

AM

AUTOMOTIVE MANAGEMENT

www.am-online.com

April 2017 £8.00

VAUXHALL SALE / P6

What PSA's purchase means for UK dealers

MERCEDES-BENZ VANS / P38

Network boss Sarah Palfreyman on making her dealers more retail-ready

GENEVA / P62

The cars on their way to the UK from this year's motor show

SHAUN FOWEATHER, STONEACRE / P28

'WE ARE ON THE ACQUISITION TRAIL'



THE BCA DIFFERENCE

*More stock choice than
our competitors**



Start your search today bca.co.uk/search

* Based on vehicle stock available for sale every month on BCA Auction View during 2016 benchmarked by BCA against our competitors.

EDITOR'S LETTER

Vauxhall/Opel is now a sister brand to Peugeot and Citroën – who saw that coming? To my mind, it's a slightly odd combination, particularly as PSA has only been in the black for 18 months. CEO Carlos Tavares has also voiced a desire to break into North America, a market the French brands quit decades ago. Getting a foothold there will not be cheap.

One of the reasons Volkswagen Group has become so strong is it has cleverly positioned its brands into their own segments. Bentley is pure luxury, Bugatti and Lamborghini are supercar porn, Audi is the premium brand, Porsche the sportscar builder, Volkswagen the mainstream, Škoda the value-oriented brand and Seat the slightly youthful, lively one of the family.

However, PSA already has three brands in the mainstream, with Citroën perhaps more at the value end and DS still a long way from being regarded as truly premium. Now it has added another mainstream brand. Not to mention that Vauxhall, Peugeot and Citroën vans all compete in the same space, too.

Even Fiat got it right – joining up with Chrysler put the valuable SUV brand Jeep in the same garage as its near-premium brand Alfa Romeo, supercar firm Ferrari, luxury carmaker Maserati and small car specialist Fiat.

Tavares says there will be efficiency savings and synergies from PSA's takeover of Vauxhall/Opel. Let's hope sibling rivalry doesn't get in the way.



MEET THE TEAM



Tim Rose
Editor



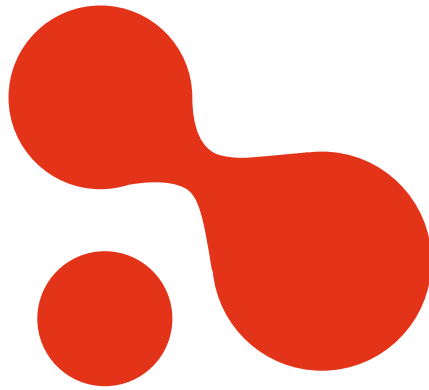
Tom Sharpe
News and
features editor



Stephen Briers
Editor-in-chief



Jeremy Bennett
Head of digital/
associate editor



BIONIC TECHNOLOGY

ADVANCED PAINT PROTECTION

COMING SOON



CONTENTS

62

Geneva Motor Show

UP FRONT

- 06 News insight
- 12 News digest
- 16 Market intelligence
- 24 Opinions

DEALER MASTERCLASS

- 56 Customer service

TALENT

- 79 The dealer's guide to flexible working
- 80 People on the move
- 86 Eight questions to... Phil Lambert, property manager, Chorley Group

INSIGHT

- 28 Face to face: Stoneacre
Shaun Fowweather believes his group's training academy will help it to £1bn turnover by 2020, as well as provide a future managing director
- 35 10 minutes with... Joanna Swash
Moneypenny's MD explains why outsourcing overflow calls to trained handlers makes sense for dealers and why she does not struggle to find recruits
- 38 Brand values: Mercedes-Benz Vans
Network boss Sarah Palfreyman is driving her dealer partners to invest in more retail-friendly facilities

SPOTLIGHT: PERSONALISATION

- 42 Tailor your sales to each customer
How car dealers can craft their messages for individuals and deliver them how and when each person wants
- 47 Do car dealers need apps?
You will still need a good website, but offering customers convenience can build trust and increase engagement
- 52 Making endless options pay
Customers personalising their vehicles can slow lead times, but dealers who manage it well stand to make greater profits

SHOWROOM

- 62 Geneva Motor Show
- 70 Alfa Romeo Giulia
- 74 Long-term reports

WHAT PSA BUYING VAUXHALL MEANS FOR UK DEALERS

GM's £1.9bn sale of Vauxhall to PSA Group creates Europe's second-biggest carmaker, but while its four brands give this 'supergroup' significant scale, they face challenges in the UK

Holders of the four UK franchises under PSA Group's new umbrella may face consolidated, multi-brand sites following GM's sale of Opel/Vauxhall to the French group.

The £1.9 billion deal makes PSA Group the second-largest car manufacturer in Europe. It will inherit a Vauxhall network of 340 UK sales sites, taking the group's total – Citroën, DS Automobiles, Peugeot and Vauxhall – to almost 740.

Vauxhall currently employs 35,000 people in the UK, 23,000 of them in its retail network.

As talks are ongoing about the future of Vauxhall manufacturing facilities in the UK – Carlos Tavares, the chairman of PSA Group's managing board, has said he wants to realise £1.47bn of "synergies" by 2022 – it seems unlikely that the dealer networks will escape change.

"There are bound to be economies of scale across the business," said Graham Jacobs, chief executive of Picador and an active member of the Vauxhall dealer council.

"If you have a national dealer development director who says 'why haven't we got a Peugeot dealer in Southampton', and there are four Vauxhall sites down there it would be daft not to put the two together. I'm sure that is something we will see."

Mark Frostick, associate at property and planning consultancy Rappleys, agreed. He told *AM* that, while "wholesale closures" within the Vauxhall dealer network were unlikely, there could be scope for dealerships to incorporate other brands into their sites.

"This could work, for instance,

where Vauxhall previously cohabited with other GM brands, such as Saab or Chevrolet."

However, he added: "It is unlikely that this deal will have a major impact on the dealership market in the short to medium term."

"Indeed, there could even be renewed growth. The expanded size of the overall company could lead to renewed investment, possibly the redevelopment of old sites for new, state-of-the-art facilities or even a relocation of all brands in a town to a single, larger bespoke site."

"If the new owners can return Vauxhall/Opel to profit, then their existing properties may become a more attractive investment and we could see a significant hardening of yields."

The impact on volume targets

Jay Nagley, managing director of automotive consultancy Redspy, believes Vauxhall's acquisition could usher in a new approach to targets and incentives within its network.

He said Peugeot has worked hard to reduce production in order to limit pre-registrations and maintain pricing in recent years, an approach that is "overdue" at Vauxhall.

"For too long, Vauxhall has offered incentives to dealers to drive volumes and the result has been considerable pre-registrations."

"Some dealers have done extremely well out of the existing Vauxhall system, but they will need to reassess that approach under PSA."

Some Vauxhall dealers may also be affected by the differing nature of GM and PSA's approach to sponsoring dealers. Under its previous owner, Vauxhall Motor Holdings chose to enter into joint ventures with

certain franchisees to buy or start their own businesses, whereas PSA owns some sites outright through Peugeot Citroën Retail Group.

Will it affect model line-ups?

By comparison with Volkswagen Group, which can pitch products at all levels of the market, from 'youthful' Seat and Skoda's budget offerings, to Volkswagen's upper- middle market and premium Audis, the new PSA Group has added a mainstream brand to a line-up already battling to achieve differentiation.

As part of Tavares' 'Back in the race' plan, which was announced in early 2014 and established DS as a separate brand, PSA said it would cull its models from 45 to 26 by 2020.

It remains to be seen whether the addition of Vauxhall will affect those numbers, but Maxime Picat, PSA's executive vice-president for Europe, described the addition of Opel/Vauxhall as creating "a portfolio of brands that are very well positioned, with

SOME DEALERS HAVE DONE EXTREMELY WELL OUT OF THE EXISTING VAUXHALL SYSTEM, BUT THEY WILL NEED TO REASSESS THAT APPROACH UNDER PSA

JAY NAGLEY, REDSPY



very limited cross-shopping".

Picat claimed that "cross-shopping" between the brands would be as low as 3%, depending on the country.

However, there are areas in which the brands may complement each other. Vauxhall has a strong representation in the fleet market, while Citroën and DS are more retail-oriented brands, with Peugeot coming somewhere in the middle.

How the figures stack up

PSA Group now sees itself as a "European champion", according to Picat, with Vauxhall taking its total market share in Europe to more than 17%.

However, Vauxhall's contribution to 17 years of losses in Europe for GM cannot be overlooked and its UK market share fell from more than 14% in 2008 to below 10% for the first time in 2016.

Vauxhall's car registrations in 2016 were 250,955, down 6.97% on 2015, with market share down almost a full percentage point, to 9.32%.

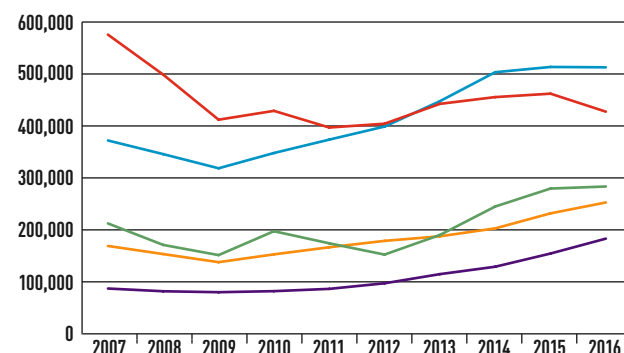
Peugeot's UK new car registrations fell 5.5% from 104,249 in 2015 to 98,529 in 2016. Over the same timeframe, Citroën fell from 80,012 to 62,991 (down 21.3%). Even when DS's growth, from 8,614 to 15,898, is taken into account, the decline across both brands is almost 11%.

The new PSA Group has seen registrations, number of retail loca-

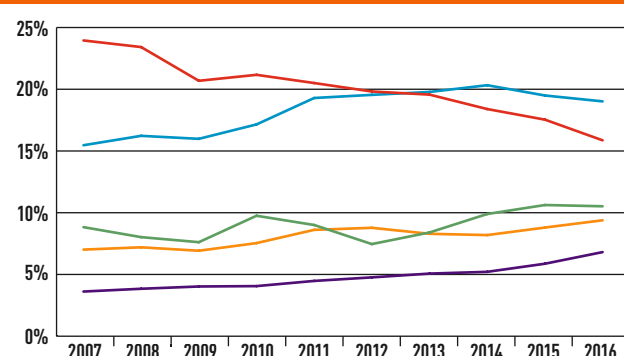


Carlos Tavares, PSA Group chief executive, and his GM counterpart, Mary Barra

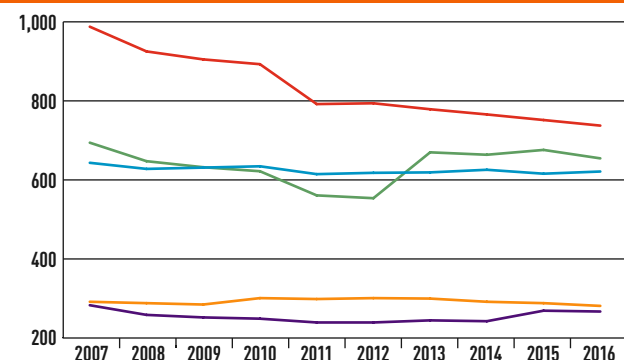
REGISTRATIONS 2007-2016



MARKET SHARE 2007-2016



TOTAL SALES LOCATIONS 2007-2016



— Vauxhall/Peugeot/Citroën/DS — VW/Audi/Skoda/Seat — BMW/Mini
— Nissan/Renault/Mitsubishi — Mercedes-Benz/Smart

Sources: SMMT, AMI

tions and market share all fall as key rivals have grown in the past decade.

Jointly, their UK market share fell 1.66% to 15.91% in 2016, the largest fall by any of the European manufacturer alliances and some 1.19% greater than the decline in the scandal-blighted Volkswagen Group (down less than half a percentage point to 19.01%).

As detailed on Page 16, Peugeot is the only one of the PSA brands to achieve a rating (7.7) higher than the average (6.1) in the latest NFDA Dealer Attitude Survey. Vauxhall came in just below the average, at 6.0 and Citroën was again the lowest-rated manufacturer, at 3.8.

Getting back in the black

Despite the challenges, Christian Stadler, a professor of strategic management at Warwick Business School, believes PSA is up to the task of turning the group around: "Scale matters, particularly for mass-market producers. It means PSA can spread its R&D costs over a larger group and this should be helpful considering the substantial shifts the industry is experiencing in such areas as e-vehicles and self-driving cars."

"PSA has a track record of turning around loss-making mass-market producers and its margins above 6% are impressive."

Investment bank Evercore ISI believes PSA could quickly achieve

profitability via a quirk of European accounting standards.

In Europe, R&D is "capitalised" as an asset whereas under GM's American-style accounting principles it was treated as a sunk cost.

Evercore said this simple change in accounting practice could see the business swing back into the black.

Picat seems sure PSA can work magic under any circumstances, even claiming a "hard Brexit" could provide a positive outcome.

He said the prospect of a soft Brexit would be "nice", but suggested the hard option may present opportunities for Vauxhall's UK plants at Ellesmere Port and Luton, suggesting: "Maybe we can introduce a Peugeot or Citroën if it makes sense".

What does it mean for GM's plants?

Nagley acknowledged that if Vauxhall were to move to limiting pre-registrations, it may affect Vauxhall's UK factories, with lower production adding to the case for closures.

PSA has pledged to honour agreements stating that Ellesmere Port will produce the Astra until 2021 and Luton will make the Vivaro until 2025. In a meeting last month, Tavares assured Greg Clark, the business minister, and Len McCluskey, the leader of the Unite union that he was "not here to close factories".

However, Jacobs feels closures are inevitable. He said: "I think, short-

term, there has to be some pain. They have to close some factories.

"Look at the way GM turned things around in America. They made \$12bn in the US last year, simply because they are the right size for the market now. You simply cannot have factories continue operating on two shifts. It's not sweating the asset."

Stadler shares this opinion: "I would expect job cuts. PSA has done it before and there is no other way to

realistically achieve the cost savings they have in mind, which might possibly mean plant closures as well.

"The UK is definitely in a bad position as Brexit makes it less competitive than Germany and the unions are stronger in Germany."

"GM has been losing money in Europe since 2000. Last year, they would have made a profit, but the devaluation of the pound caused another loss." **TOM SHARPE**



'Ford country': former headquarters of Essex Auto Group, a FordStore and Transit Centre on the outskirts of Ford's Dunton Technical Centre

SOUTH AFRICAN SUPER GROUP BUYS NINE-SITE EAG

Acquisition of Essex Auto Group the latest step in 'considerable growth' of Allen Ford owners

Following its acquisition of Essex Auto Group (EAG), Super Group said it will look at further investments in the UK as it looks to add to the 23 dealerships it operates here and the 54 it runs in its native South Africa.

Former EAG managing director Philip Maskell made the final exchange of contracts in the sale of the nine-dealership, £158 million turnover business which he has led for the past 27 years, at an emotional handover event attended by 270 of his 300 former employees.

The deal sees Super Group add five Ford franchises (Southend, Rayleigh, Thurrock Lakeside, Billericay and Basildon head office), Kia sites in Southend and Thurrock Lakeside and Fiat and Mazda in Southend to its UK concern.

Along with the Allen Ford operation acquired for £33.9m in October 2014, the acquisition of EAG takes Super Group's total UK concern to 18 Ford, two Kia and two Fiat sites along with a lone Mazda site.

In an exclusive interview with *AM*, Super Group's chief financial officer,

Colin Brown, described EAG as a "successful and profitable going concern", but was unwilling to reveal how much Super Group had ultimately paid for it.

He said the weak pound had benefited Super Group, with the South African rand's relative strength increasing during the course of deliberations.

"In that respect, the market played nicely into our hands," said Brown.

"We have a good representation with Ford in the UK now. We do like the high-volume brands, but we would certainly look at others. We'd assess them on their own merit."

Combined with its fleet management and logistics businesses, Super Group's turnover rose 15% to £8.9 billion in the six months to December 31, 2016.

Super Group (UK Investments) is a wholly owned subsidiary of Bluefin Investments, both businesses registered in Mauritius.

Philip Maskell and his brother, Peter, both leave EAG as part of the sale, along with fellow director Michael Brown. Colin Brown said Super Group "hopes to keep as much as we can of the existing structure".

I GET THE IMPRESSION THAT THIS COULD BE THE START OF A CONSIDERABLE PERIOD OF GROWTH FOR [SUPER GROUP] IN THE UK

PHILIP MASKELL, ESSEX AUTO GROUP



EAG's published accounts for year-end October 2016 show a turnover of £158m and pre-tax profits of £1.8m. Its return on sales was 1.1%.

The group, which has its headquarters at a state-of-the-art FordStore and Transit Centre facility on the outskirts of Ford's Dunton Technical Centre, saw vehicle revenues rise 9.1% to £144.9m (2015: £131.7m) on the back of 11,444 sales in the same period.

Maskell, a former Ford dealer council chairman and the founding chairman in 2005 of the Retail Automotive Alliance, a buying group for franchised dealers, said the handover had been "an emotional affair".

"Over 270 of the business's 300 staff turned up to the handover. They didn't have to, but they all came along and said goodbye," he said.

"I wanted a formal handover. I owed it to the staff. Too often now, people are told about a takeover with a single email."

Reflecting on his 44 years in the industry, Maskell said he was "very proud". He said: "We have developed a world-class business led by our five Ford businesses in the heart of Ford country."

"We are delighted with the strategic and geographic fit with Super Group's existing Allen Ford operation and I am very confident that the fantastic team that I set up will continue to operate very successfully under the new owners."

"Super Group were impeccable to deal with and I get the impression that this could be the start of a considerable period of growth for them in the UK." **TOM SHARPE**

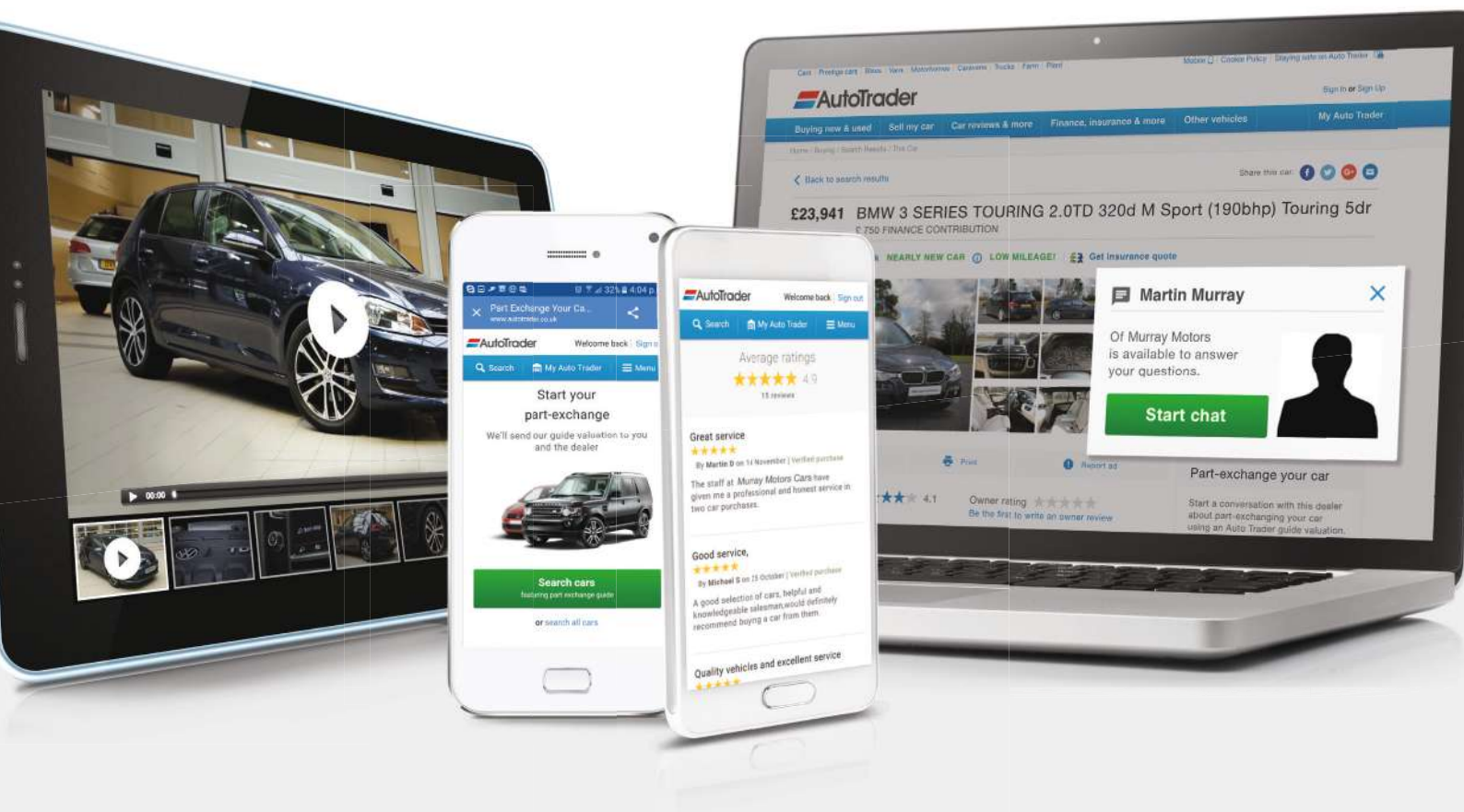


With our new packages, more value comes as standard

Every month, car buyers visit Auto Trader an average of **58.5 million** times, viewing 250 million vehicles, reading dealer reviews, talking directly with you using live chat, watching vehicle videos and making part-ex enquiries.

Our packages give you the tools you need to succeed.

To find out more visit:
trade.autotrader.co.uk/products



LifeShine™ 



DRIVEN BY RESULTS

EXTERIOR, INTERIOR & GLASS

Put the shine back into your profits and discover how your dealership can benefit from increased penetration rates when you switch to LifeShine. With a lifetime guarantee, exceptional durability and superior protection, your customers will be as delighted as you are.

For a free demonstration, call **01462 677 766**
or email lifeshine@autoglym.com



Penske Automotive chairman Roger Penske told NADA delegates retaining local expertise is vital

AM100 dealer groups seeking to expand need to think broadly about their business opportunities both inside and outside the UK.

Few UK franchised dealers currently own operations overseas, and many have plenty of opportunities to expanding their dealership portfolios and consolidate the sector here. Nevertheless, London-based Inchcape has operations including brand distribution licences and retail outlets in Asia and Australasia, eastern Africa, mainland Europe, Russia and South America, while Nottingham-based Pendragon owns successful premium-brand dealerships in California.

The direction of investment is more commonly the other way around, with businesses targeting UK dealer groups. In the past 20 years, US-based Penske Automotive Group and Group 1 Automotive have bought major dealer groups Sytner and Spire Automotive respectively. South Africa's Super Group bought Allen Ford in 2014 and has just bought Essex Auto Group (see page 8). In 2008, Roy McAllister, chief executive of Sandown Motors in South Africa, bought Mercedes-Benz dealerships in the UK from Jacksons CI. Chinese investor Lei Shing Hong bought UK operations from Mercedes-Benz Retail Group, and Japan's Marubeni Corporation owns Norton Way and RRG.

