to visit the showroom. Once the potential customer has been engaged at an event, dealers need to ensure the positive experience continues by keeping in touch and responding promptly to requests.

Hill said: "Make it easy" should be the foundation of your customer experience. Data indicates that customers feel more comfortable researching online and less so in the showroom. So, make sure it's all as easy as possible to get them through the doors."

3 EMAILS



Sales executives can feel besieged by leads with many of them 'from digital tyre-kickers', according to Jeremy Evans, managing director at Marketing Delivery. However, dealers are too readily giving up on dozens of genuine leads every month, according to Marketing Delivery's research from Q4 2018, which showed 36% of 'lost'

leads were still in-market.

Evans said: "This hints at a huge opportunity, one that can be realised through automation. Sales teams can use eCRM (electronic customer relationship management) tools to keep undecided used-car customers engaged signing them up to automated email alerts when new stock arrives, which



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C matches their initial enquiry. The same tools can be used to update prospects if a dealer reduces the price on a car. Keeping them in the sales funnel in this way maximises the chance of conversation."

Tomlinson said: "Not all leads are the same in terms of how they should be handled. A showroom walk-in, a telephone call, an email, a live chat or a Facebook post all require a different approach and skill set."

"We have to structure the dealership to ensure enquiries are handled by the most suitable

person, not by default the best sales person.

"I think the industry does an acceptable job of handling walk-in and telephone enquiries. Where the industry really struggles is the timely processing of electronic leads. We continue to fall into classic traps such as responding to an email or web lead with a phone call and then wondering why the customer doesn't answer."

Devonshire filters all incoming leads through one single channel and then chooses the best person to respond.

4 3RD PARTY REFERRALS

The consistency offered by third-party tools makes the response rate more robust, according to Motors.co.uk, whose research found one-in-five telephone enquiries still go unanswered.

Dermot Kelleher, director of marketing and business intelligence at Motors.co.uk, said: "Failure to follow up on missed calls might be inevitable, given the often hectic nature of dealer operations, but don't expect customers to call back – they'll take their business elsewhere."

"Over half of all buyers who have seen a vehicle on car search websites don't call or email before visiting showrooms, they just turn up. So make sure sales staff always ask which

– and how many – car search and review websites they used before arriving on your forecourt as four out of five people use two or more as part of the research process. This is invaluable lead generation insight."

Dealerweb React promises 100% web-lead capture and response. Automating the collation of web leads from virtually all sources, the software guides sales staff through a professional, consistent and personalised response process. Integrating with the Dealerweb Showroom sales and lead management platform ensures all leads are also recorded.

LEAD ATTRIBUTION

Tracking tools and reporting functions deliver a host of insights, enabling dealers to better manage and nurture leads. For example, GForces' system incorporates data analysis tools to monitor conversion rates and discover the most successful lead-generation channels.

Motors.co.uk's lead-tracking platform, The Eye, captures responses to listings on its site and its network of partner websites, from telephone calls and emails to detailed vehicle page views.

Kelleher said: "Top-performing dealers recognise the importance of capturing and harvesting leads, which is why it's critical to have automated processes in place to consistently manage each and every enquiry."

Vertu Motors has integrated Calltracks technology into its systems and activities and is measuring and linking up omni-channel enquires from varied sources. Vertu injects information into its systems as Calltracks passes the calls across. Once inserted back into the customers' journeys, which consist of multiple touch points, this offers a view on each part of the marketing mix to see the most successful channels.

Tomlinson said dealers must "get forensic" with their leads: "Showroom visits and telephone calls are relatively easy to measure. Digital leads are very easy to measure in terms of volume, response time, etc., but less easy to understand in terms of where they originate."

5 PHONE CALLS

Illustrating the potential impact of lost leads, Moneypenny's data analysis of a leading car brand with more than 100 sites that it supports found their ROI was 17:1 when comparing the value of the calls to the cost of Moneypenny call-handling. Moneypenny can also enter service and MOT bookings straight into clients' diaries, while a specific dealership event can be monitored using an individual diverted phone number to track call volumes and interest.

Jo McKeown, Moneypenny's automotive business development manager, said: "Retailers are becoming increasingly switched on when it comes to call

management and we continue to see a rise in the number of automotive clients who want to ensure they are making the most of every lead by regularly analysing their call and chat data."

Calltracks measures and analyses calls using static numbers or dynamic number insertion, allowing dealers to attribute calls to channels, and it assists in automatically capturing caller information, including what the customers are looking at when they call. Every lead is entered into the dealer's CRM or showroom system, or matches calls to records at a later date to identify anything missing.



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1

Making every lead count for over 1,500 dealers and counting...

For over 15 years, Dealerweb has been instrumental in transforming the lead conversion rates of franchise dealers across the globe.

During this time, we have perfected our intuitive systems to maximise profitability through better lead management and ensured competitive advantage by enabling 100% enquiry capture and response.

For many, we have also become the central hub for sales operations through our ability to

integrate with other systems – from finance, warranty and compliance providers, to DMSSs.

In this past year alone, we are proud to have helped over 13,000 users successfully process over 3 million leads in over 1,500 dealerships globally.

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'Lost lead'? Don't write off prospects so readily

Jeremy Evans, MD of Marketing Delivery, explains why more than a third of all 'lost' leads aren't lost at all – and how dealers can re-engage and convert them

Q What do you see as the biggest challenge for sales teams in 2019?

A After a challenging year for motor retailers, sales staff need to maximise the potential of every worthwhile lead that comes into the business. There is a degree of reticence among customers at the moment – exacerbated by Brexit-related uncertainties about the economy and doubts about diesel – and many are putting off decisions about whether or not to buy a new car. The challenge for dealers is keeping prospective customers engaged until they make that decision.

Q How can dealers spot real prospects and keep them interested?

A One of the most effective tactics dealers can employ to nurture a lead is contacting that customer with carefully timed reminders about the car they are interested in. A well judged follow-up email can make all the difference. We recently analysed data from Q4 2018 showing that 36% of customers marked as a 'lost lead' by sales staff are, in fact, still in the market for a vehicle. By keeping these customers engaged with relevant, timely information, businesses maximise their chance of closing a sale, rather than simply writing them off as a 'lost lead'.

