

## SUPPLIER SPOTLIGHT

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# Moving beyond the valet to total support services

As the demands of the car retail market begin to take a toll on suppliers who have failed to move with the times, Secure Valeting has shifted its sights to become an all-encompassing, technology-led outsourcing provider.

Where valeting was the sole focus of the business when it was founded by managing director George Gray back in 1998, it now prides itself on the ability to provide a flexible workforce for the UK's car retailers and a suite of technology to remove time, stress and frustrating inconsistencies from the vehicle preparation and marketing process.

With the advent of its Secure Online booking system, Progress Tracker and Auto Imaging applications, the group is growing into new areas and now has expansion in Europe and further afield in its sights.

Michaela Gunney, sales director, Secure Automotive, said: "From our roots as a very traditional valeting contractor when we started out some 20 years ago, we are now providing total contract support services – everything from 'meet and greet' staff, showroom cleaners, drivers, yard staff and technicians and, increasingly, with our Auto Imaging app becoming a real USP.

"The shift in focus for us is evident in the company name, Secure Automotive Support, which is the brand that we are more widely known as now."

Secure has seen the business grow in each of its 21 years in operation. It is now run with about 1,400 operatives completing the variety of duties.

Its operational solutions fulfil the needs of retailers and remarketers at more than 400 locations across the UK, with five regional managers ensuring client satisfaction.

Secure is one of the biggest valeting suppliers to top 100 groups and auction sites.

The breadth of solutions that Secure can offer its clients is central to its success.

**“WE ARE FINDING RETAILERS ARE MARKETING STOCK 48 OR 72 HOURS FASTER THAN THEY HAD IN THE PAST”**

**CHRISTOPHER GRAY,  
SECURE AUTO IMAGING**

The Secure Online booking system allows retailers to manage workflow and cost control in every department, while the business will also take care of health and safety audits and Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) require-



ments, along with all aspects of current legislation on modern slavery, ID checks, GDPR and anti-bribery law.

A fully managed digital vehicle preparation service can also be provided, with support operatives managing all aspects of site logistics, valeting and – with the advent of the new Auto Imaging app – high-quality photography delivered by the valeting team.

Vehicle preparation still accounts for about 70% of the business's operations, but Auto Imaging is where the real growth opportunity lies.

Christopher Gray is director of the Auto Imaging business and is confident that it is giving car retailers what they want – a fully integrated solution for marketing images, which are quality-controlled to guarantee consistently high standards.

"It's a year since we got the app up and running and since then we have launched it with 100 dealerships," said Gray, who is already talking to car retailers in Germany, Holland and the UAE who are keen to sample the system.

"The thing that they all say they like about the system is that they can upload images straight away and there's no need to rename or manually upload them into the DMS separately.

"We've worked really hard on achieving integration to various DMS systems and also the online retail sites such as Auto Trader and Motors.

"Because images are being taken and synced into all these various different platforms right after a valet, when the car is looking at its best – and not two or three days later when someone can sit down at a

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desktop and input everything – we are finding retailers are marketing stock 48 or 72 hours faster than they had in the past."

While speed is clearly of the essence with Secure Valeting's new imaging app, strict policies and procedures have been put in place to ensure the resulting marketing material remains of a consistently high standard.

Not only does the app guide the user to create a consistent number of pre-determined images with the vehicle at various angles, but real-time feedback is provided to the app's user via the system and all images are put through a quality control (QC) process by the Secure Valeting team.

A choice of backdrops – with an image of the dealership recommended to deliver a prominent and consistent marketing message – can also be added behind the vehicle within 12 hours, said Gray.

"Our ability to feed back in real time has meant that many retailers see the system as an ideal way to train their team on how to properly capture marketing images."

He said the quality of images produced by valeting teams remotely trained by the Auto Imaging App is evident among the top AM100 retailers who have adopted the system so far.

A major group adopted the app in its Ford, Nissan, Renault and Jaguar Land Rover businesses in March last year and more groups have

launched it across their JLR sites.

Despite the inherent efficiency delivered by the Auto Imaging system's fully integrated app, one concern that Gray was keen to address among potential retail

clients was the perception that having valeters capturing marketing images could slow the preparation process.

Secure Valeting is the only business in its field with its own Progress Chaser software solution. Integrated into the app, this allows real-time sight of a vehicle's progress through the valeting bay and workshop and will also identify cars that have come into a retail site, but are without images and are available for imaging.

Gray said the workflow management side of Secure's software had persuaded many retailers to opt for its "total service solution".

Since the development of the software portal, growth has been rapid and Auto Imaging is now processing more than three million images a year, with continued expansion of services to retail, fleet, inspection and workshop clients.

"I'm really encouraged that we are already competing with the sector's more established players and I want us to continue to get a really good foothold in the UK," he said.

"These big groups have done their due diligence on Auto Imaging and it has come out extremely well.

"My hope is that by the end of this year, we will have 500 sites using the app".