Success in overseas markets can be ensured by identifying a suitable acquisition or business partner and

"road testing each other", according to Roger Penske, chairman of Penske Corporation, which owns Penske Automotive Group. Doing so allows the acquirer to retain crucial local market expertise.

At the 2017 National Automobile Dealers Association (NADA) convention in New Orleans, Penske outlined how the international dealer group, which has 53,000 staff, has expanded through buying initial equity stakes in target businesses. In Yokohama, Japan, it formed a 49% joint venture with the Nicole Group and Penske said he expects to build on that.

It has also remained committed to building scale with premium brands. In Italy, it is on track to become the country's largest BMW, Audi and Porsche retailer following its takeover of eight dealerships in the Bologna region last October, and in 2015 it took majority control of 20-site Jacobs Gruppe in Germany,

a business it had first formed a joint venture with 10 years earlier.

Elsewhere in Germany, it has a 50/50 joint venture with Autohaus Nix, and owns dealerships representing Aston Martin, Lamborghini, Bentley, Ferrari, Maserati and Porsche. Some 40% of its businesses are international, and 77% are premium brands.

Penske also told NADA delegates about the group's diversification and innovation. In the USA it bought Carsense, a five-site used car supermarket business, which Penske believes has a business model that is scalable to other markets across America. That acquisition in December came just weeks after Sytner, Penske's division here, took over the UK's fourth-largest used car specialist, CarShop, again with an ambition to expand its footprint across the country (Read *AM*'s news insight on the CarShop acquisition at am-online.com/SytnerCarShop).

Penske said his businesses need to expand their used car operations: "With new cars going up and used car prices being pulled down, there's a huge opportunity there. We need to build on our used car operations." He said dealers must become "more vertical", doing more of the glass-work, tyres, repairs etc that the car buyer needs, and noted that in the 2008 recession, the motor retail industry "was kept alive by parts and service revenue".

In the US, Penske also owns heavy truck dealerships, which were cost-effective targets although he said the cost of acquisition has risen. He considers trucks a new revenue stream for the group, which is already heavily involved in truck rental – yellow Penske trucks have become a regular sight across the US.

Penske said he is looking for bigger potential acquisitions to build scale in its markets, and said the challenge is deciding where to spend the capital going forward. On integrating acquisitions, Penske said: "I think in order to make sure the transition goes smoothly, you need clear communication and you need to have a solid game plan. We enter each of those opportunities with a clear direction of where we need to go in order to make this work within our organization."

"Each situation is different, obviously, but I think the toughest challenge is making sure everyone knows the plan and is on the same page and moving in the right direction to reach our goals."

TIM ROSE

“THE TOUGHEST CHALLENGE IS MAKING SURE EVERYONE KNOWS THE PLAN AND IS ON THE SAME PAGE AND MOVING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION”
ROGER PENSKE



ADVERTISING FEATURE

The devil is in the detail

By Andrew Howells, founder, CitNOW



Simple, straightforward processes usually mean that someone else has been worrying about the detail. When it comes to producing and sending videos and tracking effectiveness, we worry, we worry a lot.

We like to think our attention to detail is exceptional. For example, we answer every call ticket inside two hours and all our on-site trainers have automotive backgrounds. We integrate with more third-party software than anyone else in the market and our dashboard and analytics suite is designed for ease of use, with at-a-glance reporting and in-depth analysis.

We focus on security. In fact, we asked one manufacturer's IT team to try and hack into our system; they gave up after three weeks. Our servers have geographically separate dual-data-centre redundancy, which is just a fancy way of saying we are very, very reliable.

For the techies out there, more devilish detail includes our use of http live streaming, which splits each video into bite-sized chunks. Uploading by the video taker is simple and fast, even when the Wi-Fi is a bit flaky.

Dozens of email templates are available, with language modifications. For example, the text can change according to gender. Email layouts and video presentation pages are designed to meet different brand standards and are available in 22 languages at the last count.

Audio can be stripped out and an approved sound track added. How useful is that when you're making web videos and you are looking for a consistent approach?

We test everything on older PCs and five-year-old browsers. Not for fun, but to provide a consistent result for everyone.

We think focusing on the detail is the best way we can serve our customers. It seems to be working.

Contact details:

Tel: +44 (0)118 997 7740

Email: reply@citnow.com

Twitter: @CitNOW

For news and tips on selling more cars and parts more profitably, subscribe to CitNOW's newsletter at citnow.co.uk



THIS MONTH'S NEWS HIGH

FEB

24th

SYTNER NAMED BEST BIG EMPLOYER IN THE UK

Sytner was named the UK's best big employer by *The Sunday Times* Best Companies To Work For programme. The Leicester-based group – now the largest by turnover in the UK – came top in the survey's Best 30 Big Companies countdown, having been in the top five for eight consecutive years.

TRIBUTES PAID TO THORNE AND RHYS

Tributes were paid to Ken Thorne, the former boss of the Ken Thorne Group, following his death at the age of 75. He died after returning to Cardiff from Dubai where he moved following the collapse of his dealership in 2002. February also saw the passing of motor industry expert Professor Garel Rhys, who died at his home in Cardiff aged 76.



STEVEN EAGELL BUYS JARDINE SITES

Steven Eagell Group completed the acquisition of six Toyota and two Lexus dealerships from Jardine Motors Group in Cambridgeshire, Essex and Suffolk. The Milton Keynes-based, privately owned company now operates a total of 20 sites (17 Toyota and three Lexus).



MAR

1st

VERTU SECURES £70M EXPANSION LOANS

Vertu Motors said it had "considerable firepower for growth" ahead of its preliminary results for the year ended January 31, 2017. A new five-year banking facility with Barclays Bank and Royal Bank of Scotland has delivered £40 million of committed borrowing capacity with the potential to add a further £30 million.



3rd

MERCEDES UK TO RECALL 75,000 VEHICLES OVER FIRE RISK

Daimler AG announced it was preparing to recall 75,000 Mercedes-Benz vehicles in the UK, as part of a fire risk affecting about a million cars worldwide. A representative of Mercedes-Benz UK confirmed that fires had resulted from repeated attempts to start a vehicle which had suffered a fault with its starting circuit.



HAMMOND TO ANNOUNCE DIESEL TAX CHANGES IN AUTUMN BUDGET

Philip Hammond, the Chancellor, said he expects to reveal changes to the tax treatment of diesel vehicles in his autumn budget. He said with the Government's commitment to improve air quality, he will consult on a detailed draft plan this spring, which will set out how the UK's air quality goals will be achieved.



8th



LOOKERS' REVENUES RISE 17%
Lookers reported revenues of £4.3 billion in 2016, a rise of 17% on the year before. Much of its growth came from increased sales at its existing businesses. Lookers' motor division's turnover rose by £658 million, of which acquisitions contributed only £131m. Chief

executive Andy Bruce said it was "pleasing to see organic growth in turnover of £527m".



SHUKERS ACQUIRES CAMBRIAN GARAGES

Shukers acquired the full share capital of Aberystwyth Land Rover and Hyundai retailer Cambrian Garages for an undisclosed sum. The deal follows Shukers' sale of its Shrewsbury Land Rover dealership to Hatfields last year.

MCLAREN SEEKS TO FILL TWO OPEN POINTS

McLaren Automotive is eyeing two franchise open points as it targets a further 20% growth in sales during 2017, following near-100% growth in 2016. Jolyon Nash, executive director of global sales and marketing, said: "We are hopeful of adding dealerships in the north of London and the north-east of England."



9th

MARSHALL TURNOVER NEARS £2BN AFTER 54% INCREASE

Marshall Motor Holdings reported a 54.1% rise in revenues to £1.9 billion and a 60.4% rise in underlying profit before tax to £25.4m. Like-for-like revenues, excluding its 2016 acquisitions of Ridgeway and SGS and new dealership openings, rose 10.7%. The acquisitions contributed £7.7m to profit before tax, said chief executive Daksh Gupta.

15th

ADVERTISING FEATURE

Why we need new metrics for motor finance

By James Tew, CEO, iVendi



Modern, omni-channel online motor finance, which connects the consumer to the dealer and then the dealer's respective lenders, is a relatively new concept. For that reason, there is sometimes disagreement about how to measure its effectiveness.

Some dealers use traditional web metrics and, while they have a little relevance, they tell only a small part of the story. Others look baldly at the motor finance approval rate, but, again, that is just a single element.

What is needed instead, we believe, is a set of widely recognised metrics.

As a motor finance technologist, we at iVendi can see the positive impact that our tools have on dealers – but it would be very useful to be able to discuss what is happening using widely accepted measurements.

As a proposed solution, we have been developing a new dashboard in recent months. It uses a series of graphical and numerical representations to look at how motor finance is driving traffic and where those visitors are coming from.

In addition, it also examines how each business is performing against its online peers, the relationship between online buyers and the offline dealership, and also provides details on out-of-hours activity, which is one of the key advantages of online motor finance.

The new dashboard is being trialled with a variety of different dealers and, following their comments, we are aiming to arrive at a final version that could become the new industry standard in this area. It's an exciting development.

■ The iVendi Platform provides a complete online motor finance solution for dealers, motor finance providers, car portals and manufacturers. To find out more, visit ivendi.com, e-mail enquiries@ivendi.com, or call 0345 226 0503.





AM digitech

27th April 2017 Ricoh Arena, Coventry

Connecting the car, the customer and the dealership

Cars are already connected and soon vehicles will communicate its servicing and maintenance needs direct to the manufacturer or dealership whilst self-driving cars are a reality

Customers expect a digitalised and joined-up car buying experience with tailored and relevant communications as part of a seamless journey effortlessly joining online, off-line and in-store

Dealerships are increasingly digitised and boutique-style stores are ever more popular whilst the business needs to consistently operate on multiple virtual platforms and in the physical world

Programme

08.30 Registration and networking

09.30 Conference opens

09.40

The implications for dealers of self-driving cars provided through a mobility service model

John Leech, partner, KPMG

The UK is especially suited to the future development of self-driving cars and mobility as a service and in this presentation Leech will explain why and the potential impact on the marketplace. He will consider a possible future scenario for new car sales and explore implications for retailers, used car sales and aftersales arising from self-driving and mobility as a service as developments take place.



10.10

New car buying trends in a digitally dominant landscape

John Miele, sales director, Carwow

Carwow draws on its wealth of data to provide fascinating insights into consumer new car buying behaviour including the changing face of customer loyalty. This session will also explore the effect of political turmoil on consumer confidence – which event had the most impact on people's willingness to purchase a new car, Brexit or Trump? Miele will also look at other influences such as the 1 April VED changes.



10.35 Q&A

10.45 Refreshments and networking

11.15

Creating end-to-end online automotive retail propositions

Hedley Aylott, chief executive officer and co-founder, Summit

Extensive experience with automotive retail disruptor Rockar and its partnership with Peugeot to facilitate its end-to-end online vehicle ecommerce facility, Summit explores how the entire car buying process can now be accommodated online including the technology, information and processes required in a complicated sector with many variables. Aylott also discusses how dealers can adapt and what the automotive retail landscape may look like in just five years' time.



Exploring how digital and technology is creating a new era of automotive retailing, AM DigiTech identifies the challenges, opportunities and solutions

Headline sponsors:

carwow

AutoTrader

COX AUTOMOTIVE

iVendi

Marketing Delivery

NODE4

reputation.com

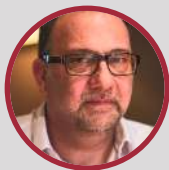
AUTOWEB DESIGN

Co-sponsors:

11.40

Adapting to an evolving marketplace to remain on the road to success

Nick King, insight director, Auto Trader



Success in 2017 and beyond depends on dealers' ability to adapt in today's evolving marketplace. King will draw on key learnings from wider retail, new research and insights into the workings of the most successful retailers to help dealers stand out from the crowd. King will also explore how a blend of dealer experience and data management creates trust and ensures the transition between the online and physical forecourt is seamless.

12.05 Q&A

12.15

Interactive Masterclasses

13.00 Lunch and networking

14.00

Interactive Masterclasses

14.45 Refreshments and networking

15.15

The digital marketing landscape – a dealer group's perspective

Alex Brown, head of digital, Jardine Motors Group



Dealers are operating in a challenging marketplace where disruptors have staked their claim and customers are researching and buying cars in new ways. Embracing disruption and evolving to align practices to meet the demands of digitally sophisticated consumers is essential and this session explores how the digital marketing strategy can incorporate aggregators, classified websites and multiple social platforms to deliver a cohesive end-to-end customer purchase journey.

15.40

The Great Data Debate

Automotive industry expert panellists

Data – whether it's the dealer's database or Big Data, is the driving force of the business but new regulations and new technology is creating a fast changing landscape. Our panel of industry experts explores the new GDPR rules covering data capture and customer communications, what they mean and how to prepare and the wider data field including vehicle connectivity exploring who owns the data, who manages the information provided by cars and how it will impact aftersales.

16.15 Summing up and close

*Organisers reserve the right to change the programme and/or timings.

Masterclasses

Delegates will have the opportunity to attend two of our six masterclass sessions covering a range of topics crucial to the daily operations of the dealership.

Tailoring the digital marketing budget for the modern consumer

Martin Dew, head of digital, Autoweb

Exploring digital marketing and advertising channels, how they connect and resonate with customers to result in leads.

Online finance, the drive towards digital sales and compliance

James Tew, ceo, iVendi

Drawing on its wealth of data, iVendi highlights trends and behaviours and explores the role of online finance tools as a facilitator of FCA compliance regulations.

Why online reputation matters and how to manage it

Charlie Roberts, sales director, Reputation.com

Keeping tabs on what consumers are saying about your business on third party sites such as Google, Facebook and other major review sites, the pitfalls and best practice.

Technological innovation for the modern dealerships

Richard Buxton, head of unified communications, Node4

Today's technology advances explained and its role in running an efficient and cost effective businesses and how it helps deliver enhanced customer experiences.

Social Relationship Marketing (SRM) explained

Jeremy Evans, managing director, Marketing Delivery

How a mature social media strategy and the wider marketing mix delivers integrated customer communications and how to maximise its reach and engagement.

How retail innovation can impact the dealership model

Cox Automotive

This session explores the innovation in the retail sector and looks at how dealers can capitalise on it to benefit their business.

Why should you attend?

Tackling the widespread technological and digital challenges facing today's dealers, AM DigiTech also considers what's on the horizon so retailers can best prepare for an increasingly tech future as well as meet the needs of the digitally sophisticated consumer.

Aimed at senior automotive retailers, decision-makers, manufacturers, IT managers, CRM managers and digital marketing managers as well as sales and aftersales managers, AM DigiTech attendees can expect to gain a deeper understanding of how digital and technology drives the business as well as current trends and future influences including:-

- **Insights** into exceptional digital marketing campaigns and tailored customer communications
- **Explore** the latest technology delivering a cohesive and high quality service to customers
- **Find out** different ways dealers are delivering an integrated experience
- **Understand** the impact of the connected vehicle, customer and business
- **Grasp** the increasingly complex and multi-faceted online customer purchase journey
- **Fully appreciate** the digitisation of the sales process and the interactive showroom
- **Unravel** the complexities of data and understand new forthcoming legal obligations
- **Listen** to latest research on consumer behaviour patterns and attitudes
- **Benefit** from best practice at work in some of the UK's most successful dealer groups
- **Network** with colleagues and discover the latest products and services on the market

For further details, please visit www.amdigitech.co.uk
or contact Paige Phillips on 01733 395133 or paige.phillips@bauermedia.co.uk

NFDA RESULTS

VW AND NISSAN PLEDGE TO IMPROVE DEALER RELATIONS

VW disappointed by latest fall in retailer sentiment as Nissan blames rapid growth for poor result

Volkswagen and Nissan said they are making efforts to improve relationships with their dealer networks following low scores in the Winter NFDA Dealer Attitude Survey.

Asked how they would rate their manufacturer overall, dealers scored Volkswagen 3.9 out of 10 (down from 4.5 in the previous survey), Nissan 4.0 (down from 5.3) and Mitsubishi 3.9 (down from 4.6). Bottom-of-the-table Citroën actually improved its score by 0.2 points, to 3.8.

The unifying theme around the negative ratings was poor communication with the franchise and dissatisfaction with profitability.

The average score across all manufacturers was 6.1, a drop of 0.1 when compared with summer 2016, but the same as last winter's survey.

Sue Robinson, NFDA director, said while a number of manufacturers had clearly taken previous negative scores into consideration and improved their position, average scores across most questions had worsened.

Robinson said: "In such a critical period, it is fundamental that manufacturers and dealers continue to constructively work together towards the same ultimate objective, which is ensuring that the automotive industry is well represented at all levels and continues to thrive."

VOLKSWAGEN

Alison Jones, VW UK passenger cars brand director, said she was disappointed by the NFDA results and had at least hoped to hold a 4.5 rating.

Jones told AM: "I wrote to the partners on March 7 in an attempt to foster more openness and address the issues the survey raised.

"We really have done all we can to try and understand where we can improve."

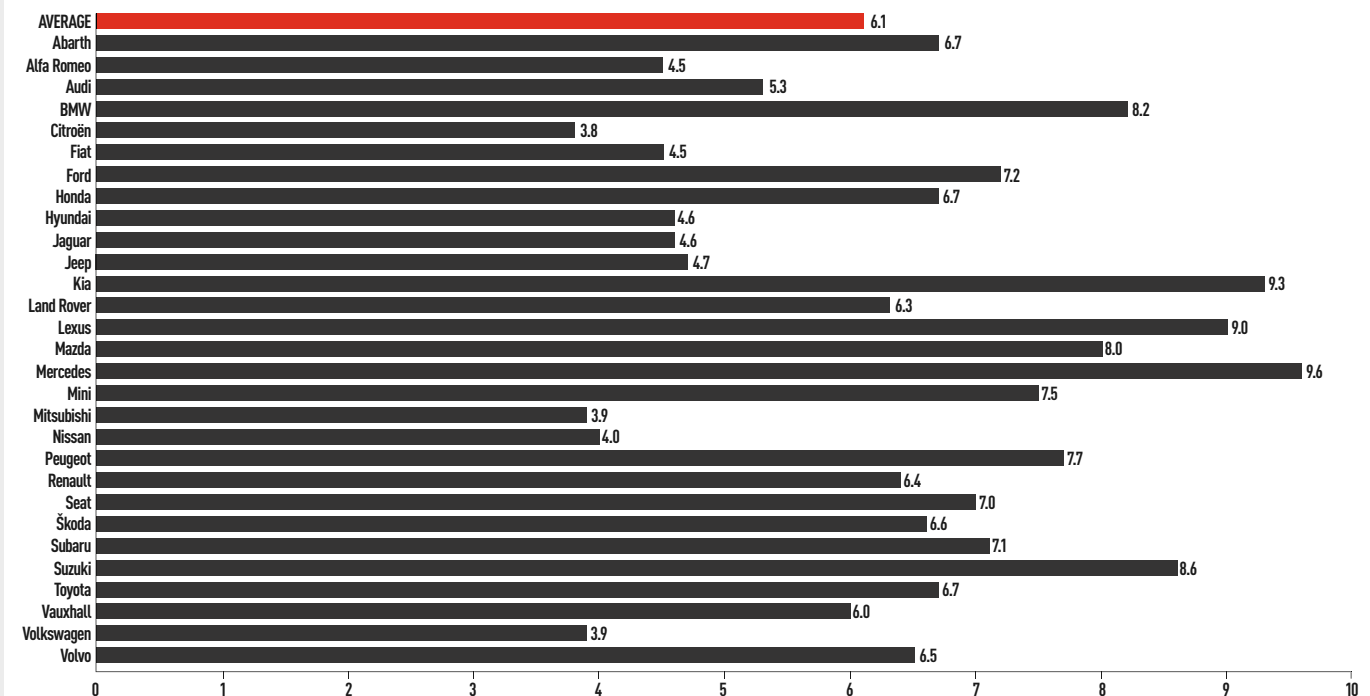
Jones knows the dealer network has taken issue with profitability and the complexity that comes with running the franchise.

She said a recent dealer forum generated 650 questions "to give us things to think about".

Jones said: "The timing of the NFDA survey came just ahead of our big conference at the end of January and the feedback from that event was very good.

"We keep being told 'yes we're going in the right direction', hosting dinners and discussions with our partners, and we are determined to drive improvement."

NFDA DEALER ATTITUDE SURVEY WINTER 2017 – HOW WOULD YOU RATE YOUR MANUFACTURER OVERALL?



WE'LL HELP YOU GET THERE

**“WE REALLY HAVE
DONE ALL WE CAN
TO TRY AND
UNDERSTAND
WHERE WE CAN
IMPROVE**



ALISON JONES, VW UK

NISSAN

Dealers rated Nissan particularly poorly for volume target aspirations, at 2.8 out of 10. It also posted the lowest score for dealers' ability to do business with their manufacturer on a day-to-day basis, at 3.7 out of 10.

A Nissan spokesman said: "We are aware of these findings and are working closely with the dealer network to resolve them."

He said the results were a reflection of how fast Nissan was growing in the UK, with increased volumes over the past couple of years.

He said: "This growth has put pressure on the network to perform. We are also intensively working with dealers to drive enhanced profitability."

"We are improving our communications with dealers to outline our vision for the coming years and are working closely with them to move our business forwards in partnership."

CITROËN

Citroën declined to comment on the areas of the survey where its scores fell, instead focusing on improvements in how dealers rated target expectations, target-setting for aftersales and demonstrator requirements.

A Citroën spokesman said: "We continue to have a close working relationship with our network partners through regional forums, dealer council meetings and via one-to-one feedback/development programmes."

Citroën said it is confident the new C3 and C3 Picasso replacement will have a positive impact on network profitability.

The spokesman said: "Citroën UK is proud of its open and honest approach, and is fully committed to a truly successful business relationship with our network partners and to achieving our shared business objectives."

THE TOP PERFORMERS

At the other end of the spectrum, Mercedes-Benz maintained its position as the best-rated manufacturer, with a score of 9.6.

It improved its overall score by 0.1 points compared with the summer survey and it was 0.3 points higher than the same survey last year.

Kia consolidated its second position with a further improvement of 0.1 points, to 9.3. In fact, when the scores for all survey questions were averaged, Kia came out on top of the table with 8.7, ahead of Mercedes-Benz on 8.5.

Lexus placed third in the manufacturer rating with 9.0 points, unchanged from last summer.

Gary Savage, Mercedes-Benz Cars managing director, said the spirit of partnership is the foundation of everything the brand does with its network: "Our overriding principle is to make our communications clear and uncomplicated: we listen, we talk and we work together."

He said high scores across the board for Mercedes were due to examining every survey question to determine where improvements could be made: "I have already called representatives from our network and the dealer council to discuss and gain their insight on scores from the latest survey."

Paul Philpott, Kia UK chief executive, said the high ratings from dealers showed how well the business collaborates with its network.

He said: "The key thing for us is communication with the network and giving them what they need to run their businesses effectively and profitably."

"We listen to them, they listen to us. We have mutual respect." This is backed up by the NFDA results, showing dealers rate Kia at 9.2 out of 10 on how the franchise takes their views into account.

Kevin Ledger, Lexus general manager of operations, said the brand has established a mutually beneficial working relationship based on a "consultative and transparent approach".