The sheer volume of leads salespeople have to tackle nowadays is a challenge, with digital interaction making it much easier for consumers to generate an enquiry. No wonder some prospects fall through the cracks, particularly when their requirements can't quickly be met by the dealer. Automation makes sense to help process leads in an efficient manner, and to pull true prospects back into the pipeline if they drop out prematurely.

Q More than a third of customers are incorrectly classed as 'lost leads' – what can dealers do to address this?

A There are a number of reasons why a prospective customer may be qualified as 'lost', yet still be in the market for a car. Our research suggests that the most common reason is that the right car simply isn't available at the right price –

availability was cited by 39% of all 'lost leads', with 47% putting it down to affordability, such as monthly payments or a car's overall price. Drivers, particularly used car buyers, do more research than ever on what car or specification they ought to buy. If they contact a dealer and the specific car they want is not available, many businesses mark them as a 'lost lead' and move on. This is self-defeating, but all too common. Instead of abandoning the enquiry, there's a good chance the customer may still be interested if the right car becomes available or the price falls. Our 'Car Alerts' eCRM [electronic customer relationship management] tool helps dealers stay in touch with genuine would-be buyers.

Q How does the Car Alerts system work?

A Car Alerts was designed to keep undecided 'approved used car' customers engaged with a dealer, even if the car they want is not available. If an enquiry has not progressed to a sale after seven days, a customer can be auto-subscribed to receive a 'Car Alert' – an automated email that updates them



whenever new stock arrives matching their enquiry or existing stock drops in price.

When we piloted this system with a pair of Audi dealers in south Wales, one recorded 40 additional sales of approved used cars in the first three months, and the other achieved 46. More than 300 dealers across the UK now rely on Marketing Delivery Car Alerts to boost their used car operations.

Q Where do you see the greatest opportunities for dealers?

A While fewer new cars were sold in 2018, dealers and workshops have all the incentive they need to tap into the potential from their existing customer base. Our research highlights the importance of ongoing engagement with customers who have already purchased a car, particularly in the wake of GDPR. Getting a car into the workshop is a great excuse for dealers to update customer and vehicle details, and to ensure they

COMPANY PROFILE

Key products: Sales CRM, Car Alerts, Aftersales, Lost Sales, Social Media

Key staff: Jeremy Evans, managing director

Founded: 2007

Based: Frant, East Sussex

Visit: marketingdelivery.co.uk

email: get.in.touch

@marketingdelivery.com

Telephone: 01892 599 911

Marketing Delivery

DATA
DRIVEN
MARKETING



36% OF CUSTOMERS MARKED AS A 'LOST LEAD' BY SALES STAFF ARE, IN FACT, STILL IN THE MARKET FOR A VEHICLE

JEREMY EVANS, MARKETING DELIVERY

send vehicle owners the most appropriate, tailored marketing messages.

Aftersales should be a key focus for dealers, and service receptions can use eCRM tools to keep in touch with customers and generate 'leads' the same way sales departments do. Customers want to be interacted with like this, and it takes a significant administrative burden from a dealership that may otherwise fill workshop bays by making calls or – worse still – just waiting for business to come in.

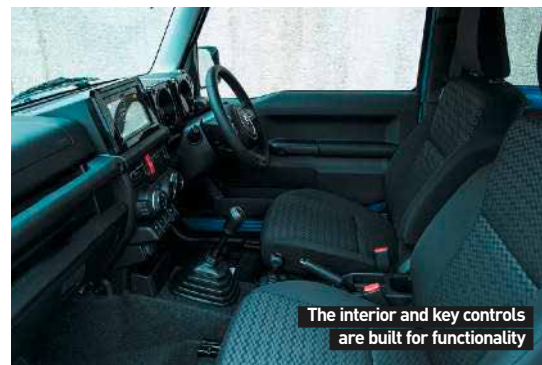
Q How could dealers use eCRM tools to increase aftersales business?

A 60% of UK motorists say they are more likely to book a service or MOT with a dealership that reminds them at an appropriate time. Dealers get the best response from aftersales prospects with an email reminder about an MOT or service three to four weeks ahead of the due date. We can provide our dealer partners with a service retention report to track customer responses to aftersales marketing, helping service teams target their emails even more effectively.

SUZUKI JIMNY 4X4: SELL-OUT SUV HAS STAYED TRUE TO ITS OFF-ROAD ROOTS



Suzuki GB expects to sell all 1,200 Jimnys coming to the UK each year



The interior and key controls are built for functionality



The new Jimny lives up to its predecessor's off-road reputation



Boot space is somewhat limited



£15,499-
£18,999



1.5-LITRE
101PS
PETROL



0-62MPH;
TOP SPEED
87-90MPH



5SP MANUAL;
4SP AUTOMATIC



37.7-
41.5MPG



154-170G/KM
CO₂

Q&A



DALE WYATT,
MANAGING
DIRECTOR,
SUZUKI GB

In 2018 you told *AM* that you had “screwed up in March”, with logistical issues causing a shortfall in stock. How is the brand faring now?
We’re doing all right. I screwed up in Q1. I got it wrong. We had the issues with Ant and Dec and then, logistically, we ended up with cars in Zeebrugge when we needed them here. Another thing was that I made our finance offers far too elegant when others were being aggressive. We have bounced back and our sales are now the second-best in our history YTD.

The brand has refreshed the Vitara and now has its first new Jimny for more than 20 years. What are the predicted sales fortunes of each?
The Jimny went on sale in January and we’d already had 10,000 expressions of interest from potential customers who registered on the Suzuki website. How many of those will be converted into sales remains to be seen, but it is clear that demand will greatly outstrip supply. There will be 1,200 Jimnys coming to the UK each year. In all honesty, they’re all

sold. Vitara volumes were up by almost 5% last year (from 11,933 in 2017 to 12,525 in 2018) and we expect current levels to continue, with about 12,000 sales annually.

Will there be marketing activity to promote the Jimny in light of supply constraints?

For dealers, the limited numbers meant that there was only one Jimny going to each dealership when dealer deliveries happened in December, rather than the showroom model and demonstrator that would usually be the case. We really need to ensure that we satisfy customer demand with every Jimny we can get our hands on.

