

# The faster cars are listed online, the faster they sell

Dealers need suppliers who can help them get digital assets online quickly and efficiently, improving sales, stock turn and satisfaction, says CitNOW CEO Alistair Horsburgh

## Q How is the car buyer changing?

**A** It's been just over a decade since CitNOW first provided retailers with the technology to bring the showroom digitally to the customer. Video is now being used at many touch points in the customer journey, both in the showroom and workshop, to communicate a host of messages – something that was unimaginable just a few years ago.

Car buyers of today are knowledgeable, highly informed and comfortable starting – and for some, even completing – their purchase online. With this significant shift, online assets for new and used vehicles have become an integral part of the customer buying journey.

## Q How do you see this affecting dealerships?

**A** With the rise of online retailing, uploads of digital content showcasing dealer stock will surge. Retailers will be looking for time and resource-savers to help them upload their stock across all online platforms as quickly as possible. The faster cars are listed online, the faster they sell – improving all-important stock turn.

## Q There have been some recent changes to Auto Trader's search algorithm. Can you tell us more?

**A** Using insights from consumer searches, Auto Trader has created an algorithm to measure quality and relevance of adverts to help connect the right vehicles to the right customer. The website now displays the most relevant matches first rather than being price-led, so consumers will be served a list of vehicles that best reflects their search terms. Ad quality will also come into play, with Auto Trader highlighting the importance of specification details, good imagery and video walkarounds to ensure the highest ranking.

## Q How should dealerships react to these changes?

**A** As the best matched car (rather than the cheapest) will be seen by the customer, the retailer will need to closely review its digital asset strategy.

Dealerships should ensure their ads include clean, professional imagery and vehicle-focused video walkarounds to help improve ad quality and engage prospective buyers. With the potential increase in the quantity of digital assets captured for a vehicle, a slick and simple process will help to provide a significant advantage in this arena.

CitNOW Web enables retailers to upload a vehicle's digital assets as soon as the car has been prepped for sale. Doing away with the expense and time delay of traditional photography, our app allows dealerships to capture professional, high-quality, brand-compliant images, 360-degree images and video using a single tool. CitNOW Web facilitates used vehicle asset uploads to dealer, manufacturer and classified websites in minutes rather than days – thanks to a wide range of integrations, including Auto Trader.

## COMPANY PROFILE

**Key products:** Sales, Workshop, Bodyshop and Web apps  
**Key staff:** Alistair Horsburgh, CEO; Colin Tinto, CTO  
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## Q What are the biggest challenges for dealerships moving from manual to digital processes?

**A** The digitalisation of the dealership has been going on for a couple of decades, but has massively accelerated in the past few years. In particular, we are now seeing a dramatic increase in integrations with digital suppliers, as well as consumer confidence in managing the buying process and transacting online.

Most retailers have embraced the digital sphere, but the challenge is understanding and adopting new technologies that digitally connected generations expect. Dealers need to strengthen the connection between online and offline touchpoints in the customer journey.

## Q Do you have any tips for a successful digital transformation?

**A** Dealerships should review their current processes for producing vehicle listings, noting the number of manual steps required to capture and publish their online vehicle assets. The average 'time to web', or the time it takes for a retail-ready vehicle to be published online, should also be evaluated.

Having proven, easy-to-use tools, designed with the automotive digital upload process in mind, is crucial in a highly competitive market where consumers are driving the rules of engagement. Retailers who step out of the traditional comfort zone to improve efficiency, convenience, and customer satisfaction will reap the rewards.

Dealerships should seek out industry suppliers who can help transform current processes, while also understanding the consumer, and who grasp the nuances of the automotive retail sector. Partners who listen and develop bespoke solutions – with extensive support, backed up with relevant training – lead to the strongest working relationships that deliver the best

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results. What's more, in a fast-moving and dynamic industry, it's imperative to appoint suppliers who are agile in their response to changing market and customer behaviour.

## Q What's new at CitNOW?

**A** Continual product developments and feature enhancements – often in response and in partnership with automotive retail clients – are at the heart of CitNOW's philosophy. The most recent additions include automated number plate recognition, service collection scheduler, and further Android app features. We're planning substantial developments to CitNOW Web, recognising the big impact the application will have on the industry in coming years. The first enhancement, automated background replacement, will allow dealerships to automatically replace image backgrounds with a clean, consistent backdrop in seconds.

We are passionate about helping dealerships to demystify digitalisation, and there are safe, simple steps they can take to start them on the journey. Video is now being utilised in every area of the dealership, which is testament to its success. So far in 2019, the platform has already passed the total upload hours of 2018, with the highest ever number of monthly upload hours –

exceeding 60,000 hours of video footage – in August.

At the end of August, CitNOW was responsible for an incredible 8 million video uploads this year, averaging 1 million a month. The volume of video footage has far outperformed CitNOW's expectations, and reflects the powerful role of video in the modern dealership.

**■ We'd love to set up a review of your current processes to find a bespoke, easier, more automated solution to save you time and money. Contact us today for your complimentary audit and consultation at [marketing@citnow.com](mailto:marketing@citnow.com), or call us on 01189 977 749.**

**Alistair Horsburgh, chief executive, CitNOW**