Ledger said: "We consult with our network on a broad spectrum of business and operational matters through working groups and committees, covering everything from quarterly campaigns to standards."

"However, it's just as important that anyone in the network is free to pick up the phone and have a direct conversation with Lexus senior management if they have anything they want to discuss. That is one of the benefits of having a compact and flat management structure."

Mazda also scooped a top six position with 8.0, its best result since 1992. It came just behind Suzuki at 8.6 and BMW at 8.2.

Jeremy Thomson, Mazda UK managing director, said the business had worked hard to build mutually beneficial relationships with the dealer network.

He said: "We will continue to listen to our dealers and, building on this positive feedback, will redouble our efforts to be an 'easy to do business with' manufacturer." **TOM SEYMOUR**

SPONSOR'S COMMENT



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

While many commentators, including myself, share a view that our industry will see more modest sales levels in

2017, the fact remains that the motor finance industry has seen unprecedented growth in recent years. This has been enabled largely by PCP deals and low interest rates.

While both can be good news for customers, it is important that the industry maintains a balanced approach to risk and affordability. In particular, it is crucial that we remain mindful of the impacts of higher guaranteed future values on future deposits, even when this can help customers by lowering monthly payments today.

Rightly or wrongly, the increased borrowing that often comes with the way PCP is structured has recently led to some speculation in the national press that this could cause issues for customers in future.

With PCP, as with other products, it is critical that customers understand the unique features and overall value of their finance agreement and discuss all options with dealers at the point of sale to avoid issues further down the line.

It is also important that guaranteed future values (GFVs) reflect a realistic market value. While lenders take on more of the risk if GFVs are inflated and customers get lower monthly payments, I still question whether this is really in the best long-term interests of every customer.

Where an unrealistic GFV leads to a customer being in a negative equity situation, this could disadvantage them if they wish to part-exchange or buy the vehicle outright at the end of their agreement. In this situation, this is not a great customer experience and it limits clarity, choice and possibly the customer's ability to buy their next car.

Offering customers competitive, value-for-money car and finance propositions is a cornerstone to the success of the market. We need to ensure we provide overall value for customers, offering genuine choice and clarity, constructing PCP deals in a way that preserves valuable options at the end of the contract that are beneficial to all.

NEW CAR REGISTRATIONS

February falls 'will rebound in March'

New car registrations fell 0.3% year-on-year in February, to 83,115.

The private market dropped 1,647 units, or 4.4%, to 36,018 cars. Business registrations also declined by 5.3%, or 79 cars, to 1,398.

Fleet registrations rose 3.3%, or 1,446 units, to 45,699, according to data from the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders.

Mike Hawes, chief executive, SMMT, said: "We expect to see the market bounce back in March as buyers take advantage of the new 17 plate, as well as the last chance to buy a car eligible for current lower VED rates before they change on April 1."

1 TOYOTA

Registrations are up 13%, or 1,224 units, so far this year, led by the A-segment Aygo, which accounted for almost half of that growth as its fleet registrations rose 68%, or 635 units. Retail demand for the Verso, Prius and GT86 also increased.



2 SUZUKI

Suzuki's dealer network is off to a cracking start, with 5,349 registrations just two months into the year. Retail registrations are up 37%, with substantial growth in the B-segment Celerio, Vitara and Baleno.

3 JEEP

Registrations are down 194 units, or 17%, after a poor year-on-year result in February. Dealers will eagerly await a volume boost from the new Compass compact SUV, which will slot between the Renegade and Cherokee in showrooms near the end of this year.

4 MASERATI

Perhaps as a result of national marketing activity for the Ghibli, including a competitive contract hire offer, the Italian prestige brand has increased its year-to-date registrations by almost 87%.

Marque	February					Year-to-date				
	2017	% market share	2016	% market share	% change	2017	% market share	2016	% market share	% change
Ford	9,909	11.92	11,513	13.81	-13.93	32,687	12.69	33,548	13.26	-2.57
Volkswagen	7,326	8.81	6,694	8.03	9.44	20,293	7.88	18,749	7.41	8.24
Vauxhall	6,299	7.58	7,868	9.43	-19.94	20,169	7.83	23,130	9.14	-12.80
BMW	6,119	7.36	5,760	6.91	6.23	14,608	5.67	14,025	5.54	4.16
Mercedes-Benz	6,099	7.34	5,196	6.23	17.38	19,147	7.43	16,996	6.72	12.66
Audi	5,237	6.30	5,384	6.46	-2.73	16,913	6.56	16,897	6.68	0.09
Nissan	5,033	6.06	4,634	5.56	8.61	16,411	6.37	15,354	6.07	6.88
Peugeot	3,273	3.94	3,469	4.16	-5.65	9,225	3.58	10,782	4.26	-14.44
Kia	3,243	3.90	2,889	3.46	12.25	10,904	4.23	7,955	3.14	37.07
Škoda	3,236	3.89	2,902	3.48	11.51	8,667	3.36	7,895	3.12	9.78
1 Toyota	3,095	3.72	2,478	2.97	24.90	10,531	4.09	9,307	3.68	13.15
Hyundai	3,009	3.62	2,685	3.22	12.07	9,396	3.65	8,566	3.38	9.69
Honda	2,126	2.56	2,050	2.46	3.71	6,136	2.38	6,570	2.60	-6.61
Citroën	2,120	2.55	3,046	3.65	-30.40	5,370	2.08	7,620	3.01	-29.53
Renault	2,092	2.52	1,948	2.34	7.39	6,112	2.37	6,093	2.41	0.31
Mini	2,045	2.46	1,721	2.06	18.83	4,325	1.68	3,652	1.44	18.43
Land Rover	1,778	2.14	1,275	1.53	39.45	7,205	2.80	5,884	2.33	22.45
Seat	1,728	2.08	1,594	1.91	8.41	5,582	2.17	4,713	1.86	18.44
2 Suzuki	1,587	1.91	1,248	1.50	27.16	5,349	2.08	3,602	1.42	48.50
Fiat	1,426	1.72	1,917	2.30	-25.61	4,647	1.80	5,475	2.16	-15.12
Mazda	1,164	1.40	1,411	1.69	-17.51	3,991	1.55	5,692	2.25	-29.88
Volvo	1,077	1.30	1,030	1.24	4.56	3,872	1.50	4,020	1.59	-3.68
Jaguar	869	1.05	769	0.92	13.00	3,563	1.38	3,021	1.19	17.94
Dacia	439	0.53	512	0.61	-14.26	2,433	0.94	2,179	0.86	11.66
DS	369	0.44	807	0.97	-54.28	1,028	0.40	1,896	0.75	-45.78
Mitsubishi	354	0.43	710	0.85	-50.14	1,683	0.65	2,245	0.89	-25.03
Smart	294	0.35	234	0.28	25.64	1,045	0.41	937	0.37	11.53
3 Jeep	227	0.27	345	0.41	-34.20	955	0.37	1,149	0.45	-16.88
Lexus	206	0.25	232	0.28	-11.21	1,006	0.39	1,233	0.49	-18.41
Porsche	202	0.24	206	0.25	-1.94	889	0.35	1,033	0.41	-13.94
Alfa Romeo	196	0.24	165	0.20	18.79	480	0.19	469	0.19	2.35
Abarth	130	0.16	112	0.13	16.07	353	0.14	313	0.12	12.78
Infiniti	118	0.14	27	0.03	337.04	300	0.12	132	0.05	127.27
MG	111	0.13	103	0.12	7.77	316	0.12	416	0.16	-24.04
SsangYong	105	0.13	153	0.18	-31.37	403	0.16	413	0.16	-2.42
Bentley	60	0.07	48	0.06	25.00	223	0.09	168	0.07	32.74
Subaru	48	0.06	74	0.09	-35.14	226	0.09	281	0.11	-19.57
4 Maserati	46	0.06	31	0.04	48.39	211	0.08	113	0.04	86.73
Aston Martin	31	0.04	19	0.02	63.16	220	0.09	88	0.03	150.00
Lotus	24	0.03	39	0.05	-38.46	49	0.02	55	0.02	-10.91
McLaren	14	0.02	0	0.00	0.00	63	0.02	0	0.00	0.00
Other British	17	0.02	15	0.02	13.33	69	0.03	63	0.02	9.52
Other imports	234	0.28	82	0.10	185.37	624	0.24	343	0.14	81.92
Total	83,115		83,395		-0.34	257,679		253,073		1.82

STREAMLINE YOUR SALES PROCESS

Discover the power of our Mobile Finance Calculator. It's designed to help you spend more time with your customers and less at your desk.



TRY IT TODAY:
blackhorse.co.uk/dealerportal

**A BETTER WAY
OF DOING BUSINESS**



USED CAR SALES

Healthy start to Q1 hints at buoyant 2017

Industry analysts quietly confident that used car sales will top 2016's record 8.2m

Last year was a record for used car sales in the UK, with 8.2 million vehicles sold, up 7.3%* on the year before. Following a buoyant start to this year, industry analysts agree that the signs are good for that record performance to continue in 2017.

Philip Nothard, retail and consumer specialist at Cap HPI, said: "The first three months of the year have grown to dominate the sales cycle. Analysis has shown significant growth. Volumes have risen from 605,198 in [Q1] 2013 to 771,780 in [Q1] 2016. This represents a margin of more than 229,489 vehicles against Q4 2016, and we are on track for a bigger result over Q1 2017."

Analysing the market and consumer buying behaviours is helping, while competitive pricing and increased stock turn could fuel a good result for used cars.

Nothard said: "Pre-reg or tactical registrations will remain and continue to exert pressure on nearly new values. We expect PCH to increase across the board as it continues to prove an attractive option to motorists."

As expected, the VED taxation changes are providing a boost among new cars as dealers race to either sell or register those vehicles adversely hit by the April 1 changes.

Rupert Pontin, head of valuations at Glass's said: "We expect to see a number of more expensive £40,000-plus vehicles pre-registered ahead of the VED changes."

With new car registrations for the first quarter broadly in line with expectations following manufacturers' focus on Europe after Brexit and the devaluation of sterling, Pontin predicted it would eventually boost the used car market.

He said: "There won't be an immediate impact on the used car market, it will be felt later in the year. But with fewer new cars in the market, there will be higher retail demand for used. That will be good for the market as it will keep values at a steady level alleviating some of the pressure pre-registrations put on late-plate cars."

RIISING MARKET

According to Glass's figures, January saw almost 14% more year-on-year activity at the auctions, although February was down 0.9%. Pontin believes the market will return to growth, as contract hire and leasing vehicles and returning PCP cars find their way into the market, resulting in some downward pressure on values, which he warns could

WE EXPECT TO SEE A NUMBER OF MORE EXPENSIVE £40,000-PLUS VEHICLES PRE-REGISTERED AHEAD OF THE VED CHANGES

RUPERT PONTIN, GLASS'S



pose a challenge later in the year.

"We are expecting the UK used car market to enjoy further modest growth from the 8.2m units sold in 2016," said James Powell, executive vice-president at Sword Apak, the wholesale stock-funding software management specialist.

Continuing low interest rates, used car PCP finance and new car price increases as a result of the drop in the value of the pound, have helped enhance the value proposition of used cars, together with encouraging levels of consumer confidence, record low unemployment levels and wages growth of 2.6%, which outstripped inflation.

Powell said: "Used car supply levels are good, largely being matched by consumer demand, especially in city car, supermini and SUV classifications. This is evident from sales and conversion levels across industry remarketing channels. Despite some mixed reports on values, the overall impact on prices seems to be a neutral one."

Trade buyers are also selecting stock carefully, focusing on vehicles with a fast turnaround. Simon Henstock, chief operating officer for UK remarketing, BCA, said this was vital as the market is helped by more flexible access to stock and accurate pricing.

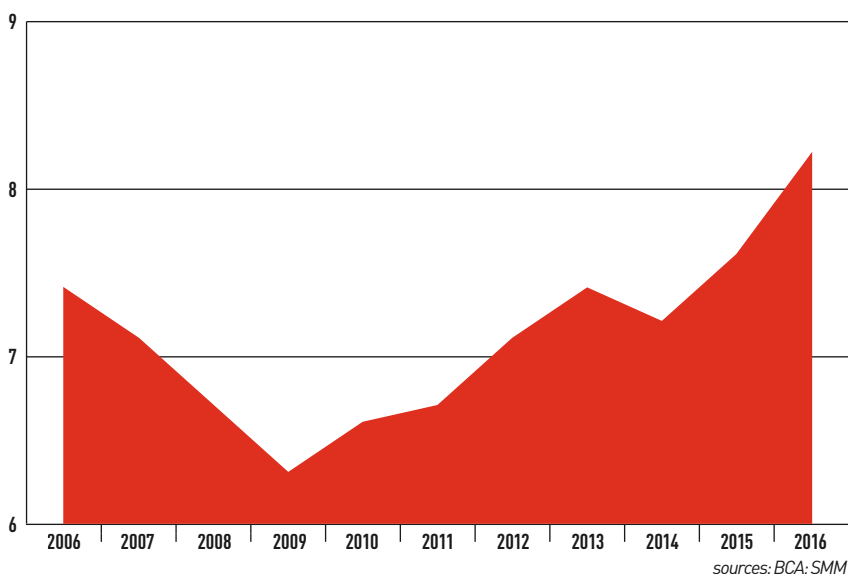
"Dealers are now able to trade more flexibly and now source stock seven days a week. The availability of accurate pricing data enables more accurate stocking decisions," he said.

Similarly, Kee Resources underlined the importance of utilising analysis in a dealer's used car strategy. Alan Henson, head of sales and customer services, said: "In a market where margins are already fine, small variations in used car values have implications for purchasing, stock funding and retailing."

*SMMT

USED CAR SALES 2006-2016

Source: BCA, SMMT



WE'LL HELP YOU GET THERE

FINANCE OFFERS

New plate drives most brands to put offers front and centre

March is make-or-break time for dealers and many businesses relied on strong finance offers to drive customers through their doors during the change to the '17' plate.

Citroën was in need of some of the greatest support as the brand's new car registrations were down 29.5% after the first two months of this year.

According to the latest NFDA Dealer Attitude Survey results (see page 16) Citroën was rated the lowest overall by dealers, at 3.8 out of 10.

However, it did not receive the lowest score for its finance offers. While it was rated 5.0 out of 10 (compared with the average of 6.7), Hyundai (4.9), Subaru (4.8) and Jeep (4.8) were all lower.

Citroën had decent offers to help boost registrations in March, including its entry C1 at £129 a month with a deposit under £2,000. In fact, the entire range was available for under the £300 price point with reasonable deposit levels. The French brand also put £1,350 in deposit support behind its C3 Picasso and C4 Picasso.

The lack of clarity around Subaru's finance offers may be part of the low rating from dealers. The Japanese brand's UK website did not clearly display any PCP offers in the finance offers section during the busiest time of the year.

It was possible to find some representative examples within each model's specific website section, but they were not front and centre as they were on many other manufacturer's websites.

Subaru instead continues to lead with its interest-free credit promotion that has been running since

TOP FINANCE DEALS FOR RETAIL BUYERS

Model	Finance type	Deposit	Term	Monthly payment	Final payment	APR	Offer ends
Citroën							
C1 VTi 68 manual 3dr Feel	PCP	£1,884.43	36 months	£129	£4,251	4.90%	31/03/2017
New C3 PureTech 82 manual Feel	PCP	£2,318.66	36 months	£189	£5,807	4.90%	31/03/2017
C3 Picasso BlueHDi 100 manual Edition	PCP	£1,833.71	48 months	£249	£3,936	4.90%	31/03/2017
C4 Cactus PureTech 82 manual Feel	PCP	£2,107.13	36 months	£179	£5,397	4.90%	31/03/2017
C4 PureTech 110 6-speed manual Feel	PCP	£2,485.37	48 months	£269	£4,000	4.90%	31/03/2017
New C4 Picasso BlueHDi 120 S&S 6-speed manual Feel	PCP	£3,815.57	48 months	£289	£6,427	4.90%	31/03/2017
Subaru							
Outback 2.0i SE Premium Lineartronic	PCP	£7,270	49 months	£399	£12,669	6.90%	31/03/2017
Forester	50/50	£13,090	12 months	N/A	£13,090	0.00%	31/03/2017
XV	50/50	£11,090	12 months	N/A	£11,090	0.00%	31/03/2017
Levorg 1.6 GT-S CVT	PCP	£7,233	49 months	£349	£10,222.50	6.90%	31/03/2017
Impreza 1.6i-S 6MT	PCP	£4,294	49 months	£249	£5,496.25	6.90%	31/03/2017
BRZ 2.0i SE Lux 6AT	PCP	£8,093.75	49 months	£299	£9,225	6.90%	31/03/2017
WRX STi 2.5 UK Type 6MT	PCP	£3,920	49 months	£399	£13,785	6.90%	31/03/2017
Kia							
Picanto 1.0 '1 Air' Manual 5dr	PCP	£2,150.00	37 months	£124.90	£2,740.5	4.90%	31/03/2017
cee'd GT Line 1.6 CRDi 6-speed manual 5dr	PCP	£5,200.00	37 months	£325.19	£7,215.80	4.90%	31/03/2017
Rio 1.1 CRDi 'SE' Manual ISG 5dr	PCP	£3,550.00	37 months	£201.03	£3,550.00	4.90%	31/03/2017
Carens '2' 1.6 GDi Manual ISG	PCP	£4,550.00	37 months	£285.20	£6,141.85	4.90%	31/03/2017
Sorento 'KX-1' 2.2 CRDi 194bhp 6-speed manual 7-seat UM	PCP	£6,650.00	37 months	£322.09	£12,012.38	4.90%	31/03/2017
Sportage '2' 1.7 CRDi manual ISG 5dr	PCP	£5,050.00	37 months	£206.92	£10,516.80	4.90%	31/03/2017
All- New Niro '2'	PCP	£5,150.00	37 months	£208.41	£11,206.50	4.90%	31/03/2017
Mercedes							
A 180 AMG Line	PCP	£3,887.96	36 months	£299	£10,975	5.10%	31/03/2017
B 180 d SE	PCP	£1,925.88	36 months	£309	£9,600	5.10%	31/03/2017
B 250 e Sport	PCP	£2,999	36 months	£299	£10,250	5.80%	31/03/2017
C 200 d AMG Line	PCP	£4,999	36 months	£355	£13,875	5.10%	31/03/2017
C 220 d AMG Line Estate	PCP	£5,755.48	36 months	£359	£15,350	5.10%	31/03/2017
E 220 d AMG Line	PCP	£5,999	36 months	£385	£18,850	5.10%	31/03/2017
CLA 180 AMG Line Shooting Brake	PCP	£3,999	36 months	£349	£14,255	5.10%	31/03/2017

October last year across all variants of the Outback, Forester and XV. Customers pay a 50% deposit, pay nothing for a year and then pay the remaining 50% balance interest-free.

Kia's finance offers were rated the highest by dealers at 8.8 out of 10. It led with a 37-month 4.9% APR offer across its range in Q1, continuing the same formula from Q4 2016. While the range is affordable, with the majority of models shown here under £300 a month, it does have a higher level of deposit and higher cost per month compared with Citroën's range. This perhaps hints at what may be higher level of profit for Kia's models due to the brand building its reputation for reliability and style.

Mercedes-Benz tied with Kia for the highest-rated consumer offers, at 8.8. This compares with a 6.7 rating for Audi and 7.3 for BMW.

Mercedes has also seen healthy growth in new

car registrations so far this year, up 12.6% YTD.

Despite its status as a premium German brand, it too hits below or close to the £300-a-month mark for entry-level models such as the A-Class and B-Class.

However, rival offers from Audi and BMW show Mercedes is the most expensive of the three. While the A3 and 1 Series both cost £249 a month, the A-Class comes in at £299. The A4 and 3 series come in at £319 and £299 respectively, while the C-Class comes in at £355, again suggesting that Mercedes is under less pressure to compete on volume, but can continue to successfully grow its share of the market for its network.



SEARCH FOR FINANCE OFFERS

For a searchable list of manufacturers' finance offers, go to am-online.com/offers

NFDA DEALER ATTITUDE SURVEY

How satisfied/dissatisfied are you with:
Strength of consumer offers? (Winter 2017)

Brand	Score (out of 10)
Kia	8.8
Mercedes-Benz	8.8
BMW	7.3
Audi	6.7
Citroën	5
Hyundai	4.9
Subaru	4.8
Jeep	4.8

IS YOUR DEALERSHIP ONE OF THE BEST IN THE UK TO WORK FOR?

If you have created a place where people love to go to work every day, AM wants to hear from you (and your employees)



AM's Best Dealerships To Work For in the UK initiative is designed to recognise those franchised dealerships that excel in running great workplaces, but how exactly do we assess that greatness?

The real measure of whether an organisation is a great place to work is employee engagement, which is why AM's programme includes surveys of both employers and employees. All the surveys are conducted by AM's research partner, Best Companies Group (BCG), which will also determine the final list of winners.

Formed in 2004, BCG combines its survey technology with its expertise in workplace excellence research to create and manage more than 60

similar programmes globally. Every year, BCG surveys more than 600,000 employees, representing more than 5,000 organisations.

Among its many programmes, BCG works with *Automotive News* to manage the American version of Best Dealerships to Work For.

"We are really excited to lend our expertise and passion to AM's Best Dealerships To Work For programme," said Peter Burke, BCG's president and co-founder.

Through the two-part assessment process, BCG gathers the data that enables it to determine which dealerships make the list. There is no charge for participating in the programme. The data is also used to create an Employee Feedback Report, which every participant can purchase. This report summarises

the employee engagement data and provides industry benchmark reports so organisations can better understand how their own corporate culture compares against the best.

"Participating in this initiative will not only give dealers the opportunity to see if they are one of the best employers in the industry, but it will also provide each participant the opportunity to obtain and use the feedback report to improve the engagement levels within their organisation," said Burke.

In the competitive UK labour market, being named an AM Best Dealership to Work For will help with employee recruitment and retention, but even dealerships that do not make the list can benefit from the initiative's employee feedback.

To find out more, go to BestUKDealerships.com.

≡ WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS TO YOU?

There are a number of benefits to companies that choose to take part in the AM Best UK Dealerships To Work For programme. They include:

1. Recognition as a top employer, including use of the AM Best UK Dealerships To Work For logo
2. A promotional aid for recruitment and staff retention
3. Promotion to potential customers; raising your profile in your local area
4. The ability to benchmark performance against peers
5. Understanding of employees' views and areas to improve

≡ ARE YOU ELIGIBLE?

To be eligible for consideration, companies must:

- Have a minimum of 15 employees working in the UK
 - Be a franchised dealership
 - Be a publicly or privately held business
 - Have been in business for a minimum of one year
- A 40% employee response rate is required (80% for dealerships with 15-24 employees). Temporary or seasonal workers, contractors, consultants, interns and volunteers are not counted as employees or included in the survey.

○ JUNE 2:

Deadline for participants to register. Retailers can register as a group or by individual dealership. Verification will be sent within 24 hours

○ JUNE 9:

A web link for the employer questionnaire will be sent to the contact at each registered company

○ JUNE 23:

Completed employer questionnaires are due

○ JUNE 30:

Online employee engagement & satisfaction surveys are emailed to staff

≡ PROGRAMME TIMETABLE

Registration
deadline to enter:
June 2, 2017
For more information and to register
go to www.BestUKDealerships.com



≡ HOW IT WORKS

AM Best UK Dealerships To Work For is a two-part process designed to gather information about each participating dealership.