Elsewhere in the Suzuki range, we have seen the adoption of down-sized, turbocharged engines or the 1.2 SHVS mild hybrid. Why was neither solution considered for the Jimny?

The Jimny’s off-road focus meant the 1.5 was the ideal engine. That said, a hybrid variant would be great to see. I’d like to see an electric version, but there are currently no plans. To a degree, there is a sense that we have sold 42,000 Jimnys in the UK over the past 20 years and, because there’s been nothing else in the market and those vehicles are still running, they haven’t had any cause to change. The success of the Jimny could actually depend on how many fashionable city users will buy the car.

REVIEW RATINGS

TOP GEAR



WHAT CAR?



AUTOCAR



KEY RIVALS



Fiat Panda 4x4



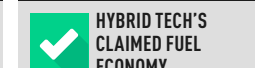
AFFORDABLE ENTRY-
LEVEL TO 4WD



LACKS ULTIMATE
OFF-ROAD ABILITY



Suzuki Swift 4x4



HYBRID TECH’S
CLAIMED FUEL
ECONOMY



LACKS OFF-ROAD
ABILITY. PRICE



Dacia Duster 4x4



VALUE,
CABIN SPACE



CONSPICUOUS
FOR THE BRAND-
CONSCIOUS

The new Jimny off-roader presents Suzuki GB with a ‘problem’ more common among supercar makers such as McLaren or Lamborghini when they launch a new limited edition model – demand outstripping supply. While the Jimny appears to have niche appeal – its 85-litre boot means it is most certainly not a family car – managing director Dale Wyatt is certain his 158-strong retail network could sell more than their allotted share of global production (see panel, right).

Out on the road, the Jimny is comfortable enough, despite an occasionally bouncy rear end, but it feels ill at ease holding speeds of more than 50mph. The normally aspirated 1.5-litre petrol engine produces just 101PS and 130Nm of torque.

Suzuki quotes a top speed of 90mph, CO₂ emissions of 154g/km and fuel economy of 41.5mpg under WLTP-correlated figures.

Fitted with the optional four-speed automatic gearbox (adding £1,000) that top speed drops to 87mph, CO₂ emissions rise to 170g/km and mpg falls to 37.7mpg.

That’s not particularly impressive for a small car with a kerb weight of just 1,135kg. But while Suzuki may have hit the bull’s-eye with the Jimny’s balance of cute-but-utilitarian styling, its shortcomings result from the fact that it has been designed to build on the reputation of its predecessors for being a robust and capable off-road tool.

SZ4 (£15,499) and SZ5 (£17,999) specifications are available from launch and while widespread use of hard cabin plastics communicate its budget roots, the interior and key controls are built for functionality. As in a Land Rover Defender, switchgear has been designed for use by gloved hands.

Large dials with digitised central displays tweak the air conditioning, while rocker-type switches located in the lower part of the centre console operate the electric



THERE WILL BE
1,200 JIMNYS
COMING TO
THE UK EACH
YEAR. THEY’RE
ALL SOLD

DALE WYATT,
SUZUKI GB

windows and hill descent control system. Cruise control is also standard and operated via the multi-function steering wheel.

One control unfamiliar to any other compact vehicle available in the UK is a rather old-school stubby second gear lever to activate the low-range transfer gear.

SZ5 Jimnys also get a seven-inch touchscreen infotainment system with built-in sat-nav and Apple CarPlay or Android Auto smartphone connectivity, as well as 15-inch alloy wheels (instead of the SZ4’s steel items) and heated seats.

Suzuki must have reeled from the Jimny’s three-star Euro NCAP safety rating. Standard on both trims is Suzuki’s Dual Sensing Brake Support system, a lane departure warning system and six airbags.

Thatcham Research’s director of research, Matthew Avery, said the passive safety technology had not performed optimally under test conditions, adding: “The youthful audience the Suzuki Jimny

has been designed for deserve better.”

On the UK launch event, on standard road tyres and in soggy conditions, the four-wheel-drive Jimny’s ladder-frame chassis, short overhangs and 210mm ground clearance combined to make it a very robust off-road tool nonetheless.

Despite being petrol-powered, the Jimny will haul itself up steep, mud-covered rises and roll in controlled fashion down steep drops when switched from two-wheel-drive high ratio, through to its most extreme setting.

While it may feel a little at odds with A-roads and is severely short on stowage for a modern family, the Jimny is a compelling compact off-roader and, perhaps more importantly, is a car without a direct rival, or equal, in its class.

Suzuki dealers in rural and urban settings alike are unlikely to have problems selling the limited numbers headed to UK showrooms. **TOM SHARPE**



An electric 2018 at Lookers

It's fair to say that Lookers had a very eventful 2018. The national franchised retailer group continued its acquisition strategy with the purchase of Jennings Motor Group and its full-year and half-year financial reports told a story of resilience and confidence in the face of market uncertainty.

However, many of the headlines about the group last year were not the result of its performance on the stock market, but its support for local and national charities, including work as a key supporter of BBC Children in Need.

Lookers' biggest initiative was perhaps its involvement in the third annual Ben Industry Leader Challenge. The baton is passed every year between businesses to raise vital funds for the charity, which works tirelessly to support those in the motor industry who have fallen on hard times.

In previous years, Daksh Gupta, the chief executive of Marshall Motor Holdings, raised £142,000 by skydiving from 10,000ft, and Jeremy Hicks, the former managing director of Jaguar Land Rover UK, raised more than £185,000 by swimming the English Channel.

Electric vehicles and hybrids took centre

stage when Andy Bruce, the chief executive of Lookers, took up the challenge at the 2017 Ben Ball, a glitzy gathering of the great and the good of the motor industry in support of the charity.

Taking up the gauntlet, the Lookers Electric Charge tasked all 160 of its dealerships, as well as head offices, to raise as much money as possible for BEN over a six-month period.

This involved a relay of electric and

THE NORTH-EAST leg of the Electric Charge included a 1980s neon-inspired barbecue at Lookers' Newcastle head office, and it was chocks away for Colin Pybus, franchise director, Lookers Ford, and Michael Scott, franchise director for the Nissan Renault Division, as they took to the roads as World War II pilots Monty and Rupert. You can watch their video at youtube.com/user/LookersWebTV

In the **MIDLANDS**, Lookers dealerships were paid a visit by a host of special guests, including the Shelby crime family at Mercedes-Benz Walsall.



