

# Making memorable moments pay

Customer satisfaction is high on the agenda for almost every franchised dealer, to give them the best chance of getting a high customer satisfaction index (CSI) score and, more importantly, to secure lucrative bonuses from their manufacturer partners.

A significant part of that customer service is in the valeting area and Autoclenz believes it can enhance the status of the car valeting model from a commodity purchase into an investment for dealers.

"A customer doesn't see much from a £400 service, but they do see the courtesy clean," said sales director Martin Peters.

"Whether they are buying a car or having it serviced, as human beings we judge with our eyes, nose and touch. If the customer can clearly see something positive has happened to their vehicle it could make the difference on a CSI score."

However, Autoclenz is eager to point out that it is more than simply a valeting company – 25% of its revenue now comes from extra services such as SMART repair,

meet and greet, and collection and delivery.

Peters said: "The entire customer journey can be handled by us, so the first person a service customer sees in full dealer-branded uniform can actually be an Autoclenz operator."

"They will greet the customer by name and do a quick damage check of the car before introducing them to the service receptionist."

If this damage check reveals scuffs or kerbed wheels, it gives the service adviser the opportunity to offer SMART repair as an add-on sale, safe in the knowledge that Autoclenz's on-site SMART repair operative will be able to complete the job before the customer expects to collect their car.

However, even if there are any delays, Autoclenz also offers collection and delivery.

Customers who want a courtesy vehicle during servicing could face a three-week wait, said Peters, but if they opt for a collection and delivery option the booking can often be made much sooner.

"The take-up has been massive, especially



in London. The whole collection/delivery piece is very attractive to dealers. It enables them to save money as they don't need as many courtesy cars. The workshop can also be more efficient as they know exactly when cars are coming in," said Peters.

Autoclenz's meet and greet service also allows the operator to create an inventory of the vehicle's contents.

"Service managers could be giving away tens of thousands of pounds a year in goodwill for things that customers claim have gone missing from their cars," said Peters.

"Usually, it's high-value items like iPads, sunglasses or golf clubs," he added.

The inventory provides a safety net for the dealer and clarity for the customer. Clear, zip-up bags are also used when the internal clean is carried out to store any items found in the door pockets or glove compartment.

Autoclenz aims to have its extra services stick in the customer's mind – it refers to them as 'memorable moments'.

"A very simple one is we use a new car essence when the car is cleaned," said Peters. "I want the customer to notice the car has had a clean and remember it. When they get into that car, the smell should reaf-

firm that something has happened to it."

With almost 50 years in the valeting industry, Autoclenz has grown into a £40million-a-year business that services more than 384 clients in the UK.

Its customer base is growing by 8-10% every year and it currently works with 1,800 operatives, who work as self-employed sub-contractors. More than three quarters of Autoclenz operators are implanted at customer sites.

Autoclenz's main retail customers include eight of the top 10 dealer groups in the AM100 and, increasingly, its business comes as part of deals with big dealer groups.

Peters said: "We don't offer an ad hoc service; we offer a full in-plant service. The customer supplies everything up to the plug and we supply and manage everything else – all equipment, all labour, health and

safety, and we staff the account subject to the volume coming through."

Autoclenz believes that that flexibility is a key benefit. For example, it estimates that most valet bays will see about 20% more work during the September plate-change. This can be a challenge for dealers recruiting in-house.

"By outsourcing, it's really not your problem anymore. We can staff up and down accordingly, to make sure everything is delivered on time and to the right standard," said Peters.

"Also the pricing is based on a per-unit piece, so it's the ultimate pay-as-you-go solution."

"When you are busy in September, you will pay more, but that's because you've sold more cars. In December, when it's quieter, your bill is a bit lower."

“THE UK WORKFORCE SIMPLY DOES NOT WANT TO CLEAN CARS. IT IS ONE OF THE LAST JOBS AN IT SOLUTION CAN'T DO

MARTIN PETERS, AUTOCLENZ

Outsourcing can also help solve another headache, said Peters. The Modern Slavery Act, introduced in 2015, was one of the biggest legal changes to affect the valeting business.

"We lead the market in the compliance of vetting and making sure that our valeters have the right to work in the UK and have a driving licence."

"Historically, dealer groups would pay for the valeting and not be worried about where the guy comes from or what they get paid. The new law puts the onus on the customer and the supplier, making sure the people in the valet bay are legal and paid right."

With about 70% of its workforce from outside the UK, Autoclenz acknowledges that it faces a challenging period as the country prepares to exit the EU.

"The UK workforce simply does not want to clean cars. It is hard work and one of the last manual jobs that an IT solution cannot do. You need a good labour-intensive valet to do the best job possible," said Peters.

In future, he believes there will be massive growth in Autoclenz's driving services: "The world is changing, more people are using PCP and they can even go online and buy a vehicle. I see home delivery and handover of new cars as an immense growth market."

He believes there will be a lot less retail dealerships in coming years and buyers will order a test drive for delivery, spec a car and get it delivered, all from their home. Similarly, servicing is likely to be handled by an aftersales site that uses collect and delivery.

"It's going to be more difficult to maintain customer loyalty as the touchpoints will be reliant on outsourced partners. If that is the case, it is critical that that partner envelops the brand," said Peters.

For more information, visit [www.autoclenz.co.uk](http://www.autoclenz.co.uk), email [sales@autoclenz.co.uk](mailto:sales@autoclenz.co.uk), or call 01283 554 682

autoclenz