Part one: the employer completes the employer questionnaire, which details company policies, practices, benefits and demographics. This can be completed at group level for all the participating dealerships where applicable.

Part two: employees of the company complete

the employee engagement & satisfaction survey, an in-depth set of 76 statements based on a 1-5 scale of 'disagree strongly' to 'agree strongly'. The survey also includes two open-ended questions and seven demographic questions.

Both surveys are completed online, although a paper option is available if email and internet technology is not available for use by employees.

Best Companies Group will combine the results

of the two surveys to determine which companies make the list of the Best UK Dealerships To Work For.

Participating is free, and dealerships will have the opportunity of purchasing an Employee Feedback Report from Best Companies Group, which will provide comprehensive details of the surveys, including employee comments and benchmarking against peers.

○ **JULY 14:**
Deadline for completion
of employee survey

○ **AUGUST 22:**
Notification letters
sent to participating
dealerships

○ **SEPTEMBER 5:**
Employee feedback reports sent
to companies that ordered them

○ **NOVEMBER 9:**
AM Best UK Dealerships To
Work For report published at
Automotive Management Live

VIEWPOINT



MOTOR RETAILERS HAVE HAD A RECORD RUN, BUT CLOUDS ARE GATHERING

MIKE ALLEN head of research, independent investment bank Zeus Capital



CARS IN CATHEDRALS OR NOT, BELIEF HAS A PLACE IN BUSINESS

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

→ It's no secret that the new car industry has been thriving in recent years, with 2016 the fifth consecutive year of growth. However, there is perhaps a cautionary note on the horizon.

Manufacturer behaviour over the coming months will be a key influence on the market and is likely to be driven by foreign exchange for some.

That said, in what is likely to remain an oversupplied market, some manufacturers will see rivals' price rises as an opportunity to increase their market share.

The true impact of the EU referendum has yet to play out, and is expected to be multi-faceted. Since the result was announced at the end of June 2016, suppliers to the UK car industry have warned that there is no guarantee that they will keep their manufacturing process in the country amid the uncertainty over trade agreements.

In addition, any new system of tariffs could have a significant effect on both the appetite from manufacturers to create vehicles and on consumers to purchase them.

Alterations to taxation will play

"SOME MANUFACTURERS WILL SEE RIVALS' PRICE RISES AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO INCREASE MARKET SHARE"

a key role in consumer confidence. In particular, we expect to see robust consumer demand in the first quarter of the year, supported by the impending introduction of the new vehicle excise duty rules in April.

With the only vehicles exempt those that do not produce any CO₂ (and have a list price of below £40,000), motorists are likely to look to avoid the potentially costly new tax and purchase their vehicles before the rules change.

A diesel scrappage scheme could also be on the agenda from Q2, which may boost new car registrations in the short term.

Despite the record results last year, the SMMT has already hinted at greater challenges to come.

The organisation anticipates a more difficult 2017, with the weak pound resulting in further price increases to vehicles, which is expected to become increasingly significant as the prospect of Brexit approaches.

Nevertheless, 2017 will remain another competitive year, with almost 70 new launches planned, and the competitive finance offers available to the consumer will provide a wider choice.

PCP penetration rates in new cars are at record levels and are steadily rising in used cars, which, in theory, should shorten buying cycles, as such agreements require the consumer to make a decision about their vehicle every three to five years.

Realistically, it is unlikely to be until H2 2017 that we get a true test of trading in the industry given current developments, and the knock-on effect that this could potentially have on the used car market.

→ It is not often that a car dealership event creates more news in the Christian media and *The Times* than it does in the motoring press.

However, this is what happened when Sycamore Motors hired Peterborough Cathedral for the local launch of the new BMW 5 Series and the Mini Countryman. The cathedral, which will be 900 years old in 2018, allowed cars to be driven into the nave for the first time. The event involved a choir performance and a short talk.

The Times described the event as 'God and Mammon collide', while others took a more tolerant view. Many regarded the cathedral hiring out the space as simply a way of raising funds to support its upkeep.

There are arguments on both sides, but it does bring into focus the issue of work and faith.

Canon Jonathan Baker, acting dean, said: "One thing which the BMW event demonstrated powerfully is that God and the world do not belong in separate compartments.

"If Jesus is Lord at all, then he is Lord of BMW as well as Peterborough Cathedral. By holding the launch in the cathedral, this was made visible, with the event taking place literally under the shadow of the cross."

Some may argue that Jesus threw the money-changers out of

the temple, while others would say that the real church is a body of people and a cathedral simply a venue where they meet.

The canon concluded that: "We do not believe that God can be contaminated by the presence of a new car, and we do not need to be anxious about allowing faith and commerce to come together – on the contrary, it is important for the health of both that they do."

Although I have reservations about the use of cathedrals as showrooms, I agree that there should not be a division between faith and work. To ask people to park their beliefs at the dealership door reduces their capacity to function as genuine human beings.

In some cases, organisations make their beliefs and values more explicit. These values are often set by the senior management of the organisation and these should be an authentic outworking of their beliefs, whether they are faith-based or not.

Peoples' attitudes to work and each other are shaped by what they believe and help to define their own self-worth. It was John Calvin, the Protestant reformer, who said: "In following your proper calling, no work will be so mean and sordid as not to have splendour and value in the eye of God."

Maybe by breaking down barriers, both the church and dealerships can be seen in a different light.

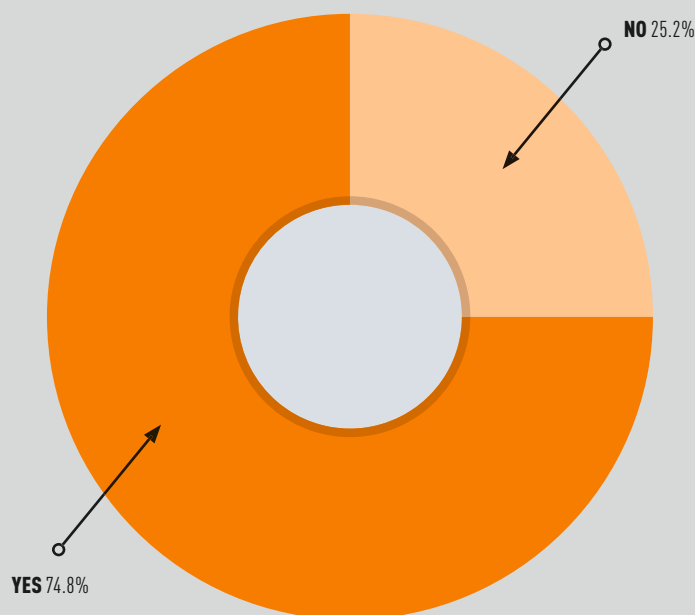
"TO ASK PEOPLE TO PARK THEIR BELIEFS AT THE DEALERSHIP DOOR REDUCES THEIR CAPACITY TO FUNCTION AS HUMAN BEINGS"



AM POLL

DEALERS PREPARE FOR TIGHTENING OF CONSUMER DATA RULES

DO YOU BELIEVE CONSUMERS WILL WANT TO TAKE MORE CONTROL OR CARE OVER THEIR PERSONAL DATA IN FUTURE?



Three quarters of dealers expect consumers to become less open and trusting with their personal data in the future. This could be a challenge to some data-led sales prospecting activity and personalisation of processes in the motor retail industry, particularly as the General Data Protection Regulation comes into force in May 2018 and requires consumers to give consent for their data to be gathered and processed, and to be informed of the purposes it will be processed for.

One AM poll respondent stated: "The new GDPR regulations are just part of this. People are becoming much more wary of how their data is used."

Many 'yes' voters in the poll cited people's fears about data breaches or theft as key reasons behind them becoming more wary about what they provide, plus the desire to limit junk mail and sales calls or texts.

"I believe the more consumers begin to learn regarding their data and who holds it, the amount of information it contains about them etc. they will want to take better care," said another respondent.

In the minority of 'no' voters, some conceded that consumers may expect companies they trade with to take greater care of any data held. But one respondent noted: "I'm constantly amazed at what people admit to or tell others about on social media. A large minority/small majority seem to care little about what others know about them."

NEXT MONTH:
WHAT PROPORTION OF YOUR WORKFORCE IS FEMALE?
VOTE NOW AT AM-ONLINE.COM/POLLS

ADVERTISING FEATURE

The proof of the pudding...

By Neil Addley, managing director,
NFDA Trusted Dealers



Fact: at least 70% of enquiries are walk-ins. Consumers are able to access so much information these days – about pricing, specification, car reviews, dealer reviews and so on – that they seldom have cause to call the dealer until they are pretty much sure of the car they want to buy.

In fact, a lot of hard (trackable calls or emails) enquiries are on non-franchised stock, because the risk to the customer that the vehicle may have been sold is higher, so they need to check. 'Alien stock' is also on average more than £700 cheaper than franchised stock, as sales managers hedge their bets on cars they are not that confident in valuing.

A lot of hard enquiries are on non-franchised stock

Despite this, I am delighted to report that Trusted Dealers has increased the number of enquiries year-on-year by 17% by focusing on our core demographic. How is this useful for you? Well, for a start, you should look at substituting some of your classified spend for Trusted Dealers. We are the only website run on a not-for profit basis on behalf of the dealer community.

Secondly, on a brand-by-brand basis, you should look at the demographics of your customers and target your marketing based on that customer profile. This could include changing the copy in your Adwords campaigns and up-weighting your bids, tweaking your content strategy and social media activity to suit the relevant audience and changing the creative in your press, email, direct mail, TV, radio or other above-the-line activity.

If you would like more information on understanding your demographics, drop us a line.

■ If you would like more information, please give me a call on 01423 206 272, or email neil@trusteddealers.co.uk.





Seeking motor dealer for genuine partnership

1.6

At Barclays Partner Finance, we're looking to build a proper relationship. With dedicated support and flexible products that help you get more sales over the line, we could be your perfect match.

- Dedicated field-based Sales Manager
- Support from an expert motor finance team
- Full product range including stock funding
- Finance decision in seconds
- Tailored pricing and commission rates
- Free point-of-sale materials for your showroom

Plus we can introduce you to a competitive range of Barclays business solutions. Let's start our partnership. Call us today on [0844 811 7747](tel:0844 811 7747)*

Choice. Convenience. Control.



Partner Finance



*Calls will cost no more than 7p per minute plus your phone company's access charge. (International calls will be charged at a higher rate – please check with your telecoms provider.) To maintain a quality service we may monitor or record phone calls.



Shaun Foweather: 'We've not expanded because we have to, we have expanded because we love coming to work'

FACE TO FACE: STONEACRE MOTOR GROUP

TRAINING FOR THE £1BN CLUB

'Car man' Shaun Foweather believes the Stoneacre Academy will help his group to achieve its 2020 turnover target, as well as provide a future MD, reports **Tom Sharpe**

Stoneacre Motor Group is in an acquisitive mood as the "cash-rich" business targets the fast track to £1 billion in turnover by 2020.

Group managing director Shaun Foweather describes himself as a "car man" and claims that his drive to grow the business comes purely from the buzz of going to work.

"We've not expanded because of any pressure to expand, because we have to, we have expanded because we love coming to work," said Foweather.

"There are large groups that have shareholders and banks telling them what to do. We don't have any of that. We started this business on our terms and we can still do pretty much anything we want to do, that's one of our greatest strengths."

However, he drives the numbers behind the business as hard as he does his collection of exotic cars.

Stoneacre's rapid expansion from a former Peugeot dealership in Scunthorpe in 1995 to the AM100's 21st-placed group, with a turnover of £560.9 million (for the year ended April 24, 2016) and 68 franchised outlets at 40 locations is testament to his ambition.

But the agility of the business's earlier years is still evident, with Foweather crediting it for the fast development and deployment of initiatives such as an FCA-compliant programme that sold £2.8 million of GAP insurance; a connected aftersales partnership with Smartdriverclub; and specialist finance, used and remarketing divisions.

The desire to offer top-level training to staff and apprentices led to the creation of the Stoneacre Motor Group Academy 18 months ago, following the mantra 'Career for Life', a play on the company slogan 'Motoring for Life'.

Based at Stoneacre's headquarters – it moved to the sprawling former home of the now defunct online car-buying service JamJar.com in Doncaster six years ago – the Ofsted- and IMI-accredited project

secured the group the AM Award for Best Training and Development Programme accolade in February.

Foweather said: "The academy has helped to add about £1.5m to our site costs here, but it will have been worth every penny."

RECRUITMENT FOR SUCCESSION

Former Stoneacre apprentices have already risen to the ranks of management and Foweather expects the operation to deliver a future managing director.

"This is not about cheap labour – 96% of our apprentices are still with us. What it is about is that, because the motor trade is so incestuous and the job is changing so much, we want people who have a passion and a desire to go out there and make a difference to their lives."

It is not lost on Foweather that the establishment of an accredited apprenticeship scheme will also offset any potential losses from the forthcoming apprenticeship levy scheme.

From April, employers with a payroll of more than £3million will have to start

paying into their apprenticeship levy accounts. Dealers will only be able to claim back this money – 0.5% of their total wage bill – to fund training with accredited apprentice training providers.

Stoneacre now has its own.

Foweather said: "The apprenticeship levy will not be a concern to us at all, because I will be claiming every penny of that back."

Stoneacre poached Claire Rooms from external training provider, the Learning Skills Partnership, to establish and run the academy two years ago.

She set the operation up in a little over three months, with assistance through a partnership with Hull College.

The academy has a 15-strong team, with many trainers recruited from senior positions within the group to ensure they understand the Stoneacre philosophy and command the respect of the existing staff, Rooms said.

Stoneacre currently has 171 apprentices in the business and the academy also oversees the regular training and development of staff from across the group's workforce of 1,830.

Apprentices are recruited from across the UK and attend recruitment days in South Yorkshire where they carry out tasks and complete interviews ahead of selection, many receiving about 2,000 hours of guided learning if they are successful.

So far, Rooms has overseen two graduation ceremonies, in which about 50 apprentices received certificates at Stoneacre's headquarters.

She said: "We really feel that we are providing top-class learning that will put them on the path to a career for life."

Foweather said the academy's results in training existing staff have led to more employees coming forward to be trained themselves.

"The quality of the people we are producing is raising standards across the group and that is a hugely positive outcome from my point of view," he said.

Acquisitions have to be at the heart

FACTFILE

TURNOVER £560.9 million (2015/16)

FRANCHISES Abarth, Alfa Romeo, Aston Martin, Fiat, Ford, Hyundai, Jeep, Kia, Lotus, Mazda, Nissan, Peugeot, Suzuki, Vauxhall, Volvo

LOCATIONS Ackworth, Blackburn, Chesterfield, Dewsbury, Doncaster, Durham, Goole, Grantham, Grimsby, Harrogate, Hull, Hyde, Lincoln, Liverpool, Middlesbrough, Newcastle, Peterborough, Rochdale, Rotherham, Scarborough, Scunthorpe, Thirsk, Wallasey, Wigan, Worksop, Wrexham and York.

NEW CAR SALES (2016) 16,680

USED CAR SALES (2016) 19,368

NUMBER OF STAFF 1,830

C of Stoneacre's strategy if the group is to achieve its £1bn turnover target.

Foweather said the business is in good shape and in an "acquisitive position" moving into 2017, having emerged from a record-breaking 2016 with 16,680 new car sales and 19,368 used vehicle sales. To date, the group's largest acquisition was £85m turnover Huntson Holdings – trading as Autoworld Abarth, Alfa Romeo, Citroën, Fiat, Hyundai, Suzuki, Seat and Volvo in Chesterfield – in October 2015.

This furthered Stoneacre's claim to be the UK's largest independent retailer of Suzuki and Fiat, but the group must be prepared to up the stakes.

Stoneacre's latest accounts – for the year to April 24, 2016 – show pre-tax profit fell from £6.7 million to £6.1m (9%) as turnover rose from £449m to £560m.

Return on sale (operating PBT%) went from 2.38% to 1.45%; return on capital

employed from 21.36% to 15.68%. Its after-sales division achieved 8.71% growth in gross profit, however.

In 1993, Foweather was a general manager at Midlands-based, seven-site TK Motor Group when owner Richard Teatum decided to sell up.

Teatum initially retired to Spain, but returned to the UK the following year to form Stoneacre's parent company, Decidebloom, and buy a bankrupt Peugeot retailer in Scunthorpe.

Foweather said: "That dealership was called Stoneacre and we were just too tight to change the signs."

Its early focus was in used cars. Foweather said: "We didn't want to get involved with manufacturers."

A successful first year led to the acquisition of a second used car operation in Lincoln, but it was the purchase of a site at Ackworth, near Wakefield, that Foweather

▼ PART OF THE PROCESS: CONNECTED AFTERSALES

Aftersales and parts will feature heavily in Stoneacre's next set of financial results, according to aftersales director Gerry George.

A recent partnership with Smart-driverclub offers a connected aftersales service to customers and gives Stoneacre's 49 dealer sites access to important knowledge about their cars post-sale, via a telematics device plugged into the onboard diagnostics (OBD) port.

Customers pay £6 a month to be part of the 'Stoneacre Connected' initiative. This grants them access to a range of cost-saving and peace-of-mind benefits delivered via a smartphone or computer. (See our feature on apps on page 49.)

Daily reports of mileage information, fault alerts, low battery, collisions and stolen vehicles will mean that dealers can proactively contact customers to arrange services, repairs and replacement vehicles.

George said: "We have 23,480 service plans, so that gives us a good foundation to build on. Honestly, we don't know what the financial reward might be, but it's really about offering customers something that could benefit them and really boosting retention."

Following its adoption of a Manheim service system for its dealership workshops, Stoneacre delivers 360-degree videos of every service in

an attempt to boost transparency and promote aftersales retention.

An online booking system, which lets customers book directly into the workshop diary, and group-wide Saturday workshop opening have also added convenience.

George sees these as key factors in his department's 8.5% rise in gross profit. In the medium-term, though, he is targeting growth in tyres and parts, both of which will benefit from online sales platforms and extended facilities.

He said he expects the rise of torque-rich EVs to boost tyre demand. He said: "Our aim is to sell five times more tyres in 2018 than in 2016. It needs to be a competitive product, but we can do it."

Stoneacre's 11 bodyshop facilities are experiencing growth. The group completed 7,000 more repairs in 2016 than it did in the previous 12 months.

Its Doncaster parts hub, caraccessoriesplus.com, is also destined for expansion as the group plans to compete directly with the likes of Euro Car Parts.

The parts business grew its turnover by 17% in the past calendar year, with gross profit rising 21%, and George said growth would be backed up by the facility's expansion from 25,000 sq-ft to 80,000 by 2020. He added: "We'll multiply business four times during that period".



Stoneacre Suzuki Ackworth – the group says it is the UK's biggest independent retailer of Suzuki

described as a "cornerstone of change".

The deal stipulated that Stoneacre must stick with the attached Suzuki franchise for a year. That year, Suzuki sales at the site rose from 80 to more than 300 under a business model that lured used car customers into a new car with affordable finance.

An invitation from Suzuki to buy a franchise in Peterborough followed and Stoneacre expanded once more. An adjoining Seat franchise saw the group add another manufacturer partner.

"Now we won't buy a site unless it has a franchise attached," said Foweather.

GOING PREMIUM

Talks are ongoing with Honda and there is a desire to align the group with more premium partners in the shape of Audi, Mercedes-Benz or Jaguar Land Rover.

In March 2016, the business moved



Stoneacre's Aston Martin showroom in Newcastle.
Foweather believes his personal interest in the cars helped him to win the franchise



“PREMIUM SERVICE IS SOMETHING THAT WE WANT TO SEE REPLICATED ACROSS THE GROUP

SHAUN FOWEATHER

decidedly into the luxury sector, opening a new, 1,950-square-metre Aston Martin showroom at Silverlink, Newcastle.

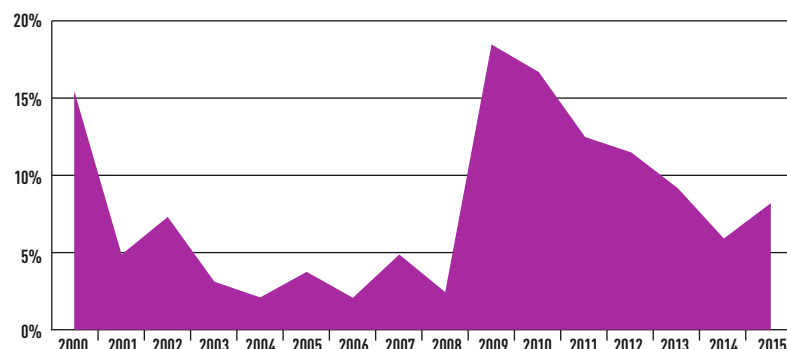
This fulfilled a personal ambition for Foweather: “Even before we bought the franchise, I had two Austons in my garage at home.

“I think that was a big part of us getting the franchise, because they came to my office and saw all the pictures and the models and we got on very well from the off.”

Stoneacre prepared itself for the arrival of a luxury partner, by opening Stoneacre Specialist Cars at Wheatley, near Doncaster in 2015. The site offers an array of exotic used cars priced well into six figures.

The exercise was intended to help the group understand the market ahead of the opening of the Aston Martin site and the Specialist facility was then to be moved to Newcastle once it opened.

GEARING PERCENTAGE



Foweather describes Stoneacre as a 'cash-rich' business. While borrowing did peak during a flurry of Ford site acquisitions in 2009, its gearing remains well below the AM100 average of almost 55%.

However, the success of the South Yorkshire business means Stoneacre Specialist Cars will now stay where it is, and a further site in the north-east is highly likely.

Foweather said: “The most important thing we learnt was that premium service is something that we want to see replicated across the group.

“People who buy premium cars often get blasé about it. We have to remember that the guy turning up to buy his new Suzuki is probably committing just as much of his income into that investment.”


Despite learning about the premium sector before opening its Aston Martin site,

Stoneacre recruited 80% of its staff from previous franchise operator Stratstone.

Foweather said: “These are people that work for the brand as much as the company. We have two technicians there with a combined 53 years’ experience.”

SWEATING THE DATA

A landmark supercar showroom may draw customers from far and wide, but car sales are still a targeted, commission-driven operation at Stoneacre.

Among the 140-strong team at its Thorne headquarters is a 70-strong call centre back-selling GAP insurance, 

selling service packages and carrying out targeted sales events.

An in-house IT department, meanwhile, is working hard to develop new and more sophisticated ways of mining customer data.

Often their research is focused on activity surrounding near-prime and non-prime credit applications. Stoneacre is often able to facilitate a loan through Stoneacre Financial Services (SFS) or schedule an automated communication to a customer when they become eligible for a loan.

SFS was born out of a desire to create a wide customer base by getting everyone on the motoring ladder, lending its own funds to sub-prime customers.

Foweather said: "We're a cash-rich business. There is no gearing and you'll see that from our accounts." Stoneacre's gearing is 8.03% (2015) against an AM100 average of 55%.

"SFS is small. When we set it up, it was because we had a surplus of cash and we started to use that to get a better return, but where that is needed in acquisitions we'll use it that way. Increasingly, that is where our attention is focused."