Advertising feature



In **MERSEYSIDE**, activities included bake sales and raffles, while, on the stranger end of the spectrum, staff drove their electric vehicles dressed as everything from super heroes at Vauxhall Ellesmere Port to the Teletubbies at Vauxhall St Helens, all while singing the challenge's theme song, *Electric Avenue*

hybrid vehicles travelling 2,000 miles to destinations that included the group's entire dealership network. Along the way, a wide range of fundraising activities were held, from carbon-neutral days and green energy workshops to test-drive events and golf days.

The route was carefully mapped out to include locations key to the UK's electric car industry. These included the impressive 75-acre Nissan plant in Sunderland and a finale in which Johnny Mowlem, the European Le Mans Series GT champion, test drove the all-electric

Jaguar I-Pace around the manufacturer's facility in Castle Bromwich. Carbon credits were also purchased where hybrid vehicles were featured.

A strong start at Charles Hurst

The challenge got off to a roaring start in May at the £20 million Audi Centre in Dublin, before moving on to Charles Hurst's sprawling Belfast operations, with pit stops at the group's Portadown and Lisburn Vauxhall dealerships.

Colin McNab, the operations manager at Charles Hurst, said: "Charging across the UK and Ireland, not only were we working hard to raise vital funds for Ben, but this unique 2,000-mile carbon-neutral challenge also allowed us to really show off what these powerful electric vehicles can do, how efficient they are and what a significant, positive impact they can make to improving our environment."

It was then down to the team at Renault Newtownabbey to transfer the relay over the Irish Sea to Audi Ayr, from where it headed down through Scotland and England until it reached its final destination at Mercedes-Benz Eastbourne in October.

Along the way, it was down to the good people of Lookers to come up with creative ways to raise as much money as possible and ensure that the Lookers Electric Charge would prove to be the most successful Industry Leader Challenge yet.

It was a challenge that staff would rise to most emphatically, so much so in fact that Bruce would go on to announce the impressive total of £215,755 at the 2018 Ben



Staff at **MERCEDES-BENZ OF GATWICK** adopted an aeronautical theme for their leg of the challenge

Ball in December (having driven there in a Jaguar I-Pace, of course).

At the ball, he passed the Leadership Challenge baton to Jon Wakefield, managing director, Volvo Car UK; Tim Tozer, chief executive, Allianz Partners UK and Ireland; and Darren Guiver, managing director, Group 1 Automotive, who plan to cycle 166 miles down the Thames from source to sea on a self-propelled water bike.

Bruce said: "I can't say enough how incredibly proud I am of what we managed to achieve last year with the Lookers Electric Charge. Ben is a vital resource for those within our industry who have found themselves in difficulty and the Industry Leader Challenge was a fantastic opportunity for us to show our appreciation."

"I would also like to once again thank everyone right across the Lookers business who took part in raising such a remarkable total. They really are a highly creative, motivated and compassionate group of people and are a testament to the values we hold dear as a business."



electriccharge@lookers.co.uk ■ www.lookers.co.uk ■ www.lookers.co.uk/EC4BEN

Is it time to go self-funded?

Why pay a warranty company who has a financial incentive to retain as much of your premium as possible?

You walk into the workshop and see the car you bought at the auctions up on the ramp getting its preparation done.

The engine looks good. Chassis looks strong. No squeaks. No rattles. The service book is up-to-date, with the manufacturer's stamps decorating every page. This one could roll straight out onto the forecourt.

But wait. You spoke too soon.

The rear discs are worn thin and a window switch isn't working.

So you put the time and money into correcting the issues and prepare the car for sale. Maybe you do the work in-house or perhaps you employ a technician to do an independent check to give your customers added reassurance. However you approach your preparation, dealers are spending more time and money ensuring vehicles are inspected to the highest standard to meet customer expectations.

What happens next?

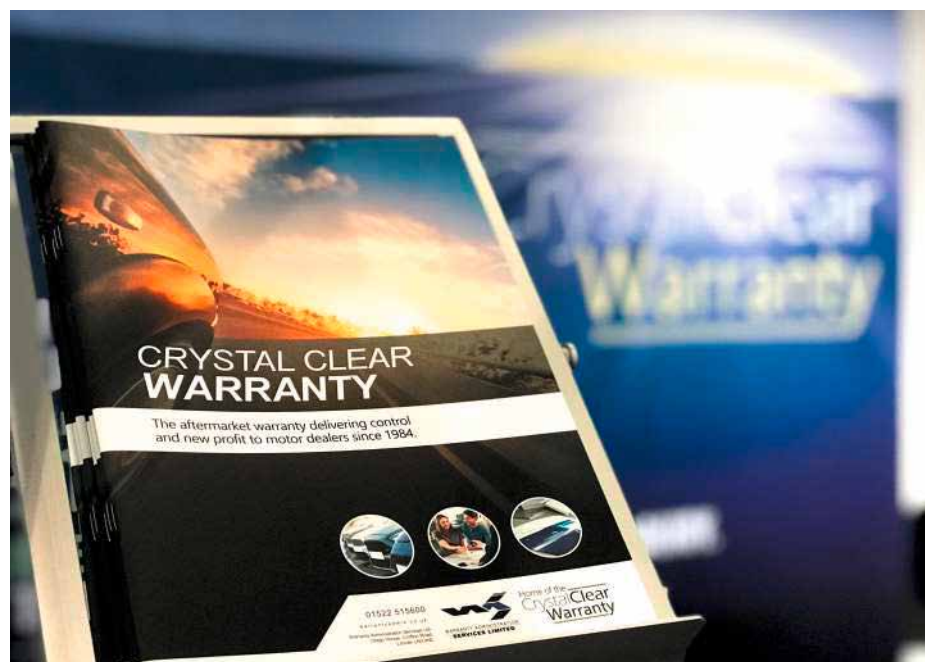
Your customer agrees to buy the car and, to give them extra peace of mind, you include a warranty with the deal. Your customer drives away happy and enjoys a trouble-free experience in their new car without even making a claim on the warranty.