In 2015, SFS announced it expected to lend £1.6m over the year, but its funding book for the year ended up at £1.2m. Foweather attributed this lack of growth to the re-emergence of cheap lending.

General digital sales manager, Mark Zavagno, said his main strategy is to make that lending available to potential Stoneacre customers: "Our targeted communications when a customer reaches a certain threshold to turn and get them back into the funnel have been a success. We're seeing open rates of 23%."

Zavagno said close monitoring of



Claire Rooms, Stoneacre's group academy manager, set up the academy in three months with help from Hull College

potential customers' online habits and enquiries had resulted in 72 sales since November.

Stoneacre's head of data science, Dr Stefan Blackwood, is currently trawling live chat transcripts to identify language indicators of a receptive customer, techniques also being used to brief sales staff on the language they use when prospecting.

"Our transcript patterns indicate how sales staff start to flag after 3pm and also how older customers respond positively to a more formal approach. These are things that need to be taken into account when developing a sales script."

Lynn Oakes, Stoneacre's business development centre manager, is in charge of Stoneacre's call operators.

Taking the pressure off retailers by taking inbound enquiries, the team also sells 700 to 800 self-funded MOT test cover plans each month, at £25 each, alongside service plans that include entry

into a VIP club offering free vehicle health checks and puncture repairs.

The team has seen huge success in its sales of GAP insurance since the introduction of FCA regulations and is on track to double its 2015 performance (5,000 GAP policies).

Customers are contacted three days after buying a car and all documentation is time- and date-stamped to ensure compliance, said Oakes.

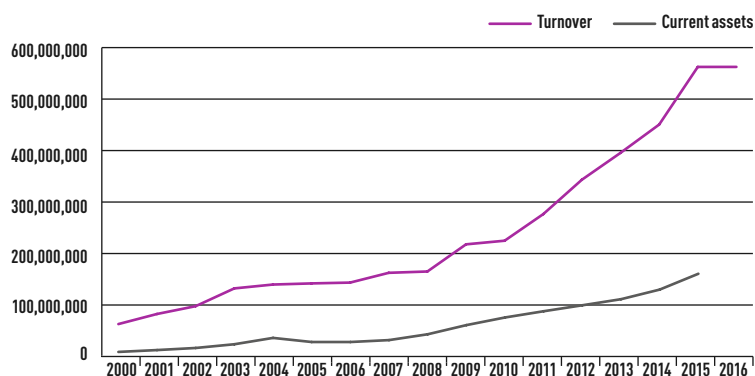
She added: "In our first year, we are on target to sell 10,000 policies and profit is an average £200 per unit."

Targeted car sales campaigns are also conducted by the business development centre.

Foweather is clear about their value, regularly selling about 350 cars in the space of five hours and serving as a morale-builder.

He said: "The sales teams will get dressed up, we'll buy them pizzas, make it fun."

TURNOVER V CURRENT ASSETS (£)



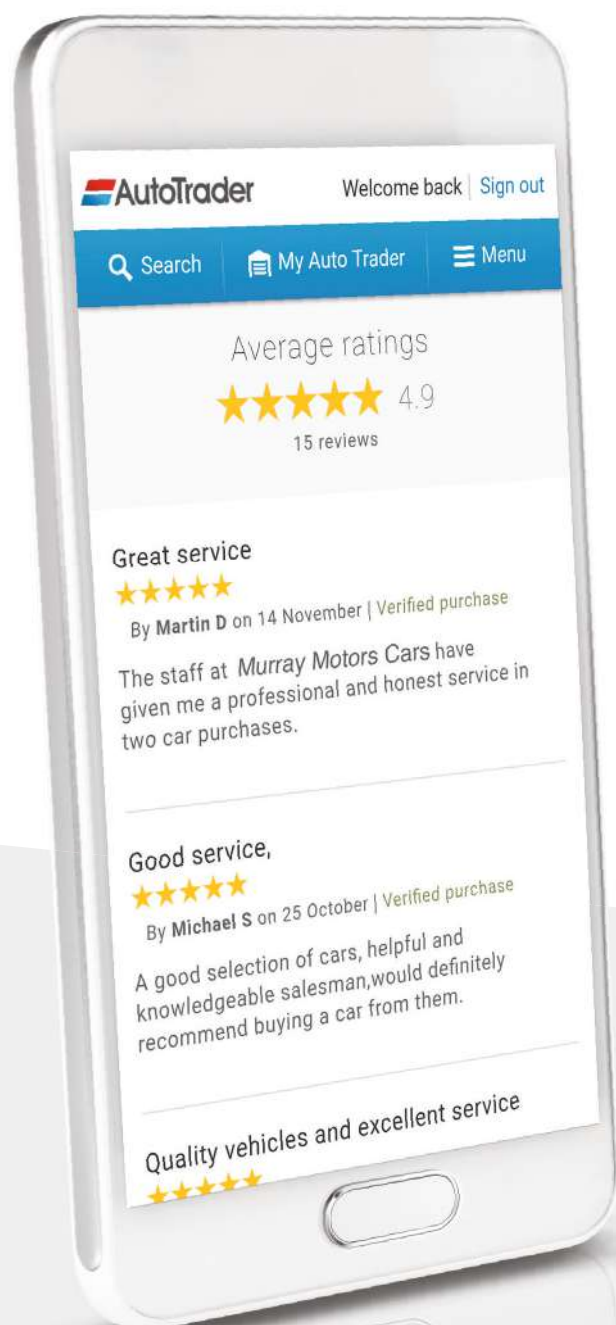
Stoneacre's value-driven ethos ensured that it experienced gains in turnover even during the financial crisis, but it will have to prioritise acquisitions to reach Foweather's £1 billion goal by 2020.



“IN OUR FIRST YEAR, WE ARE ON TARGET TO SELL 10,000 [GAP] POLICIES AND PROFIT IS AN AVERAGE £200 PER UNIT

LYNN OAKES, STONEACRE

Our Dealer Reviews can help you to build trust with potential buyers



Great experience

By [John S](#) on 12/09/16

Excellent experience from start to finish. Superb dealer and a pleasure to buy my vehicle from.

To find out more visit:
trade.autotrader.co.uk/at-dealer-reviews

Only a master tailor can create the best fitting suit...



The same applies to finance solutions

Only a class-leading finance provider will ensure you have the finance products that best fit with your customers' needs. Alphaera is able to provide an award-winning range of products, because it offers bespoke advice, support and training. Speak to us today to find out how we can tailor the right range of products to meet and exceed your customers' expectations.

www.alphaera.co.uk



Tel: **0370 505 0137** Email: info@alphaera.co.uk

Vision. Partnership. Passion.

[@AlphaeraFS](https://twitter.com/AlphaeraFS)



ALPHERA
Financial Services



MINUTES WITH...

Joanna Swash, managing director, Moneypenny



What's your response to the perception that call-handling centres are barriers between customer and service provider, particularly centres located overseas?

In the days when companies only wanted to keep costs low, call-handling centres were traditionally dirty words and synonymous with bad service. But not these days.

All our calls are handled by more than 500 employees from our new headquarters in Wrexham. Attempts to have a presence in New Zealand to support the 24/7 service were dropped because visas for UK staff to work there could only be obtained one or two at a time.

We prefer not to be described as a call centre company, but as a telephone answering service and outsourced switchboard provider.

In what other ways do you differentiate yourselves from call centres?

By providing dedicated teams for our clients, specifically matching our staff to each client and ensuring they are experts in the area in which they are working. In the case of automotive clients, they also receive training about the brand and the dealership, even to the extent of test-driving a range of models to get a better feel for the product and business.

Typically, at the start of the relationship we will introduce team leader 'Alice' in person to a new client and say 'this is your new switchboard receptionist and first point of contact for your customers who are put through to us'. If Alice happens to be on another call or away from her desk back in Wrexham, then that call will be taken by 'Kate' or someone else on the team responsible for meeting the needs of that one client.

WE CURRENTLY HAVE A TEAM OF 20 BRAND-TRAINED AUTOMOTIVE RECEPTIONISTS, WHICH IS PROJECTED TO BE AT LEAST 60 BY THE END OF THIS YEAR

The client may wish to remain first port of call for a customer, but if that call goes beyond four or five rings, it is routed to us. We have an overflow role, but the person at the other end is not aware of this. That's the vital thing, to provide a seamless route of communication. Someone the client knows and trusts to look after calls, exactly as if based in their office.

Being at the forefront of digital technology, we offer far more than telephone-answering alone.

We have recently introduced live chat and integration into dealers' dealer management systems for services like service bookings. Integration adds an awful lot of value. For example, we can authorise vehicle health checks with our clients' customers, which improves workshop efficiency and productivity.

We also provide clients with call data reports to help them initiate improvements to their business. No one package suits all brands or dealerships and our smart reporting ensures we tailor our service to their requirements.

Methods of communication are constantly evolving. People these days –

particularly the younger generation – are very digitally focused and phone calls are just one part of the channel.

'Disaster recovery' is another role. During a trial with BMW Westerly, it had a power cut to five sites that lasted for several hours and all calls seamlessly came through to Moneypenny. We were able to capture calls that would otherwise have resulted in lost sales across both car and aftersales.

Companies don't get that level of service when they outsource elsewhere.

Where does automotive rank in your client portfolio?

It's one of our fastest-growing sectors out of more than 8,500 UK businesses of all shapes and sizes from sole traders to multinational corporations. The company is projected to grow 20% year-on-year.

Moneypenny has preferred supplier status with Mazda, Mitsubishi and another premium brand (that has asked not be named), but in addition to this we handle the calls for 17 major brands. Our service is recommended to more than 300 retailers and dealerships through the supplier-of-choice status alone. We also work with used car centres and fleet and finance companies.

We currently have a team of 20 brand-trained automotive receptionists, which is projected to be at least 60 by the end of this year, representing a growth from 5% to 17% of the workforce.

Do you have problems recruiting new people?

Far from it. Demand always exceeds vacancies, despite the fact that there are major employers like Bank of America only 13 miles away in Chester. People





really want to join us – we are among *The Sunday Times* 100 Best Companies to Work For list – so we can be picky. Many of the applicants come through referrals from family and friends who are already here. Last year, we received more than 4,000 applications for 179 vacancies.

The appeal of working for us was given a significant boost with the opening of our new headquarters (costing £15 million and opened last July, the building is on a 10-acre plot and has features like a tree house meeting area and its own pub). Along with a competitive salary, there are perks like subsidised meals and social events, such as hiring cinemas to show the latest films.

I believe these are just some of the reasons for low staff turnover – just 2%.

What do you look for in an applicant?

Attitude above aptitude, although of course the latter is still important in terms of basic skills. Passion is an over-used word, perhaps, but that is important, certainly enthusiasm, a 'can-do' approach to deliver what the customer expects. Those qualities cannot be faked. Candidates also need to demonstrate a confident telephone manner, lots of common sense, attention to detail – and a sense of humour helps.

Average age is preferably mid-30s because that comes with some life experience. They know what it's like to have bought a house, bought a car, have gone through the customer experience of being treated well, badly or indifferently. Those shortlisted are first interviewed over the phone followed by interview sessions at our headquarters.

Can you provide, either as a specific case, or in general terms, what benefits your service offers dealerships, such as reduced downtime answering enquiries?

During a month-long trial, we discovered that five major brand dealerships would have lost an average £85,000 through lost sales based on the total cost of a new

“ DURING A MONTH-LONG TRIAL, WE DISCOVERED THAT FIVE MAJOR BRAND DEALERSHIPS WOULD HAVE LOST AN AVERAGE £85,000 THROUGH LOST SALES [FROM UNANSWERED CALLS]

car, service or part that was captured from the calls which were handled by Moneypenny, calls which would have usually gone unanswered.

Are there any impediments to growth and if so, what are the reason(s)?

None that I can think of. Our new headquarters will serve us well with our current growth projections and we have 10 acres for further expansion.

The company set up a base in the US two years and that has been well received because no other provider offers our range of services. One auto group has signed us up for outsourcing about 10,000 calls a month.

What lesson have you learned in your management career?

To instil in both clients and employees a sense of trust and wellbeing. That's the ethos of Ed and Rachel (Ed Reeves and Rachel Clacher, the company's founders). Look after people and the rest will follow. Show what 'good' looks like. Also, to keep abreast of innovation so that we are able to offer our clients the very best solutions for their business.

As a business, we learnt early on to recruit from within where possible. It's a false economy to rush things, to employ people simply to fill a position. Far better to wait for the right person to come along.

Creating the right environment and

giving staff opportunities is key to their wellbeing and asking every member of staff for their input on how to improve the business. You'll always get the best out of people by doing this.

What prompted you to join Moneypenny?

I was running my own small company (remanufacturing cartridges for laser printers). It wasn't going too well so I applied for a vacancy in sales. That was 12 years ago when there were just 20 people. I had a particular empathy with what the company was doing – I totally 'got it' – because I knew what could be lost through just one unanswered call.

What do you do for leisure?

Cycling, spending time with my children (Alex, 13, and Eleanor, 10) and helping my husband restore an old house we recently moved into.

Are you superstitious?

No, but I would not walk under a ladder without first carrying out a risk assessment.

What are your views on the so-called 'glass ceiling' for women in industry and commerce? Do women have certain innate skills that men lack, and vice versa?

I think times have moved on and success really is down to the individual. I believe that if you are passionate about something, work hard and have a can-do attitude then opportunities will arise. Because of the nature of the job, most of the people we employ are female.

What are your views on executive pay? Should it be capped?

Every business is different and has different needs. Of course you have to attract the right person for the job, but each situation is unique.

CHRIS PHILLIPS

FACT FILE

COMPANY:
MONEYPENNY

HEADQUARTERS:
WREXHAM,
NORTH WALES

TURNOVER:
£15.5M (2015)

PRE-TAX PROFIT:
£1.5M (2015)

STAFF:
500

Hate filing?

Drive efficiency with a smarter, cheaper, easier way to store documents. Access and print any of your docs, from any of your sites.



Navigator Document Storage.

You'll love Navigator's integrated document scanning and storage system.

Navigator

The Dealer Management System that was built for **your** business
Tel: **0845 686 2300** www.dmsnavigator.com

THE BEST DEFENSE IS A GOOD OFFENSE

It has been said that the best defense is a good offense, but with LTK you can have both.

It is good to answer all of the calls that come into your dealership within the allotted number of rings, but it is even better to follow up those “Prospects”, “Lapsed” and “Dormant” customers that you want to remember you.

Whether you wish to improve your own contact centre’s bookings performance, or you are looking for an outsourced expert to do it for you, give us a call on 0121 647 5539.



LTKCONSULTANTS

LEADERSHIP • TRANSPARENCY • KNOWLEDGE

WWW.LTKCONTACTCENTRE.COM

MERCEDES-BENZ VANS

To sell the new volume-boosting X-Class pick-up truck, its LCV dealers need to invest in more retail-friendly showroom facilities and standards, network head Sarah Palfreyman tells **Matt De Prez**

While customers of Mercedes-Benz passenger cars will be used to 'glass palace'-style dealerships, customers of its commercial products are accustomed to a more utilitarian experience. However, that is about to change, according to Mercedes-Benz Vans' network chief.

The German premium manufacturer's LCV division, which became a separate legal entity to parent company Daimler and, more crucially, split from Mercedes-Benz Trucks in January, is on a push towards making its dealerships more retail-friendly, according to head of network operations, Sarah Palfreyman.

"Most of our partners started out as truck partners and when we brought vans into the market they also took on the van franchise," she said.

"However, the majority of our competitors have grown their commercial vehicle franchise via their passenger car network."

Palfreyman said this creates different challenges for Mercedes-Benz Vans and that part of her job is trying to provide a more 'retail' format while retaining the flexibility that the truck business provides.

"The network that we have, in terms of the structure, brings with it lots of benefits. For example, without the truck network it's unlikely we would be able to run 24-hour workshops."

She intends to further separate the van and truck sides of the business this year by increasing the number of dedicated Van

Centres in the network, so it can cope with SMEs and private buyers alongside its traditional fleet customers.

She will also require dealers to gain accreditation in the manufacturer's Van Pro scheme, by having a showroom and passing an audit, before they can sell the new volume-boosting X-Class pick-up truck.

Most Mercedes-Benz van dealers currently hold both truck and van franchises, along with a few aftersales centres that are shared with passenger car dealerships.

Two dedicated Van Centres opened last year – Euro Commercials in Cardiff and Roanza in Liverpool. Rygor Commercials also launched a new, purpose-built van and truck site in Gloucester, and there were site redevelopments from Mertrux Nottingham, Orwell Truck & Van Ipswich and Northside Truck & Van Sheffield.

In total, Mercedes-Benz Vans has 116 locations in the UK, 64 of which are dedi-

CUSTOMER DEMANDS HAVE DRIVEN US TO EVOLVE OUR PRODUCT TO PROVIDE THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

SARAH PALFREYMAN, MERCEDES-BENZ



cated sales sites, with the rest offering aftersales. By contrast, in Europe all the sites deal with car, van and truck.

Retail sales grew by 8% last year and the brand is keen to expand into new segments and new markets, with a particular interest in the lifestyle customer.

"Customer demands have driven us to evolve our product to provide the best of both worlds – a commercial vehicle that offers additional benefits when not being used for work, for example, our Vito Tourer, and future X-Class products," said Palfreyman.

In terms of the franchised network, she believes there is no one-size-fits-all solution – some joint dealerships already have van-dedicated space and staff and some have van-specific showrooms.

"We also have new facilities that accommodate both truck and van very successfully. We will review each location on its own merits, taking factors into account such as capacity, retail environment, and location, and will evaluate, working with our dealer partner, whether we can find a truck and van solution, or a more dedicated van solution, which could include a showroom."

At the centre of Mercedes-Benz Vans' drive towards professionalisation of the network is the Van Pro dealer excellence

KEY PRODUCTS



Citan

Built under a platform-sharing agreement with Renault, the smallest van in the Mercedes-Benz range is frugal and cheap to run. 2016 registrations: 3,881.



Vito

Launched in late 2015, the Vito is Mercedes-Benz's contender against the Ford Transit Custom, Renault Traffic and Volkswagen Transporter. 2016 registrations: 7,737.



Roanza Liverpool – one of two dedicated Mercedes-Benz Van centres opened last year

scheme. It was introduced across Europe five years ago by Daimler, to make dealers more retail-ready and to increase their focus on vans.

Van Pro centres operate to strict standards that are annually audited. The staff receive extensive training to ensure they meet the right standard of service and the site holds a larger demonstrator fleet.

Palfreyman said: "It's more a way of doing business. The whole point is to support and assist our dealers around the professionalisation of the offering they can make to customers; be that around process, people or even the facilities.

"What we've attempted to do in the UK is offer support and coaching to dealers so they can invest in the dedication that we are looking for."

Forty of the 64 sales sites have been Van Pro-accredited and more are expected to join this year. The target is for 80% of dealers to be accredited by 2020.

"I'm not obsessed with every single location being accredited, but I do want to ensure that all our partners are engaged in the process," said Palfreyman.

She said the second iteration of Van Pro is being developed and, specifically in the UK, will include used vehicles: "The majority of used sales are carried out through the network. We've had significant growth in the

used market and we are looking to maximise it.

"The interesting piece is around how that fits with the physical infrastructure. Lots of people that sell used vehicles successfully do not have all the vehicles on a forecourt – they use a virtual showroom. From our point of view, it's about trying to find the balance between the two.

"The reality of our network is – despite improving used performance – it has not been an area of focus. It's part of a strategic vision about where we want to be by 2020 – to have our network selling used vehicles more successfully. If we sell a used vehicle today, in two cycles' time the customer will go on to buy a new vehicle."

The dealer network's used van sales grew 9% year-on-year, to 10,254, in 2016. Northside Truck & Van alone sold 5,287 new and used vans.

Last year was Mercedes-Benz Van's most successful to date for new and used vehicle sales. Palfreyman hopes this success will provide an incentive for dealers to invest in new facilities.

According to the SMMT, registrations reached 32,029 in 2016, (36,952 including taxis and V-Class models), marking the fifth consecutive year of growth for the brand. Total conquest sales were up 7% in 2016.

Palfreyman anticipates further growth in

2017: "One of the things we are looking at is how our customers will be buying vehicles in the future. While we are building for today, we've got to have an eye on the future."

Palfreyman joined Mercedes-Benz in January 2013 as regional sales and finance manager for vans. In April 2015, she was promoted to head of network operations, where she took responsibility for the operation side of the UK dealer network.

She said an expanded team will allow her to do more to help dealers: "My team and I will be able to provide more support to partners to develop architectural concepts, which previously would be handled by network partners due to resource constraints. I also have a team with me now who can talk to the dealers about financial performance in much more depth than we would have been able to before."

Online sales

In January, Mercedes-Benz Vans launched an online portal to collect deposits for the upcoming X-Class pick-up, the brand's first foray into both online sales and the pick-up market.

"It's really important for us to understand and provide a platform for customers to order that vehicle. It gives us an idea of the genuine interest



◀ Sprinter

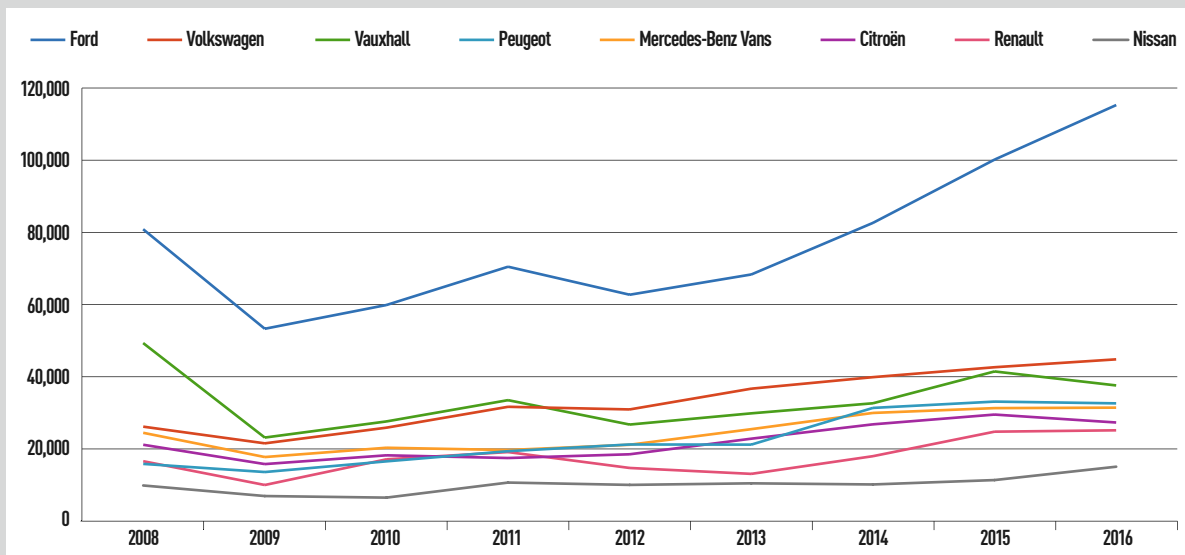
A new model of the brand's best-seller is due in 2018 and, like the current model, will share a platform with the Volkswagen Crafter. 2016 registrations: 23,749.



◀ X-Class

The brand's first foray into the growing pick-up sector will go on sale next year. The order books are already open despite only a concept version being shown to the press so far.

✓ MERCEDES-BENZ VANS REGISTRATIONS (LCV < 3.5 TONNES) VS RIVALS 2008-2016



Mercedes-Benz is poised to steal fourth position in the van market from Peugeot once its new X-Class pick-up brings in more custom.

and gives us the opportunity to talk to our customers before the launch.

"We also want to be able to provide an online purchase solution. I'm looking at virtual networks as well as physical infrastructure. Our dealers will always be involved – if we sell online, they will hand over that vehicle and the customer will build a relationship with the dealer at handover.

"Online solutions should offer customers more opportunity to interact with the brand early on in the purchase," said Palfreyman.

The challenge for Mercedes-Benz Vans when adopting an online sales model is juggling between retail customers and fleet, as the expectations and service requirements differ between the two.

"My job is to provide the solution for all those people, to give them the flexibility or opportunity to purchase or service as they need to," said Palfreyman.

"While some are comfortable to sit at home of an evening browsing on the internet and happy to press the 'buy' button, there are also customers that want to come to a physical environment where they can interact and build a relationship with the salesperson."

New markets

Mercedes-Benz Vans believes the X-Class will be a major incentive for dealers to invest in the Van Pro scheme. The pick-up market grew by 17% last year, according to the SMMT, in contrast to 1% growth in the LCV market. The brand expects the X-Class will deliver dealers a high number of first-time, conquest customers.

"We are working hard internally to ensure that in the launch of this vehicle we provide the right level of support, some through Van Pro. There will be a physical aspect to that – we will do something different with X-Class in showrooms. The important thing is that we do display it in showrooms.

"It will be in locations where we have



Van Pro-accredited dealerships will have more retail-friendly showrooms

“OUR DEALERS WILL ALWAYS BE INVOLVED – IF WE SELL ONLINE, THEY WILL HAND OVER THAT VEHICLE”

SARAH PALFREYMAN,
MERCEDES-BENZ

showroom availability and in the majority of cases those are Van Pro dealers."

Palfreyman confirmed the X-Class will only be available through Van Pro agents: "From our perspective, it's about a commitment to the future. We have partners who are very committed to our future in van, but the customer profile for X-Class is quite different to what they have sold in the past.

"We are used to working with customers who require vans for a dual purpose – business and lifestyle (e.g. family vehicle or recreational vehicle). X-Class takes that a stage further in terms of lifestyle requirements and desire from existing car owners.

"We need the ability to sell in an environment that is more commensurate with that customer."

Although Mercedes-Benz Vans said it does not pay particularly close attention to market share figures, it does believe the X-Class will help it to grow from 2016's 8.53% (SMMT <3.5-tonne). Palfreyman said the new Vito, which launched in 2015, had a very successful first year, with 9,208 registrations (including V-Class), up from 8,885 registrations (including Viano) in 2007.

Mercedes-Benz Vans is very strong in fleet. It has some direct sales, through historic customers, but the majority are operated by the dealer network.

"We try to work in partnership with the

network to provide the right solution to fleet customers. All our dealers can sell fleet vehicles," said Palfreyman.

She is looking to grow sales to local business customers and believes that is where both X-Class and Van Pro will make the difference for dealers – by providing the right product with the right resource and processes.

"Van Pro is about growing the number of customers we sell to. We want new segments and new markets. That's what we've done with Vito and what we will do with X-Class," said Palfreyman.

"Our strategy is based around providing solutions to fleet, retail and local business customers, all through our network."

Aftersales

Despite these new opportunities to increase sales, Mercedes-Benz Vans is unlikely to increase the number of sales sites significantly in the next few years. Instead, Palfreyman wants to focus on aftersales – providing customers with a greater level of coverage than currently available.

"From a capacity point of view we do well, but we probably have some challenges. Some of that will be fixed by having van-dedicated facilities. We do provide other solutions – we have workshops that are specific to some of our key customers and will continue to do that where possible.

"I'm keen to explore our geographic spread, to ensure we have facilities within at least a 20-25 minute drive time of our entire customer base. For me, it's about dedicating some of our facilities to van to make sure a van customer has the option to bring their vehicle in when needed.

"We are giving the service to all the different customer types, rather than a one-size-fits-all approach. This is the way it will move forward – customers are demanding we provide more flexible solutions."

SPOTLIGHT:

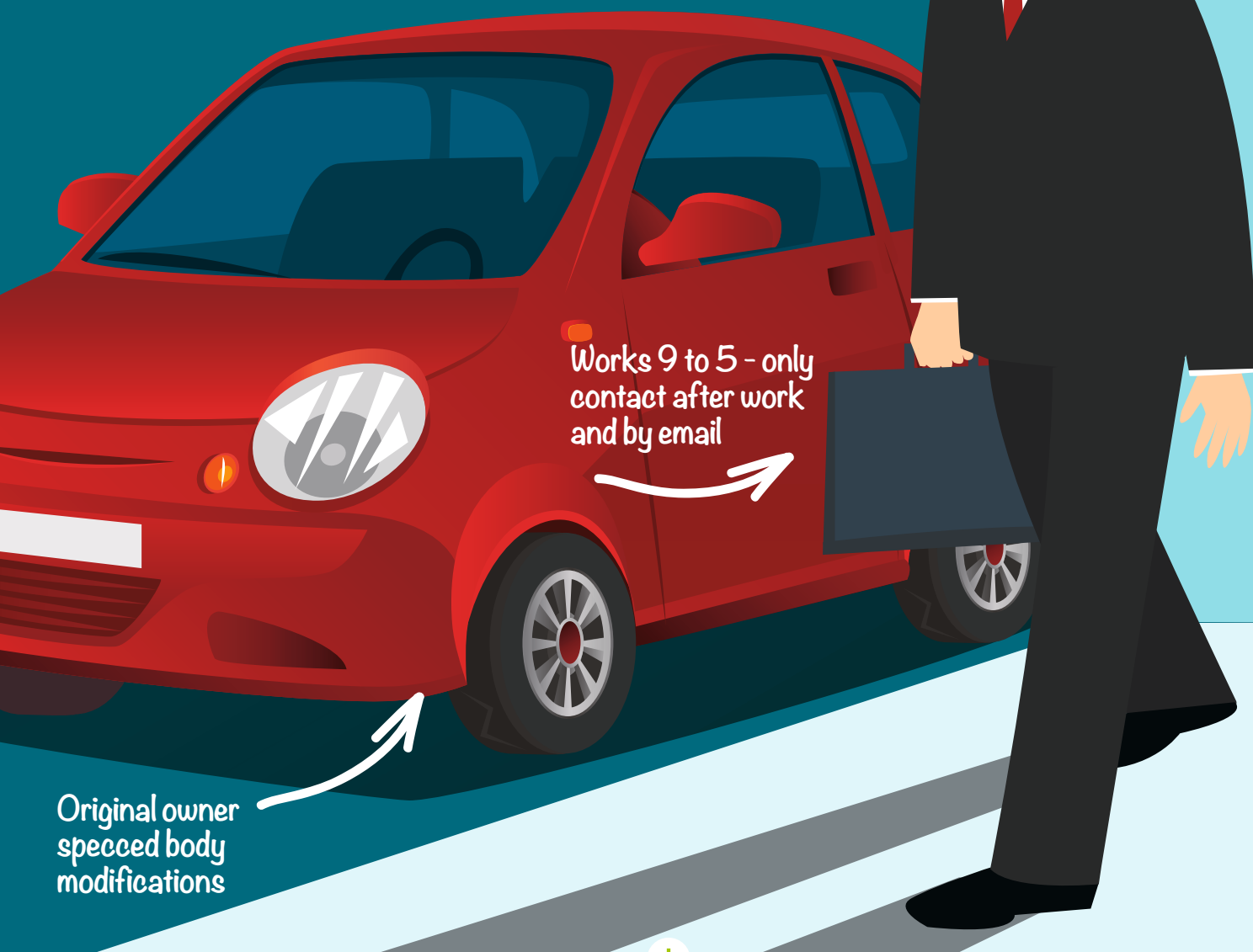
PERSONALISATION

Sponsored by



Searched for used
MPVs under £12,000

RIGHT BUYER, RIGHT OFFER, RIGHT TIME



TAILORING THE MESSAGE

CONSUMERS INCREASINGLY RESIST
BLANKET MARKETING. HOW TO CRAFT
AND DELIVER PERSONALISED OFFERS

PAGES 42-44

ARE APPS THE ANSWER?

YOU WILL STILL NEED A WEBSITE,
BUT APPS CAN HELP TO BUILD TRUST
AND BOOST RETENTION

PAGES 47-48

DECISIONS, DECISIONS

CONSUMERS WANT CHOICE IN
CONFIGURING THEIR CARS, BUT CAN IT
CAUSE PROBLEMS FOR DEALERS?

PAGES 52-53

TAILOR YOUR SALES TO EACH CUSTOMER

As consumers become increasingly resistant to blanket marketing, car dealers need to craft their messages for individuals, and deliver them how and when each person wants

Consumers expect a tailored experience at every stage of the purchase and ownership cycle – beyond simply being addressed by name in a generic email campaign.

Personalisation is about individual communications and timely information, but also includes taking cues from a person's online search history and their social media demographics to deliver relevant content more likely to lead to action at different stages of their journey and via various platforms.

A Google search is the starting point for most car buyers' journeys and personalisation has been available for about three years. Remarketing lists for search ads (RLSA) changes the text in ads according to a person's search history. The same principle applies to banner ads, where the image and message dynamically change to match an individual's previous online activity.

Some trail-blazing dealerships are undertaking similar campaigns with Google-owned YouTube and instead of a randomly generated ad video when a consumer watches YouTube, a video review of the vehicle previously viewed would appear.

"It means the consumer is more likely to click the ad or watch the YouTube ad video," explained Scott Sinclair, lead generation industry manager for Google. "It shows how personalisation is being delivered through search, but it is almost exclusively being undertaken by the larger groups with sophisticated digital set-ups.

Sinclair emphasised that Google ads "can be done by anyone", but he said dealers are not taking advantage of it in big numbers.

"Most dealers drive traffic to certain areas of their website to reflect the search, but there are many more variables, such as age of car or part-exchange requirements, which

are not being incorporated but would deliver a much more tailored result for consumers."

Programmatic advertising, which delivers even more personalised experiences using real-time data and signals so different people looking for the same car for different reasons see different ads, is now creating an even more sophisticated and personalised search landscape.

THE FASTER, THE BETTER

Once a customer or prospect is on the dealer's database, timing is everything, according to James Hill, sales director at Dealerweb: "Individual customers and prospects will respond best if they feel the dealer not only understands what they want, but when they want it."

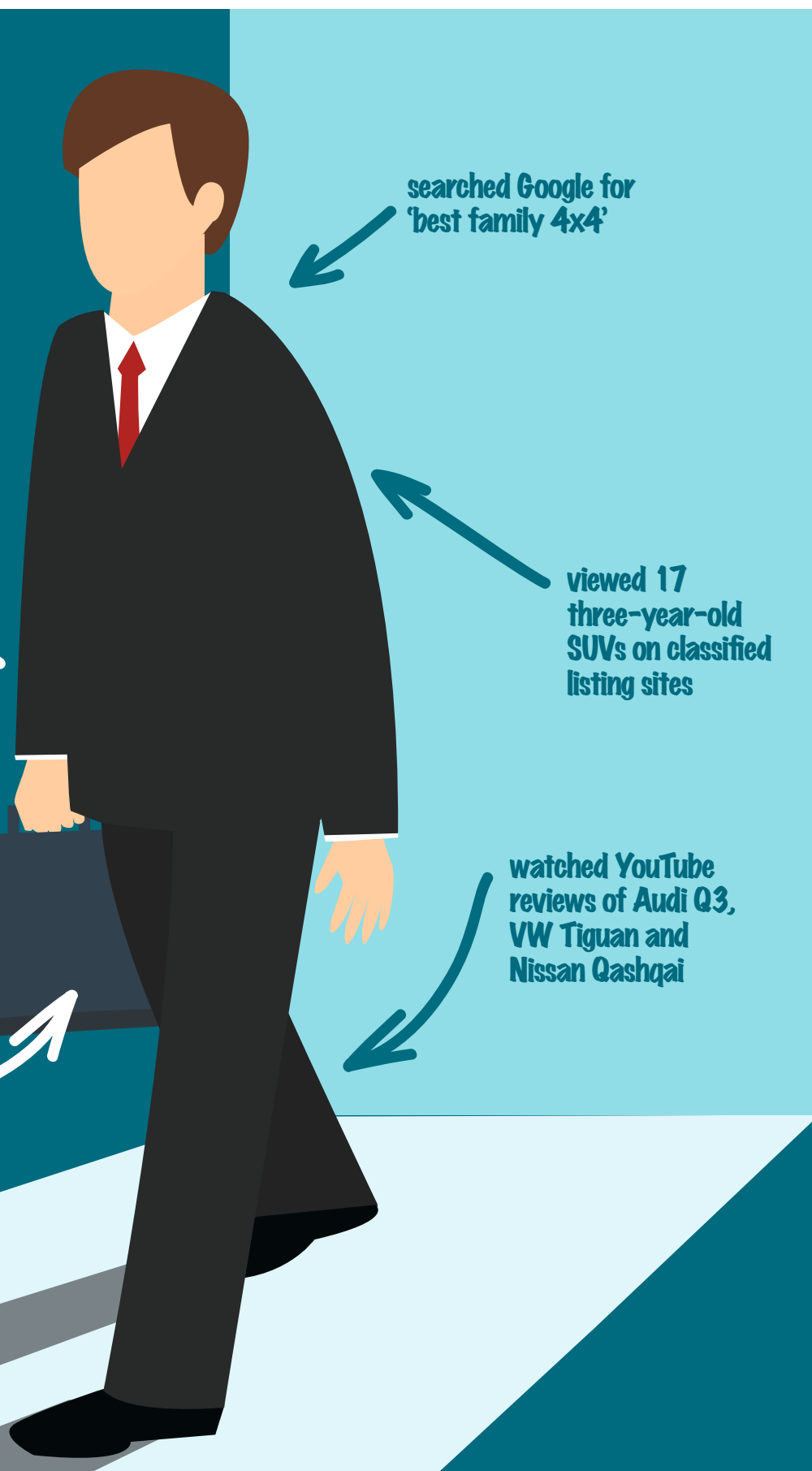
However, it is not just about timing sales and aftersales offers on anniversaries of the initial purchase, or offering products such as warranties and service plans that are specific and at the correct moment. Research conducted by Dealerweb in late 2016 showed consumers expect fast responses. Almost half (49%) of buyers expect a response to an online enquiry within an hour. Half of these – 25% of all vehicle buyers – expect the dealer to respond in less than 30 minutes. More than a third (34%) would take their enquiry elsewhere if there was no response in four hours, with 10% doing so in just one hour.

The findings led Dealerweb to develop React, a multi-platform software tool that allows dealers to respond to any online enquiry at any time of day, from any device, with tailored and personalised

Facebook profile
says potential buyer
is 47, male and lives
in Leeds

only wants to be
contacted by email,
during office hours

dealer website
shows prospect
clicked only on
used cars



“CUSTOMERS DEMAND NOT ONLY A PERSONALISED RESPONSE, BUT ALSO A TIMELY ONE

JAMES HILL, DEALERWEB

responses incorporating relevant attachments and web links.

“Customers who interact in this way demand not only a personalised response, but also a timely one. A generic ‘thanks for your enquiry’ message will now no longer cut it,” said Hill.

Facebook, according to marketers, is underused yet offers a relatively cheap and straightforward way of delivering personalised communications drawing on the platform’s wealth of demographic information, but greater results are possible when combined with the dealer’s own data.


Bluesky’s head of operations, Lauren Cooke, said: “At the most basic level, we target our advertising to relevant audiences. The best approach, however, uses the dealer’s own data. Facebook allows us to generate ‘lookalike’ lists based on customer data, targeting similar customers. These seem to perform quite strongly, delivering plenty of traffic and leads.

“The dealers who do best at this have, unsurprisingly, a good quality database to work from, and a strong understanding of the customer journey within their dealership’s unique set-up.”

Combining dealer data and Facebook demographic tools is also something Jeremy Evans, managing director of Marketing Delivery, believes should be utilised more widely by dealers.

“Currently, only one in 10 dealers are actively employing Facebook advertising as part of their social marketing strategy, which means that the vast majority are missing out on a large proportion of a relevant audience,” said Evans.

He added: “A smaller audience can be filtered according to their interaction with the dealer’s website. For example, targeting only those people who clicked on used cars, and serving them with relevant Facebook advertising tied to the dealer’s pre-owned stock.”

Marketing Delivery takes the process one step further by using additional data from customer records to identify 

C'live' used car prospects, who can then be served with data-driven marketing about particular vehicles in stock.

Such an advert may have a very small audience, but it will have remarkably high relevance and at an average cost-per-click of £0.20, it is about 80% cheaper than Google AdWords for car dealers. Such micro-audience targeting was responsible for up to 60% of dealers' total new vehicle display page referrals between September and October 2016.

Former head of digital for Perrys Motor Sales, Lee Manning, who now works on the agency side after founding Armchair Marketing, said: "Currently, many dealers are failing to target properly when using Facebook and their data collation can be poor so they then don't experience the return on investment they were expecting.

"The whole point of Facebook advertising for example, is that you can see huge benefits in really granular advanced targeting. We run hundreds of similar adverts at a time with differential demographic profiling to optimise and enhance the best performing demographics. It's the best way to ensure minimum wastage for the dealer group's spend."

Managing and utilising customer data to communicate on a personal level and thereby boost customer service requires a flexible dealer management system that incorporates other tools, such as online booking and self-service check in, according to providers CDK.

"An integrated DMS can help dealerships gather information and accurately maintain databases, with the ultimate goal of providing staff with the knowledge and data to manage customer contact through all channels of communication," said Phil Stubbs, CDK's UK sales director.

PERSONALISING AFTERSALES

Dealers are further personalising both the car-buying and aftersales experience by using additional communication tools such as video, for example, to highlight specific features prior to a sale being finalised and heightening excitement

showing a customer's new car arriving on site as it is taken off the transporter.

Alistair Horsburgh, CEO at CitNOW, said: "There may not be time to demonstrate every feature during the customer's initial appointment, or the demo car may not have a certain feature a customer is looking for, but a sales executive can use video to capture these during a quiet period, or when a new demonstrator comes in, loaded with niceties.

"Increasing numbers of customers will buy a coveted new model without seeing it in the flesh, so any opportunity to satisfy their intrigue with an early glimpse of the car at a motor show, factory tour or conference (within any given restrictions) will be well received. We saw a CitNOW Video Award entrant do this, and it went down well with the customer."

Personal communication should also continue post-sale, said Horsburgh: "Every car will leave the forecourt and lead a different life to the next one, so providing a tailored approach to maintenance rather than a 'one-size-fits-all' solution builds trust through transparency."

Delivering timely and relevant messages in whatever format to different generations of customers adds a further layer of complexity for dealers.

Stubbs said: "Every generation expects a high level of customer service – just delivered slightly differently. Having grown up during a technological revolution, Generation Y consumers are often 'numb' to blanket advertising and expect personalisation through social connections.

"As retail trends change, the level of personalisation required will too. In just 10 years' time, most consumers will be digital natives. They will expect a certain level of personalisation wherever they shop, including having information sent to them in a form that suits them and at a time convenient to them."

This will only be achievable with quality data that is well managed and utilised. Manning said: "Why is it that Apple can get all of our details very accurately for our £500 phones, but when buying a car the data records are commonly sketchy and incomplete?" **DEBBIE KIRLEW**

“EVERY CAR WILL LEAVE THE FORECOURT AND LEAD A DIFFERENT LIFE... A TAILORED APPROACH TO MAINTENANCE BUILDS TRUST

ALISTAIR HORSBURGH, CITNOW



SPONSOR'S COMMENT



**By James Hill,
sales director, Dealerweb**

A one-size-fits-all approach to marketing is becoming increasingly outmoded, with personalisation becoming

essential for securing sales and fostering the kind of relationship that will facilitate repeat business and an exceptional customer experience. Customer-facing dealership staff need to have the mindset to record a wider range of data, throughout the customer life-cycle, so the business can tailor its marketing activity to reflect the needs and expectations of specific groups and individuals.

The essential starting point is recording comprehensive customer data at enquiry stage, while also securing the customer's approval to subsequently store and act on it.

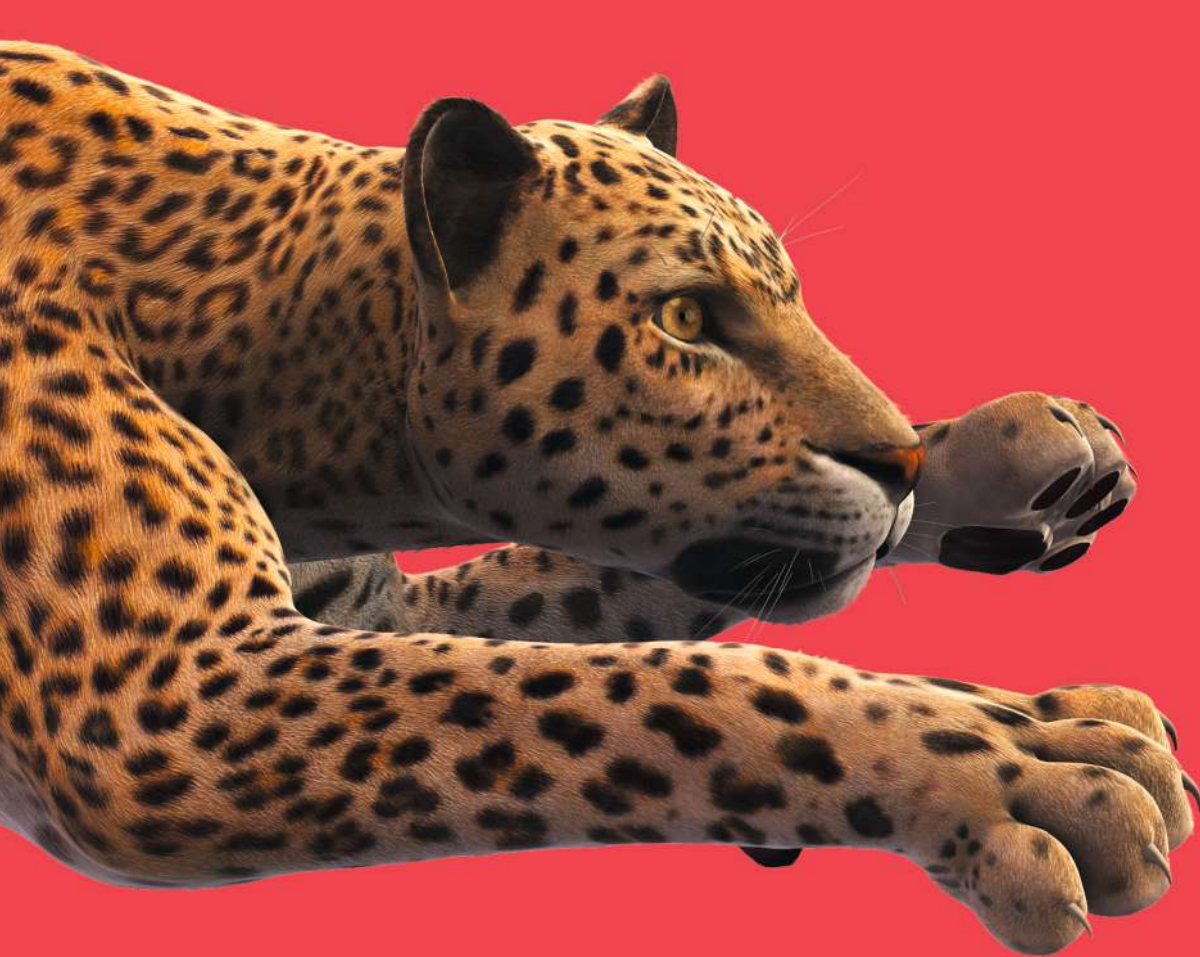
“Customer-facing staff need to have the mindset to record a wider range of data

Recording basic details on preferences for type of vehicle (brand, segment, even colour), finance options and budget are obviously key for maximising a positive response to offers. However, it is possible to achieve even higher rates of engagement for outbound marketing campaigns if personalisation is taken to the next level.