So you spent all that money preparing the vehicle and then paid an additional premium for a warranty that wasn't really needed. How many other cars have you bought warranties for that were never claimed upon?

Perhaps this is a good time to sit down and add up the total amount of money you have spent buying in warranties, then subtract the money your warranty supplier has paid in claims.

Whatever remains is how much your warranty company is profiting from the quality of your stock. Profit that could and should be coming back to your bottom line.

Ask yourself – is it good business and in the best interest of your customer to pay a warranty company that has a massive



"Instead of paying out premiums, you build a flexible claims fund in your own business"

financial incentive to retain as much of your premium as possible? I'll let you answer that one.

So what can you do about it?

Speak with the self-funded warranty experts at Warranty Administration Services on 01522 515 600. For 35 years, they have empowered motor dealers to profit from the quality of the vehicles they sell by helping them offer their own customer-focused warranty.

A trusted service that steers the customer perception of warranty back on track. Featuring all the bells and whistles, they deliver every penny not used for claims

back to you, with your customer's best interests at heart.

So instead of paying out premiums, you build a flexible claims fund in your own business.

Instead of arguing to get something covered for a valued customer, you work with a team who treats your customer fairly. Without vested interests.

Warranty Administration Services have set the standard for self-funded warranty since 1984, and have built a reputation of trust and transparency working alongside new and used UK dealers including names such as Hendy Group, TC Harrison, Furrows Group and Arbury Group.

So, is it time to go self-funded?



SHOWROOM LONG-TERM REPORTS

SEAT ATECA

REPORT
PROGRESS



SEAT OFFERS MAKE BUSINESS SENSE FOR FLEET CUSTOMERS

Company car drivers have formed a substantial part of the Ateca's success since its launch in 2017. Of its total 9,467 registrations in 2018, 52% were to business and fleet customers.

Seat's keen pricing shows a desire to continue that momentum in 2019. Its first-quarter finance offers give business customers the opportunity to run an Ateca SE Technology for three years on contract hire for as little as £199 a month after a £1,194 initial rental.

Contrast that with the £1,595 initial rental and £266 a month that Volkswagen requires from business customers who want to contract-hire a Tiguan SE Nav – identical under the skin – over the same period. While Seat doesn't have the same brand perception as VW, it has a clear opportunity to tempt businesspeople who would rather save £1,200 a year.

And the savings could be even bigger. Ateca SE Technology comes with metallic paint, 18in alloys, full LED headlights, 8in touchscreen with sat-nav, dual zone climate control, and park assist. Comparing the spec lists at retail prices, the Tiguan SE Nav has the same touchscreen and similar alloys, and tri-zone climate control, but Volkswagen charges an extra £580 for metallic paint and a further £1,375 for those LED headlights.

So while the two brands are from the same family, and dealer groups often represent both, Seat sales executives should keep looking at their local SME market. They have a compelling, value-based message to share. **TIM ROSE**



PRICED FROM:
£20,825
(THIS MODEL
£30,000)



SEGMENT SHARE
3.64% (JAN 2019)
(SOURCE: SMMT)



55.4MPG



2.0-TDI 150PS

✓ AFFORDABILITY,
HIGH SPECIFICATION

✗ BRAND AWARENESS
MUST IMPROVE

CURRENT
MILEAGE 0 4 6 4 7

START
MILEAGE 0 0 0 9 4

≡ GUESS THE CAR COMPETITION

THIS MONTH'S WINNER



Iain McCall, national franchising and business development manager at Toyota GB, correctly identified the Peugeot 304 Cabriolet last issue.

See if you can identify this month's model for your chance to win a £20 John Lewis voucher. Email am@bauermedia.co.uk with 'Guess the car' in the subject line and include your job title and company in your entry. The closing date is Friday, March 8



NISSAN LEAF TEKNA

REPORT
PROGRESS



THERE IS STILL MILEAGE IN THE RANGE ANXIETY ARGUMENT

Tim Rose's 'winter test' review from last month whispers in my ears as I scrabble in the gravel drive or muddy car park verge in early morning and evening darkness for the recharging cables that lead into my house through a partially open window.

Then there is the range anxiety. 'Will I be able to plug in when I get to work?'; 'If I go out again in the evening will I have enough charge to get me to work when using my domestic 3kW socket (a full charge takes 21 hours)?'. It eats at my confidence in the car, while other factors weigh on my conscience. Commuting (I do 66 miles a day – Nissan says the average driver does 50), is the single largest generator of greenhouse transport emissions. Just more than half of all transport emissions come from cars – and the level is going up.

There are signs that consumers are beginning to react positively. In 2014, there were about 1,208 new alternative fuel vehicles (including hybrids and pure EVs) being registered a month in the UK, according to SMMT figures. In 2018, it was 11,773, an increase of more than 870%. The Leaf had a 7.7% share of the AFV market last year, down from 8.6% in 2017. However, we are still a long way from mass adoption.

The announcement of the Leaf 3.Zero e+, with a 40% range increase (62 miles, according to Nissan) is welcome news. But it's a special edition, limited to 5,000 units in Europe. The tech is there to calm fears, so why not put it into full production? **JEREMY BENNETT**



PRICE: £30,055
(EXTRAS:
METALLIC PAINT
– £575, PROPILOT
PARK – £1,090)



SEGMENT SHARE
6.64% (JAN 2019)
(SOURCE: SMMT)



COMBINED RANGE
(WLTP):
168 MILES

✓ MAJOR COST SAVINGS
PER MILE

✗ FEAR OF RUNNING
OUT OF JUICE

CURRENT
MILEAGE 0 3 6 9 9

START
MILEAGE 0 2 5 1 2

Visit www.warrantyadmin.co.uk or call 01522 515 600 today

ADVERTISING FEATURE

BCA announces innovative upgrades for Dealer Pro app

By Stuart Pearson, COO, BCA UK Remarketing



BCA has announced a programme of regular upgrades for its unique Dealer Pro product in 2019, with quarterly enhancements planned and further integration with dealer management systems. Dealer Pro is used by leading franchised and independent dealers across the UK and is integral to many manufacturers' used car and online retailing programmes.

Last year was a transformational year for the service, with more than 2 million vehicle appraisals and valuations conducted and the launch of the Dealer Pro app free to download from Google Play and the Apple App Store. BCA also integrated partner finance to the app, to enable dealers to finance a part-exchange instantly on the forecourt.