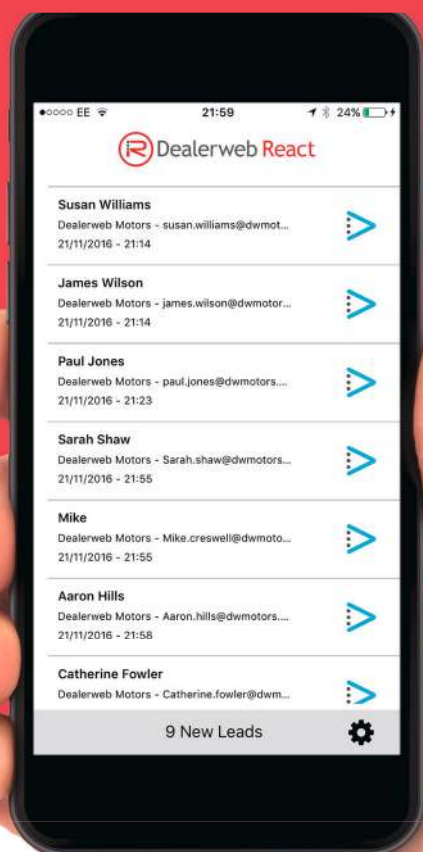
Implementation of a showroom management system, such as Dealerweb Showroom, allows dealers to easily manage a wider range of bespoke customer data to more precisely tailor their customer engagement strategy and campaigns. Dealers have the ability to specify customer profile data fields that are important to them, based on their particular sales process.

This kind of dedicated focus on data and relevance for outbound marketing takes effort, but technology can be used to guide the process while safeguarding compliance with evolving data capture regulations.

 **Dealerweb**



From today, no web lead can escape



Dealerweb React pounces on every web lead arriving at the dealership, triggering real-time alerts to the sales team.

Sales advisers are presented with a menu of pre-composed editable messages with the facility to add links, downloadable brochures and appropriate documentation. It's then just a matter of pressing buttons.

This means that all enquirers receive a quick, thorough and professional reaction to their requests thereby enabling the dealership to fulfil today's online consumer's response time expectations. And in style.

For more information and to book a demonstration, please call 01392 247477





Connect every
touchpoint.

Increase sales, convert more
leads, and join up every
customer relationship.

CloseIt - the complete dealership
sales performance solution.

**To arrange a FREE demo call
0333 444 0387**

ARE DEALER APPS THE ANSWER?

While an app is no substitute for a good website, creating convenience for your dealerships' customers can build trust, increase engagement and improve retention

Smartphone apps have been available for more than 10 years, but dealer groups are starting to explore whether they can help boost consumer interaction and data.

Both Stoneacre Motor Group and Trust-Ford have launched apps for consumers to install on their phone, believing they offer enough benefits to make them worthwhile.

These apps are breaking new ground for automotive retail. While dealer staff have adopted apps to help them with their job roles and customer interaction, the majority of dealer groups have not looked to develop consumer-facing apps.

Apadmi, an app developer that has worked with Jaguar Land Rover and Lexus, has not seen major demand from dealer groups to create dedicated customer apps and advised any business to take time to properly research whether an app is the best way to go.

Nick Black, Apadmi chief executive, said: "An app isn't a replacement for a website, it has to be a utility."

"An app has to solve a problem. Dealers should look at the underlying process of the customer journey to determine what an app could help with."

Black said a bespoke app can cost upwards of £100,000. There are large dealer groups in the UK that will have

marketing budgets that dwarf that, but would it be better spent on website development instead?

Nick King, Auto Trader insight director, believes so: "Apps, which require a committed consumer to narrow their search to just one dealer, are unlikely to play an important enough role in the car-buying process to warrant investment over the primary digital channels."

"So while an innovative app could perhaps complement a dealer's website or digital marketing, a great website that is engaging and vibrant, offer lots of images and videos, and one that stocks the right cars priced according to the live retail market, will always be far more effective in driving sales."


Some dealers may argue that it is better for manufacturers to swallow the development costs for apps.

Volkswagen has already launched an app for iOS and Android. It allows customers to add their vehicle details to make service bookings, track progress of their new car order, view their service history, track a service while it's in the workshop, approve amber or red work and have access to their car's manual and handbook.

The app was created by VW's sales, marketing and aftersales departments and integrates into the back-end systems of the VW dealer network.

But does this mean the dealer is surrendering that customer relationship to the manufacturer? Who owns that data is a contentious issue for dealers, particularly with more factory-fit connected car technology coming.

Penny Searles, Smartdriverclub chief executive, believes manufacturer apps are looking to control the conversation with new car customers and perhaps dealers should be looking to enter that space to make use of their brand and reputation.

Searles acknowledged that the 

**“AN APP
ISN'T A
REPLACEMENT
FOR A WEBSITE, IT
HAS TO BE A UTILITY
NICK BLACK, APADMI**



← motor retail sector is not as well developed for apps as other sectors.

She said: "I think the reasoning behind this is the length of time between purchases or interaction.

"You're probably interacting with Tesco once a week. Banking apps are probably used once a day. At the dealership, that time between interaction might be a lot longer."

That is why a dealer app that offers useful weekly information to a customer could benefit the business.

CONNECTED CUSTOMERS

Smartdriverclub offers dealers a white-label app product and Stoneacre Motor Group was one of the first dealer groups to sign up.

Stoneacre Connect works by plugging a telematics device into the on-board diagnostics (OBD) port on the group's used vehicles. Data from the customer's car is fed to the owner's smartphone and to the dealership. It offers functionality to consumers that fleet drivers have seen for a while from telematics suppliers.

The device provides mileage information, fault alerts, low battery, collision and stolen vehicle alerts so dealers can proactively contact customers to offer personalised services, repairs and replacement vehicles.

Stoneacre Connect customers get 24/7 emergency assistance in the case of an accident, 'Where's My Car' to help locate their vehicle if they have forgotten where it's parked, business mileage information, theft tracking that can speed up police recovery and up to a 40% insurance discount if they want to use telematics-style insurance.

In addition, they will be able to view special deals on tyres and MOTs from Stoneacre. Dealers can interact with data from the app through an online portal.

Gerry George, Stoneacre aftersales director, said the app was developed to address a specific challenge of generating aftersales revenue from used car customers.

He said: "You can only really do that if you give your customers a very good reason to come back to you again and again.

"The beauty of Stoneacre Connect is that it benefits our customers on a number of levels – it not only makes their lives easier by helping us to be proactive in offering our services when they need them, but offers a whole range of useful additional services that currently only new car buyers can enjoy."

Dealers using an off-the-shelf product such as Smartdriverclub can help reduce the risks associated with development

costs. Dealers pay £5 a month for each customer vehicle using the app.

While Stoneacre offers the app for free, Searles said some dealers charge customers £5 a month to make it cost-neutral, with others offering to roll it into service plans as an optional extra.

Searles said a dealer can introduce a branded app in about eight weeks.

DEVELOPED FROM SCRATCH

TrustFord, Ford's retail group, developed a dedicated app with supplier App Creative from scratch in about six months.

The app can be set to remind customers of their insurance and tax renewal dates, as well as when their vehicle is scheduled for its MOT and service.

By entering the vehicle's registration (including non-Ford vehicles), the app can provide information on recommended tyre pressure and oil type, dimensions, engine size, MPG and performance.

Users can also locate the nearest TrustFord dealership or car park, search for used car stock, and check TrustFord's latest new car offers. The app also provides advice videos on maintenance and technology on specific models.

Julia Greenhough, TrustFord head of marketing, said the decision to develop an app wasn't from requests by customers, but realising there was an opportunity to reinforce customer loyalty.

TrustFord's head of product management evaluated the idea using customer research to highlight areas where customers would be interested in using app functionality.

It came up with ideas for functionality through some in-house brainstorming on



Stoneacre Connect is based on a white-label app from Smartdriverclub

what they wanted it to offer consumers and achieve for the business.

Once TrustFord had agreed what the app would do, it hired a user experience agency to research how consumers interacted with and used a rudimentary prototype.

Greenhough believes the real differentiator between the app and TrustFord's website is the ability to use a smartphone's native features for things such as location and navigation to show elements such as local dealership details and stock.

Greenhough said convenience is also a key benefit for app users, with the ability to book a service within three touches.

The app is introduced during the handover process. Service advisers also introduce the app to customers and outbound communications contain links to the app.

TrustFord is able to track usage through registration data and services used.

Greenhough said the app has had "thousands" of downloads since it launched in August and that TrustFord plans to add features in due course.

"We continue to see genuine advantage from an app that continues to offer customers convenience, immediacy and relevant ongoing support for their vehicle."

TOM SEYMOUR

THE MARKET IS READY FOR INNOVATORS

When looking for customer service inspiration, the motor retail industry often glances across the Atlantic.

However, automotive retail apps in the US appear to have similar functionality to what Stoneacre and TrustFord have already introduced.

Additional features could include the ability to manage and track outstanding finance payments for vehicles and to store insurance documents in a dedicated place within apps. Dealers could also add an instant message-style text-to-chat function,

the ability to book test drives and allow customers to request a part-exchange quote.

Nick Black, Apadmi chief executive, suggested functionality that could highlight specific models on the forecourt using GPS features, for example, leading customers directly to all automatics.

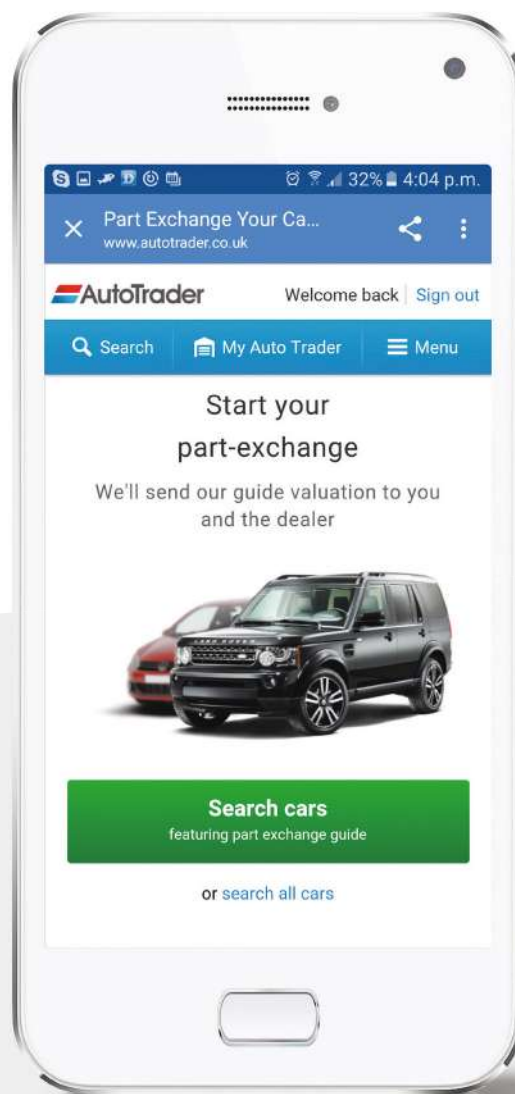
He also suggested being able to project any paint or specification combination onto a model using augmented reality on a smartphone. Volvo is already using this technology to demonstrate safety features.



Make Part-Ex conversations easier

More consumers trust our valuations than anyone else - so you can start conversations with potential buyers, making negotiations quicker and easier all round.

Now included in all packages.



To find out more visit:
trade.autotrader.co.uk/articles/part-ex-guide

*Auto Trader research September 2014.

Helping dealers 'React' to growing tide of online enquiries

The way customers are interacting with dealers is rapidly changing. Buyers are increasingly using electronic means of communication

with dealerships, and in general are demanding faster more personalised electronic responses. To meet this trend towards digital interaction

between customers and dealers, Dealerweb has launched React, a new tool to enable dealers to respond to web enquiries in a consistent, professional manner more quickly and efficiently.

"Leads from online sources increased by 35% in 2016"

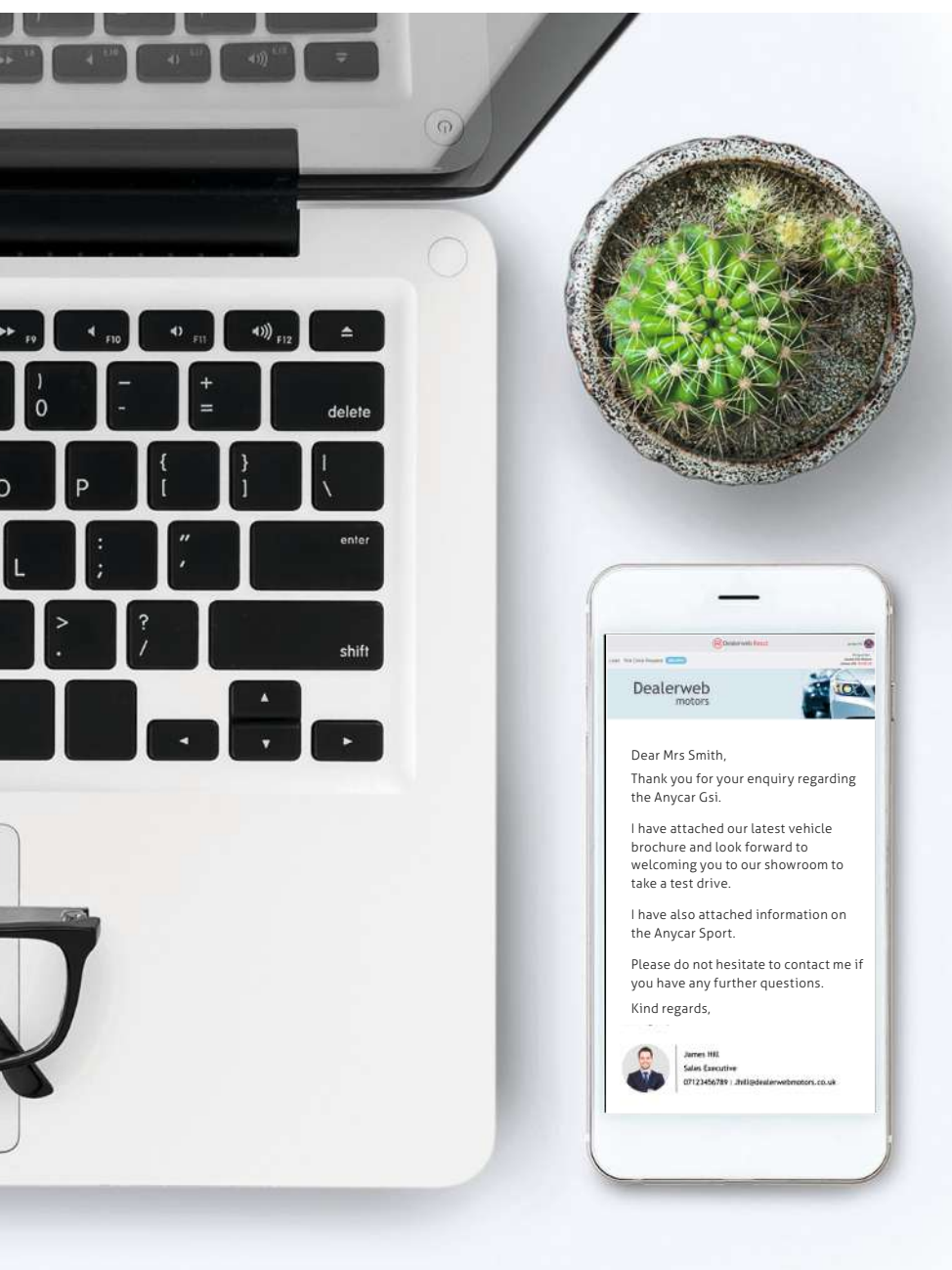
Electronic communication methods gain favour

In late 2016 Dealerweb polled 1,000 motorists on their attitudes towards the car buying process, with the data suggesting that car dealers need to consider greater use of electronic communications to reach a more digital-savvy generation of car buyers, especially when responding to web-generated enquiries.

Younger generations of car buyers are driving the shift towards electronic communications with dealerships. According to Dealerweb's research, 54% of car buyers between the ages of 18 and 24 would prefer to communicate with dealers via text, email or social media, more than twice the number who cited phone contact as their ideal.

The growth in online enquiries

The volume of web leads generated by UK motorists continues to rise each year. In 2016, Dealerweb data from



volume and premium-brand dealers across the UK shows that leads from online sources increased by 35% compared to 2015.

James Hill, Sales Director at Dealerweb commented:

"Dealers are witnessing a dramatic growth in the number of web-based customer enquiries, representing a clear shift in consumer behaviour. Dealers need to meet the needs of the new generation of car buyers – 'digital natives' who have grown up using electronic forms of communication.

"This new generation of buyers is generally more comfortable using electronic tools to interact with car dealers, and this trend is only expected to accelerate. Indeed, buyers across all age groups are increasingly relying on electronic means of communication in all areas of their lives. The most effective sales teams in the coming years will be those who are more proactive in using the latest digital tools to engage with prospective buyers."

"The most effective sales teams in the coming years will be those who are more proactive in using the latest digital tools to engage with prospective buyers."

Customers expect quicker, more personalised and engaging responses

Dealerweb's data suggests that the shift towards electronic communications has led customers to demand quicker responses to enquiries. When making an online enquiry about a vehicle, the findings suggest that 49% of prospective buyers expect a response from a dealer within one hour.



Half of these – 25% of all vehicle buyers – expect the dealer to respond in under 30 minutes.

Crucially, the research also found that more than a third of prospective customers (34%) would take their enquiry elsewhere if the dealer didn't respond in under four hours. 10% of prospective buyers would take their custom elsewhere after just one hour without a response.

There is a clear disparity between buyers of volume and premium brand models: 42% of premium brand buyers would take their enquiry to another dealership after four hours without a response, compared just to 32% of those enquiring about volume brand products. 54% of premium brand prospects admitted they would be more likely to make a purchase if a dealer responds in under one hour, compared with 48% of volume brand prospects.

James Hill commented:

"A swift response says a lot about a business, especially if a dealer quickly provides prospects with personalised, engaging content. It provokes a positive reaction toward the retailer and maximises the chance of converting leads into sales. Dealerweb has developed React to help dealers stand apart from their competition and make the most of the

growing online opportunity."

"49% of prospective buyers expect a response within one hour"

The answer: Dealerweb React

Dealerweb has launched a new product called 'React' that enables dealers to respond quickly and efficiently to online customer enquiries. The new cloud-based software is designed as a smartphone app and desktop application which channels all customer leads into one location, allowing for a swift and personalised response by dealers.

The new system is web-based and can be accessed through a native, iOS or Android app or fully responsive web-based interface, meaning dealers can respond quickly to leads even when they're away from their desk or the dealership.

"A swift response says a lot about a business, especially if a dealer quickly provides prospects with personalised and engaging content."

React captures online leads from a variety of different sources and guides sales staff through a simple, step-by-step process to create professional, personalised and tailored HTML email responses. Specific content can be added, such as file attachments (e.g. a brochure for the car in question) and web links, further personalising the response and boosting customer engagement.

React allows for real-time reporting and analysis, enabling managers to assess the performance of different lead sources and individual sales personnel.



HOW ENDLESS OPTIONS HARM THE SALES PROCESS

Car buyers welcome choice and dealer profits benefit from personalisation, but does that variety slow down deals and are US-style stocking levels the answer?

Two decades of using the world wide web have seemingly left many consumers intent on instant gratification. However, the UK's motor retail industry still makes many customers wait before they can drive away in their new car.

The options on many new car configurators enable customers to tailor their chosen vehicle to their needs. Because it increases the invoice value, the dealer's profitability will benefit. But is providing choice to the consumer about to become a burden for the industry?

Personalisation is a good thing as long as the gap between order and delivery doesn't become too long and lead to frustration and dissatisfaction, according to Keith Janes, Ford brand manager at Essex Auto Group. He said the introduction of a large interactive 'power wall' in FordStores has helped dealers show how additional features could enhance a vehicle.

"Customers want choice and a degree of personalisation when purchasing their next vehicle, and the higher the selling price the more prevalent this becomes – we've seen this with the new Mustang," he said.

Janes added that personalisation allows dealers to use marketing driven by lifestyle rather than purely price or payment, particularly across web and social channels.

However, he believes the industry needs more robust systems to accurately monitor a vehicle's movement through the build and delivery cycle.

Ben Waller, associate director at the ICDP, agrees. In a 2014 ICDP study, one in four buyers reported that the estimated delivery date given by their dealer had changed.

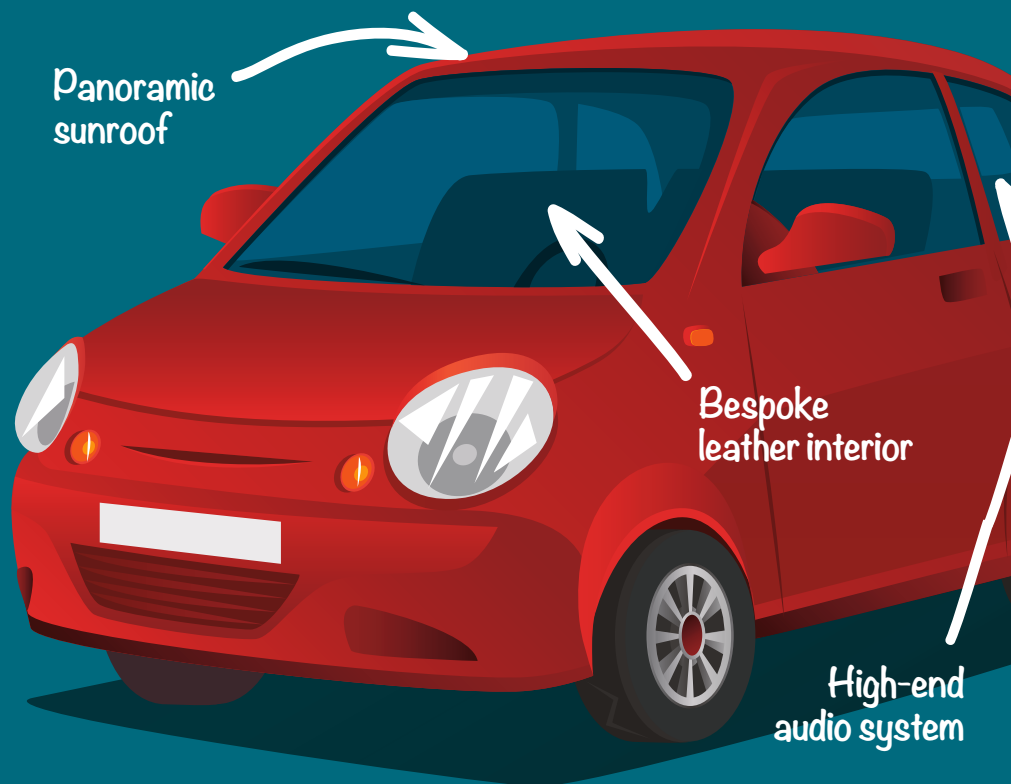
ICDP research from 2012 found 35% of volume brand customers were prepared to wait more than 30 days from order to delivery. This rose to 57% of customers at premium brands.