BCA is working on a series of integrations with leading technology providers including Dealerweb, EnquiryMAX, Pinewood, Fast Track and CDK, to remove the need for re-keying and to improve data accuracy. BCA Dealer Pro also has an ongoing agile development programme in place, working closely with existing customers to drive through regular upgrades and improvements.

BCA Dealer Pro delivers a holistic range of dealer support services that make the part-exchange process more efficient and profitable. At the push of a button, a dealer can decide to fund and retail a part-exchange, retain it within the group or remarket it through digital or physical auction.

BCA are set to take Dealer Pro even further in 2019 as the pace of technological development makes a step change at BCA. Working in close partnership with our customers, we have a series of innovative enhancements planned for every quarter that will deliver benefits back into the dealer network.



You can now read the latest and most important UK motor retail news, features and insights even more easily on your smartphone, tablet, laptop or desktop PC.

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TALENT PEOPLE DEVELOPMENT

SUCCESSION MANAGEMENT

TAKE THE DRAMA OUT OF LONG-TERM LEADERSHIP CHANGES

Dealers should have a plan for a long-term leader's departure, expected or not

Dealer groups are no strangers to long-serving directors that make a big impact on the culture of a company.

Trevor Finn announced before the end of last year that he would step down as chief executive of Pendragon after 30 years of leading the business.

He will continue in the role while the PLC looks to appoint a suitable successor before the end of Q1.

In Pendragon's case, there is not only the question of what happens next in terms of guidance, management style and culture for the Stratstone and Evans Halshaw dealerships across the UK, but also how a change of leadership affects the group's share price.

Franchise partners are also likely to be particularly interested in the future stability and leadership choice.

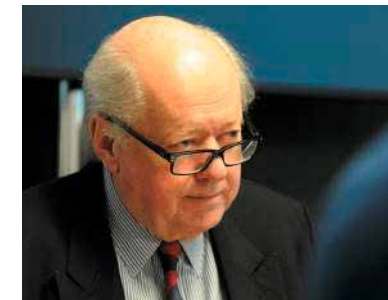
Guy Liddall, the managing director of MT Select, said a dealer group's strategy around appointing a new chief executive will usually depend on whether the departure was planned or was due to other eventualities, such as financial performance or illness.

Either way, there should always be a contingency plan in place to turn to.

Large businesses will usually have a 12-month notice period for their chief executive, so the process of finding a successor is a long one.

Liddall said: "The recruitment process will usually probe options from within and outside the automotive industry, but there is never going to be a 100% guarantee of success."

"You only have to look at Jose Mourinho's recent sacking as manager at Manchester United. He was set up in an environment where he should have been able to have success."



TRANSITION PERIODS CAN LAST AS LONG AS 12 MONTHS... A MORE ELEGANT WAY TO DO THINGS IS TO HAVE A ONE-MONTH HANDOVER AND FOR THE PREVIOUS LEADER TO STEP AWAY

CHRISTOPHER MACGOWAN

Christopher Macgowan, who was the chief executive of the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders (SMMT) for nine years, helped to write a job specification for his replacement. This was refined with help from the board and a headhunter was appointed.

After that, he stepped away from the process and the SMMT got on with the recruitment process.

He said: "In some circumstances, transition periods can last as long as 12 months, although in those cases that indicates to me a degree of nervousness from the board."

"I think a more elegant way to do things is to have a one-month handover period and for the previous leader to step away, perhaps working from home and making themselves available on the end of the

phone should they be needed."

There is also a public relations process that every company will go through in the event of a change in leadership, and the ideal is that rather than being seen as a big drama, it should in fact be the complete opposite.

Macgowan said even a major change of leadership should be seen as routine, with every step in the recruitment process a carefully choreographed process and an outlook of "business as usual".

A change in chief executive shouldn't be a worry for the business on a day-to-day operational basis, as there will be managers and other directors in place to maintain the business over the transition to new leadership.

Liddall said: "Within these larger dealer groups, the chief executive is of course instrumental in setting the agenda and direction of a company with a clear, multi-year strategic vision."

"However, the company is likely to be more than capable of continuing to operate over a period where a replacement is found. What's more interesting is how the new chief executive communicates their presence once they have joined."

This can either be through 'pressing the flesh' or even through something such as a video presentation to introduce them to new staff, particularly at businesses where there are hundreds of individual dealerships and thousands of staff.

Macgowan said: "No matter how big a figure you are or have become, you can bet your boots you report to someone – a chairman, shareholders or perhaps family members – and good governance demands that even the biggest of big beasts are answerable and can be managed." **TOM SEYMOUR**

RESOURCES

CIPD GUIDE TO SUCCESSION PLANNING

The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development on what succession planning involves, how it links to talent management, and HR's role. www.cipd.co.uk/knowledge/strategy/resourcing/succession-planning-factsheet

MARTIN SORRELL'S DOWNFALL

A tangled tale of whistle-blowers and boardroom intrigue from the *Financial Times* about the longest-serving chief executive of a FTSE 100 company. www.ft.com/content/617147b4-6cda-11e8-852d-d8b934ff5ffa

VIDEO: THE LONGEST-SERVING MANAGER AT MANCHESTER UNITED

Filmed at the Stanford Graduate School of Business, Sir Alex Ferguson discusses the manager's critical role in setting expectations, communicating, and recognising the people who work for you. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xnhu3N_nVsg

We have the experts

This new series of **'Everything You Need To Know About...'** videos enables AM commercial partners who are experts in their field to provide crucial advice and best practice for car dealers to implement in their businesses.

These short videos will be full of practical tips that will enable car dealers to manage and optimise this particular area of their business and ultimately drive improvements to the bottom line.

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am-online.com/everything-you-need-to-know

TALENT
MOVERS

TALENT ON THE MOVE



LOUISE O'SULLIVAN,
NETWORK OPERATIONS
DIRECTOR, RENAULT
GROUP UK

Renault Group UK has appointed Louise O'Sullivan as its new network operations director.

She has been with the manufacturer group for nearly 25 years, most recently as head of brand for Dacia UK (see our interview with O'Sullivan on page 30).

O'Sullivan said: "I've worked closely with our dealer partners throughout my time with Groupe Renault, not least in my most recent role as Dacia brand manager, listening to the network's invaluable insight and feedback to develop the Dacia brand together in the UK.

"The group achieved a lot in 2017 and 2018, as part of our 'Drive the Future' mid-term plan, and we are now ready to build on these foundations and accelerate in 2019 and beyond."

Also at Renault Group, Nick Tame moves into a new strategic management role, following two-and-a-half years as its sales director.



DAVE FARTHING,
MANAGING DIRECTOR,
FURROWS GROUP

Dave Farthing has become the sole leader of Furrows Group, following the retirement of fellow joint managing director Russ Smith.

The Shropshire dealer group has been in business for 100 years. Smith spent 50 years with the company.

It has a turnover of £98 million and operates Ford, Kia, Mazda and Škoda outlets.

The group also appointed sales manager Antony Frost as dealer principal at Furrows of Shrewsbury.



ROB EAST, GENERAL
MANAGER CORPORATE
SALES, BMW GROUP UK

Rob East has been named as general manager corporate sales for BMW Group UK, following Steve Oliver's departure last year.

In his new role, East leads the team responsible for all BMW and Mini sales to business and leasing customers.

He joins the company from rival Mercedes-Benz, where he was head of fleet sales.

East said his goal is to attract new fleet customers to the BMW and Mini brands.



JAMES BUXTON, HEAD OF
FLEET SALES, AUDI UK

Audi UK has promoted James Buxton to head of fleet sales, replacing Tom Brennan, who left in November.

Buxton has spent the past three years at Audi, starting as its national used car manager.

Before his latest appointment, he was working as the brand's sales operations manager.

When Mercedes-Benz announce Rob East's replacement (left), all three major premium manufacturers will have appointed new heads of fleet within a matter of months.



DAMEON GROVE,
GENERAL MANAGER,
IVECO RETAIL

The Iveco-owned Iveco Retail dealer group has appointed Dameon Grove as its new general manager.

Grove started his career as an apprentice commercial vehicle technician in 1990, and prior to joining Iveco Retail, he worked at Ryder commercial vehicles as location manager for its Oldbury depot.

Grove said: "My passion has always been within dealerships, and it was clear to me very quickly that Iveco Retail has huge potential to grow."

Grove will assume responsibility for full service locations in Croydon, Farnborough, Hayes and Reading.

ADVERTISING FEATURE

Flexible strategies for Brexit car buyers

By James Tew, CEO, iVendi



Economically and politically, these are probably the most uncertain times any of us have lived through. Depending on how Brexit is resolved, we could soon find ourselves facing any number of scenarios, from recession to business-as-usual.

Plus, in the meantime, there is the further issue of being stuck in a kind of limbo.

At iVendi, we have been thinking hard about what this means for the retail motor industry and we believe there is only one sensible strategic choice – flexibility. In a market that is next to impossible to predict, we all need to be ready for anything.

What does this mean in practice? It entails creating and identifying as many opportunities as possible, and putting the resources in place to maximise them. Dealers, lenders and manufacturers need to look hard at how the market is developing and move quickly.

We have been looking at how our technology can support this and the ways in which we can help to reach more customers online and in the showroom, and convert more of them. The key for today, we believe, lies in recognising the concerns of the Brexit-era car buyer. Faced with uncertainty, the prospect of unplanned costs is the major disincentive. They want to know the vehicle they are buying is not just desirable, but reliable and affordable. With this in mind, we have been working on ways to underline these factors in the online presentation of cars and finance, and are already helping to produce some strong results.

However, we are mindful that external factors mean these conditions could change quickly and our approach would need to change, too. Clearly, we cannot remove the uncertainty from the whole Brexit situation, but we can be ready to support the industry with the right technology and effective strategies.

■ iVendi is the international market leader in online motor retailing solutions, working with everyone from dealers and manufacturers to car portals and motor finance providers. Visit www.ivendi.com, email enquiries@ivendi.com or call 0345 226 0503.



Planning for stock growth

A partnership approach to wholesale finance can help dealers realise their growth ambitions this year, says Liam Quegan, managing director of NextGear Capital

NextGear Capital's recent dealer sentiment survey shows a strong appetite for growth in 2019. What's your view for the year ahead?

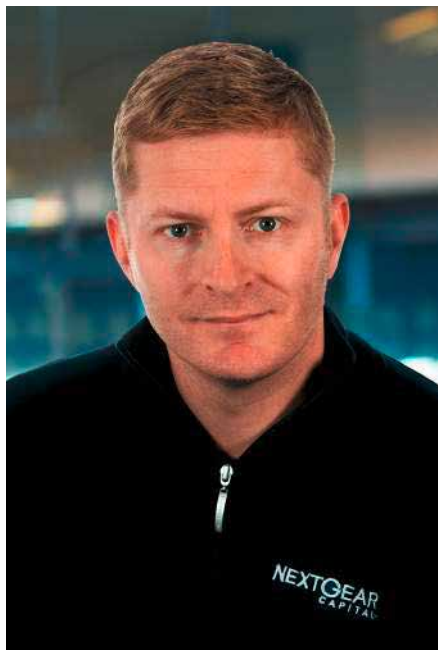
The survey showed 65% of dealers plan to grow their used car business this year, while half are planning to invest in additional used stock. This outlook is mirrored in our daily dealer conversations. Despite the uncertainty of Brexit, I'm confident the used vehicle sector will thrive. Demand is growing, consumer finance products are making better cars more accessible, online trading is breaking down barriers, and the wholesale market is opening up to offer greater access to a wider choice of stock than ever before.

What support is available to dealers looking to grow their used car business?

Perhaps the most important ingredient of any growth plan is securing the capital to do so. There are a number of options open to dealers, from their own cash, sale or return, finance company products, bank loans, auction funding plans or bespoke stocking plans. All have their merits and dealers would be wise to scrutinise the detail before committing. Our experience is dealers are often looking for counsel too – not necessarily formal advice or consultancy, but someone with a vested partner mentality who they can bounce ideas off or share a challenge. Surprisingly few suppliers are equipped to give this, so it's something worth seeking out.

What in your view is behind the growth in popularity of wholesale finance products?

Wholesale funding products have been around for a good while, but I think dealer understanding has now reached mainstream. They have come to realise



"65% of dealers plan to grow their used car business this year"

there isn't a catch with these products. Rather they are purposely designed products that allow dealers to take a more flexible approach with their own capital while attaching a predictable acquisition and sale cost to each vehicle they trade.

A survey we ran late last year indicated more than half of dealers are now using a wholesale finance product or Stocking Plan. We ended last year with a 20% increase in the number of dealers we partner with and a 25% increase in the use of their Stocking Plan. The per unit value of the vehicles we fund increased too, indicating dealers are

increasingly using their stocking plan to buy higher-value vehicles.

How does NextGear Capital's Stocking Plan differ from others available in the market?

The key difference is that dealers receive 100% funding regardless of source. Our customers are not locked in to a single source of stock, nor are they tied to a reciprocal consumer finance product. We are integrated with more than 60 auctions and vehicle wholesalers, where the full hammer price plus delivery and buyers' fees can be settled directly. Alternatively, if buying from another source, including part-exchange or a private sale, 100% of CAP clean or invoice price can be funded. This provides unrivalled flexibility. As NextGear Capital lends vehicles rather than money, another plus is that dealers only pay for what they use – be that one vehicle or 100.

Finally, what does 2019 have in store for NextGear Capital?

We are confident about the year ahead. There will certainly be competitive and market pressures, however we benefit from having a single focus. Stocking Plans is all we do, so we are free from distraction and able to give customers our all on this matter. With the support of one of the world's largest automotive corporations, Cox Automotive, we are able to continue to invest in our people, technology and product. Last October, we hit the £2 billion mark for vehicles funded in the UK and Ireland and with the increasing number of dealers turning to NextGear Capital, I'm confident we will see this number grow.

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CAPITAL

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sales@nextgearcapital.co.uk / www.nextgearcapital.co.uk / 0343 50 60 606

*100% of hammer price plus auction and delivery fees (auction purchases), or lower of CAP clean/invoice price (trade vehicles). • VAT funded on LCVs and qualifying vehicles up to the value of £45,000. NextGear Capital UK Limited, NextGear House, Kingsfield Court, Chester Business Park, Chester, CH4 9RE. Registered in England and Wales number 08696123. Stocking Plan is subject to status, terms and conditions.

EIGHT QUESTIONS TO A...

GROUP OPERATIONS DIRECTOR

Leon Caruso, of Vertu Motors' multi-franchise division, on how Brexit, WLTP and EVs can be opportunities for growth



What are the main responsibilities of your role?

CARUSO: Reporting to our chief executive and serving on the main board, I have full operational responsibility for our multi-franchised division.

Leading the divisional team, I cover sites across the UK from Exeter to Paisley, representing Hyundai, Peugeot, Toyota and Volvo brands plus our thriving multi-franchise van centre in the south-west of England.

Strategically, I work with the main operational board to ensure we have the right strategies and processes in place to continue to grow the business through an excellent customer experience delivered by engaged and motivated colleagues.

What are the most significant challenges ahead in your field of work?

CARUSO: There are many challenges, whether that be Brexit, the Worldwide harmonised Light vehicle Test Procedure (WLTP) disrupting vehicle supply, the onset of electrification or indeed disrupters driving changes to our traditional routes to market.

How might these challenges be overcome?

CARUSO: Each of these challenges are real opportunities to grow our competitive advantage and in turn, further grow our business because we shouldn't forget that these challenges are being faced by each and every business in the industry.

The direction in which the industry is moving is generally accepted, but how we get there and ultimately what it will look like is less well defined.

Agility will therefore be key and it will definitely be a case of trial and, in some cases, error – but if you are going to fail, fail fast and then try again.

Our people are by far our biggest asset and I am therefore confident that we are not only very well positioned to face these challenges, but to take a leading role in defining the shape of future motor retailing.

What attracted you to this area of expertise?

CARUSO: I come from a family of car enthusiasts and

I have had a passion for cars and motorbikes for as long as I can remember. My father was also in the industry for 40 years, starting as an apprentice mechanic, so the industry really has been part of my life since birth and there was no question of me working in any other industry.

Throughout the past 20 years, the diversity of the challenges, the pace of work and the continually evolving products/services have never left me bored and I look forward to what the industry has in store for the next 20 years.

What's is the most important thing you've learnt in your career and how have you made best use of it?

CARUSO: That there's no such thing as a "no", just a "no, not yet". In essence, never ever give up – ever.

MATT DE PREZ

QUICK-FIRE QUESTIONS

How do you relax?

I like visiting classic car shows and putting a few miles on my motorbike. I enjoy keeping fit and to wind down you'll see me reading, listening to music or watching movies – like most people, time pressures will often see me attempting most of them at the same time.

What is your favourite app?

Blinkist – transforms the key insights of 2500+ bestselling business, culture and self-help books so that you can read or listen to them in just 15 minutes. Perfect for when you're on the go or just short of time.

What drives you?

I'm driven by the inspiration of my late father who I can credit for my work ethic, values, and the confidence to take calculated risks and make mistakes.

AM

AM, Media House, Lynch Wood, Peterborough PE2 6EA
Email: AM@bauermedia.co.uk

THIS MONTH'S QUESTION TO THE AM TEAM:

What did you like / dislike most about where you grew up?

EDITORIAL

Editor Tim Rose 01733 468266
tim.rose@bauermedia.co.uk

► **Country life** – spacious gardens, quiet lanes, peaceful evenings

News and features editor Tom Sharpe
01733 468343 tom.sharpe@bauermedia.co.uk

► **Liked:** The freedom of rural living. **Disliked:** the lack of a pub

Web producer Elizabeth Howlett 01733 468655
Elizabeth.Howlett@bauermedia.co.uk

► **I grew up in Dunstable/March and it ruined my accent**

PRODUCTION

Head of publishing Luke Neal 01733 468262

► **All my family living in the same town**

Production editor Finbarr O'Reilly 01733 468267

► **Liked:** The sea. **Disliked:** The rain

Senior designer Chris Stringer 01733 468312

► **Liked:** living in the same small town as everyone I knew. **Dislike:** I don't visit as often as I would like

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