Waller told *AM* the customer needs more transparency on the pros and cons of buying from stock versus factory order, and manufacturers' customer-facing platforms should allow the prospective buyer to understand the lead time implications based on availability and configuration. The buyer could then balance their need for the car against their desire for particular features.

"Product variety has exploded in Europe over the last 20 years," he said. "Some

**“PRODUCT
VARIETY HAS
EXPLODED IN
EUROPE OVER THE LAST
20 YEARS**

BEN WALLER, ICDP



COULD SS

volume cars already come in a bewildering array of combinations that many salespeople struggle to understand, let alone customers."

Compared with Europe, ICDP data shows that US dealers offer about half the possible engine-body-paint-trim combinations for Asian and volume brands, and a third of the premium brand combinations. As a result, they typically hold vast new car inventories and buyers may drive away on the day of purchase.

However, Janes doesn't believe larger stock holdings are the answer. More important, he said, is "central fluidity" within the total manufacturer and dealer inventory, with vehicles always available wherever the demand occurs.

Professor Jim Saker, director of the Centre for Automotive Management at Loughborough University, finds it interesting that products heavily focused on younger buyers, such as Mini, Vauxhall Adam and Fiat 500, have extensive personalisation options, but this has not held back their sales. This is despite the argument that younger consumers are looking for instant gratification and access rather than ownership.

Brand perception and expectation – whether a car is positioned as made to

measure or off the shelf – are critical. One issue for the industry is the lack of research into how a customer actually goes about configuring a car online. Saker said evidence from other sectors suggests that if the process is too complicated, the customer will simply opt out. This could work in the dealer's favour, if they seek advice.

"An in-dealership configuration service has the potential to generate footfall, especially if any work done by the customer at home can be transferred so they don't have to start again," he added.

Waller believes there is less conflict between personalisation and instant gratification now than there was 25 years ago. Vehicle supply chains have become more flexible – although he said there is scope for improvement – and some brands support late customisation at their UK central processing/storage facilities or by the dealer, such as trim parts changes or decals, to allow more personalisation immediately prior to delivery.

He also suggested that the pushing of new car supply into the UK has narrowed the focus of manufacturers and dealers, so they are actually not selling their full product variety because of high stocks. For premium brand dealers, this can harm profitability if they are not selling more build-to-order cars.

Rupert Pontin, director of valuations at Glass's, said it is generally accepted within the trade that the current level of choice can help to sell new cars, but it does risk creating increased complexity and confusion in ordering for both manufacturers and consumers. He warned that complex vehicle requests could be misread, leading to mis-builds becoming more commonplace, and creating unique stock that may be harder to place with another customer.

Marc Palmer, manufacturer brand director at Auto Trader, believes that because of production lead times, dealers will always avoid marketing 'too much' personalisation simply because there is too much of a risk a customer will change their mind, leaving the dealer landed with a car they cannot sell.

Where the customer does desire personalisation, but there are lengthy lead times, the buyer and the dealer will resolve this together, said Palmer.

"Often the buyer will have a specific vehicle configuration in mind, but will be unaware that lead times may be long. If there's time pressure they have always found a compromise with the dealer, such as taking a slightly different colour or interior, and this won't change," he added. **TIM ROSE**

ADVERTISING FEATURE

Valet, image, web – the whole package

By **Michaela Gunney**, UK sales director, Secure Valeting



A growing number of dealerships are enjoying a one-stop solution to vehicle valeting, imaging and website upload. Secure Valeting and its Auto Imaging division now provide a complete digital preparation package to a

growing number of dealerships that recognise the benefits of having their vehicles digitised and aggregated to the market at the point of valet.

Secure Valeting has been a trusted valeting service supplier to high-profile dealership groups and independents for almost 20 years. The launch of its Auto Imaging division was a natural response to its customers' needs – imaging vehicles straight after valet not only offers the chance to image cars at their best, it is also the most efficient way to capture data for immediate display on the web.

Secure's Progress Chaser Portal integrates seamlessly with current dealership DMS and workflows. It communicates with existing systems and provides total transparency of all vehicle movements. It can therefore provide insight into imaging ratios – for example, specific information on why vehicles have not been uploaded to the web. This data can be used to pinpoint departmental issues and improve efficiency. The Progress Chaser Portal provides full details of a vehicle's status from arrival on site to delivery to the web. No more data entry – valeting and imaging codes are booked automatically based on vehicle availability and status. By removing all data entry obligations and synchronising with a dealership's DMS, the Secure portal integrates all information into one manageable system.

The advantage offered by Secure Valeting and its Auto Imaging division is valeting, image capture, video voiceover, digital backdrops, branding and quality control happen at the same time. *Dealer marketing departments using Auto Imaging digital backdrops report a 600% increase of online views.*

■ For more information, please contact Secure Valeting on 01480 216 700, or www.secureplc.com.



To sell online, 'dealers n



There are many steps to resolve before franchised dealers will be able to truly retail cars online.

However, industry experts are working hard to overcome these, so that the customer can undertake as much or as little of the buying process online as they choose, and so that the dealer can understand which point the customer is at in the process.

Ivendi has been working on improving the online motor finance experience for both the dealer and the customer.

Chief executive James Tew said to move to complete online retailing you need an online finance proposition that works properly, so people can manage finance online.

"Trying to sell vehicles online without finance is just not going to work. Look at the current manufacturer-type models from BMW, Hyundai and PSA, and finance is a common feature of the purchase."

This is where the challenges come. New vehicle offers are attractive thanks to strong support and low rates, but the bigger

challenge for retailing online is in used vehicles, he said, because of the variables related to condition and mileage.

"People probably have more comfort in buying anything new. But as more new vehicles are bought online, the industry has to get it right too for used cars. With used, there is a whole myriad of issues which the consumer needs to overcome, and the dealer needs to provide that transparency to engender the consumer's trust in buying online, trust that if there is a problem, it will be addressed by the dealer."

Tew believes selling a car online is likely to be the most complex transaction of any digital retail sector.

"For consumers to fully self-serve is technically very challenging, and it's very alien," he said. The consumer has to be able to understand all parts of the buying process, and the online process needs to support those consumers who aren't yet fully committed as well as those who know exactly what they are doing and what they want."

FCA compliance is another factor. Tew believes many customers do not appreciate the compliance process required in motor finance. He gives the example that many consumers using online services will tick a terms and conditions box without having read them. This cannot be allowed in an online car purchase.

Consequently, Ivendi sees its role in breaking up the compliance aspects of the process, starting before the credit application, through car advertising portals and on to dealer websites. Ivendi is currently trialling such a process. Doing so can make sure the customer is comfortable with motor finance, and is presented with suitable lenders' products, before submitting their application.

Tew said 28% of consumers quit at the point they are requested to enter bank details and assess affordability, so Ivendi is adding a function for them to save into a secure user account area part-way through their application, and return to it when convenient.

need finance that works'



TRYING TO SELL VEHICLES ONLINE WITHOUT FINANCE IS JUST NOT GOING TO WORK

JAMES TEW, IVENDI



whole is not as prime as new. In the new car market, the manufacturers' captive finance houses also have an interest in selling a new car, so they may have a different policy regarding risk compared with independent used car lenders.

"You need an online process that can handle multiple lenders, which is something being worked on right now," said Tew.

He said tools are available to start the finance process on dealers' websites, but obtaining quotes on different products on each vehicle has been difficult. Ivendi is working towards returning a panel of lenders and a selection of different products that the dealer has to offer. Choice is vital, he said, as 71% of consumers currently use comparison websites when shopping for insurance or financial services, so the concept of giving choice is key for consumers. It is also endorsed by the FCA, which wants to avoid the risk of a consumer being driven down a particular route.

Those choices could include different products such as hire purchase, PCP, even balloon HP, he said, and could also cater for different lenders' risk appetites. If a customer isn't approved for a principal product, they could see the likely price of credit with the other lenders returned, and be nurtured through the process step by step. Using approval tools such as Ivendi's car finance checker supports that – it can show the likely cost of the vehicle before fully applying, and it can guide a customer on the product they are likely to be approved for.

"Effectively, they get a pre-approval in

place for a vehicle without even seeing the vehicle in the flesh or test-driving, and then can go to the dealer and sort out the rest of the transaction."

Tew said at that point the negotiation typically will still continue, to deal with the trade-in and any outstanding finance. Because of this, Ivendi is developing a facility allowing the dealership to 'push' a deal to the consumer after a physical or telephone negotiation has taken place, and a cash price, part-exchange value and any finance settlement required have been agreed. This would give the consumer the ability to determine what deposit and annual mileage they require and submit their finance application.

This facility is being trialled with one lender and a group of dealers. The dealer can see when the customer is engaged with the deal, and as soon as they apply the dealer is alerted and also notified of the outcome of the finance application. Ultimately, the process can then be finished with an e-signature from the customer and receipt of their part-exchange and deposit as necessary.

Tew believes it is important for the dealer and consumer to be able to switch seamlessly between digital and physical elements, as the prospective customer 'stop-starts' at various points in their process.

"You need to keep in sync, because you could have a restructuring of the deal if, by the time the consumer is ready to sign, their finance settlement figure has changed. Whenever that balance changes by even a penny, if it's on finance, you need to update the financial piece with the lender."

Affordability questions also adapt according to the lender.

A new analytics tool is built into the platform, due to launch in March, to provide better reporting for dealers. Because Ivendi can track a customer across multiple websites, it can help a dealer learn more about its online competition. It can also inform dealers of their peak times for online prospects, and to understand more about their consumers, so that they can engage better with them.

Tew warned that retailing used cars online faces another challenge: more finance applicants for used cars are declined than for new cars, because the buyers' credit profile as a

To find out more, visit ivendi.com, e-mail enquiries@ivendi.com or call 0345 226 0503



1

Database cleansing

Capturing and checking good data is the key component of a successful customer relationship management (CRM) strategy, but with email capture forming part of manufacturer standards, it can become a 'tick box' exercise, according to Chris Poulson, CRM director, MDF Database Solutions, while multiple systems mean many dealers often do not have a single customer view.

Incorrect data leads to poor customer service, said Poulson: "If the MOT due date is wrong, we will send reminders at the wrong time, which can lead to loss of trust.

"It's all about the processes. If a customer does not want to receive marketing, what's the process? What systems are in place when a customer opts out of email? What do you do if an email bounces, what about the right to be forgotten?"

Dealers often waste money on cleansing data – Poulson advises businesses to archive customers who have not been in contact for the past four years.

A recent analysis of a sample of 50,000 vehicle visits to franchised dealer workshops by Marketing Delivery found 32% of customer records lacked at least one crucial piece of data, including one group missing a servicing due date for more than a quarter of its records.

However, improving data quality can deliver results. Email open rates for one Marketing Delivery client regularly exceeded 60%, compared with the typical rate of 20%. The same client also increased service and MOT bookings by 26.8% in 2016 compared with 2015, with a corresponding boost in retail hours invoiced, while vehicle sales at a VIP sales event increased by 30% year-on-year.

2

Recruit well

Nathan Tomlinson, dealer principal, Devonshire Motors, and the winner of the 2016 *AM* Award for best customer service, said: "Finding the right people – and then retaining them – is the cornerstone to success in all areas of the business. You have to be prepared to challenge conventional wage and commission structures at the planning stage. Staff recruitment and retention is as much about the culture and reputation you have created as it is about the remuneration."

Deborah Reeves, director of customer services at Jardine Motors Group, the winner of the 2017 *AM* Award for customer care, said: "Recruiting the right staff is where great customer service begins. For us, identifying people who are empathic is our top priority. We are always looking for those who show passion, leadership, good judgement and integrity and take ownership of situations and challenges."

Guy Liddall, managing director of recruitment agency Motor Trade Selection, said: "While the biggest influence on staff turnover and engagement is strong, effective management, the second is good recruitment. The best recruiters are always prepared, and never have to hurry a recruitment process. The worst recruiters leave things too late, recruit in a hurry and continue to make many avoidable mistakes. It still surprises us how many employers fail to take out proper references and to check basic details of past employment history."

Every consumer is different, and dealers' approaches to serving them vary, but [Debbie Kirlew](#) outlines the fundamental practices to improve your customer service

SEVE WAYS TO KEEP YO



3

Answering calls and emails

NSpeed of response to calls and emails can determine whether a customer opts for one business over another.

Jo McKeown, automotive business development manager at outsourced switchboard company Moneypenny, said: "One of the biggest improvements a dealership can make to its customer service is to make sure the phone is answered every time it rings.

"An unanswered call can mean lost business – a new car or service enquiry gone elsewhere. Dealerships must understand that although they cannot see the other person on the end of the phone, they are just as important as the customer on the forecourt."

Dom Threlfall, managing director at Hyundai and Suzuki dealership Pebley Beach, links the telephone system with the DMS so a customer's details appear on screen automatically when a call is received, resulting in a more personal experience with all information to hand.

OUR CUSTOMERS HAPPY

4

Personal experience

At Pebley Beach, automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) cameras recognise the vehicle's registration enabling customers to be welcomed personally to the business. The customer is then escorted everywhere by a member of staff.

Using a system adopted from Domino's Pizza that enables every stage of an order to be tracked, Pebley Beach allows customers to follow their car's progress through the workshop via a link. Introduced eight years ago, only about 10% of customers use it, but Threlfall thinks as more millennials become customers, it will become much more widely used.

"Wherever I go if there's something I like, I try to replicate it in the business. For example, the way in which waiters add a smiley face or something personal to the bill. It's these 'one percenters' that add up to a great customer experience," said Threlfall.

Tomlinson added: "While I agree that there is a place for technology in this area, you can't beat personal attention. There's a huge difference between getting to know your customers – as a result of their loyalty and your staff retention – and a system that alerts you to a customer's arrival by prompting you with their name and how they take their coffee."

Reeves said: "To make the experience truly personal, we make sure that we know what each individual customer likes. The finishing details really matter."



COMMERCIAL PARTNER COMMENT

By Jo McKeown, automotive business development manager, Moneypenny



If you could change one thing about your customer service, what would it be? Most people may say they would smile more, listen to customers' needs with greater attention, or even try harder to sell them extras.

Those are all very good suggestions, but are really 'stage two' of customer service improvement.

To really have a meaningful impact on customers, salespeople simply need to be more available to them. That's it.

Only when a customer can contact you and have a conversation are you able to do all of the things detailed above. But to get to that stage, you have to be there, ready to serve when your customers need you.

It can take a few different forms. When a customer walks through the door, are you calmly waiting to greet them, pour them a coffee, and show them around? Or do you have your hands full with administrative tasks or answering the phone? If it's the latter, you could be doing them, and yourself, a disservice.

This is even more pertinent now that opening hours are increasingly a thing of the past. Busy people leading busy lives need salespeople to be a little more flexible if they are to do business. So being unavailable in the morning or last thing in the afternoon when customers require attention most is no longer an option.

Making changes to your customer service is a smart idea – there are always improvements to be made – but before you even make a start, you have to make yourself as available as possible to your customers.

■ **To find out more, please call moneypenny on 0333 202 1005 or email hello@moneypenny.co.uk**



Moneypenny is a commercial partner of our Dealer Masterclass programme, and will be sharing more inspiration at Automotive Management Live on November 9, 2017 at Birmingham's NEC. **The next dealer masterclass, on social media, will be in the May issue of AM**

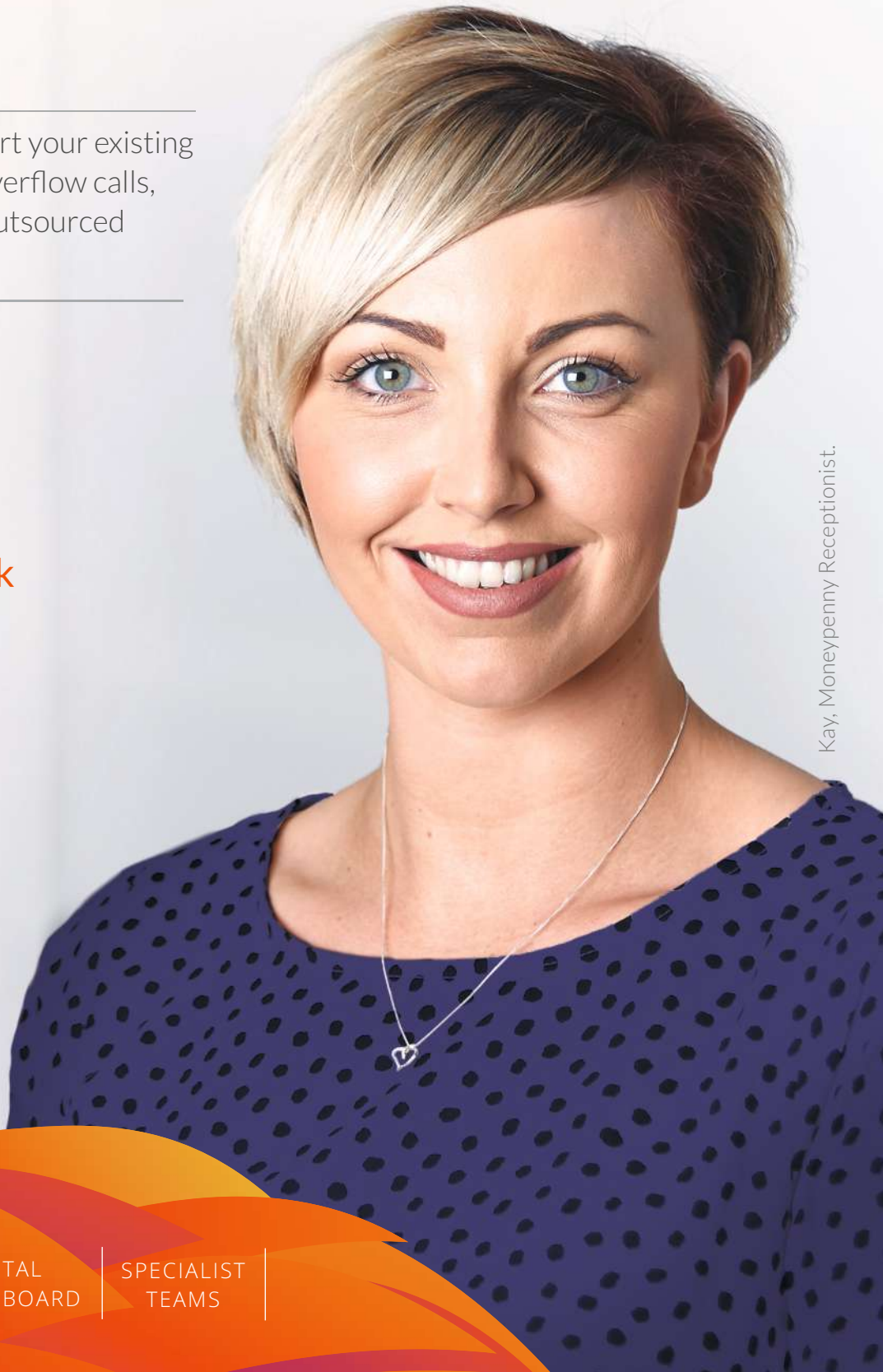
“Kay looks after calls when our team is busy. The result? More sales, outstanding service levels.”

Money Penny client since 2013

Money Penny will support your existing team by looking after overflow calls, or by providing a fully outsourced switchboard facility.



moneypenny.co.uk
0333 202 1005



Kay, Money Penny Receptionist.

OUTSOURCED
SWITCHBOARD

DIGITAL
SWITCHBOARD

SPECIALIST
TEAMS



5

Collection and delivery drivers

As the only member of staff some customers see, the full responsibility of how a business is perceived can rest solely with collection and delivery drivers.

"We view our collection and delivery drivers as vital, as often they are the only face of the dealership that the customer sees," said Peter Smyth, director at Swansway Group. "Our drivers are usually older and have often held senior jobs in the past, including ex-police officers. They understand the value of customer service and because they treat customers so well, these customers are much more likely to remain loyal to the business."

6

Customer-facing staff

Dealers are increasingly looking at creating different roles and reconfiguring the traditional sales model as they strive to achieve greater levels of customer service. At Rockar, the boutique-style retail outlet at Bluewater and Westfield shopping centres, 'angels' have replaced traditional sales executives.

Founder and chief executive Simon Dixon said: "We recruit on personality first, communication skills and ability to retain knowledge. There is no sales training as our concept is not to sell to the customer, but to give them all the information they need to make the right purchase for them."

Pebbley Beach is introducing promoter and transactor roles to its sales team. Promoters provide customers with information and are paid a flat salary and can choose their own hours, while transactors are paid a commission and are more similar to the traditional sales executive.

Threlfall said: "The industry is in a state of flux. More and more cars are being sold with a flat fee instead of a margin. We need to change the way cars are being sold – the customer is now in control."

Focusing on customer care has helped to fuel volume sales growth at single-site Mitsubishi dealer Devonshire Motors – from 356 new and used units in 2011 to a projected 550 this year. Devonshire introduced showroom hosts who are not assigned to any one department and work primarily for the customer.

In Swansway's Volkswagen and Audi dealerships, the hosts are also recognised as influential. Smyth said: "When we receive letters complimenting us on our customer service, they invariably mention the hosts. It can still be quite daunting for people coming into the dealership and having a friendly face who welcomes you before you even step into the premises can make all the difference."

Swansway is in its second year of recruiting trainee salespeople through a scheme that attracts graduates and people from different backgrounds, but who are not experienced in automotive sales. The group employed 12 last year, of which 10 remain. Recruitment for a further 20 is about to begin. The six-month training scheme offers an initial salary of £24,000 while the recruit is trained in all aspects of sales with an emphasis on customer care. It then reverts to a basic-plus-commission pay structure.



FORGET 'WAITING AREA', THINK 'COFFEE SHOP'. IF YOU CAN PUT A CUSTOMER INTO THE RIGHT ENVIRONMENT, IT NO LONGER BECOMES A CASE OF 'WAITING'

**NATHAN TOMLINSON,
DEVONSHIRE MOTORS**

7

Meet the customers' needs

Modern dealerships invariably offer internet access and endless cups of coffee. Some, like Pebbley Beach, offer cake, and at Devonshire Motors, hot drinks range from green tea to Mars-flavoured cappuccino.

Tomlinson said: "Forget 'waiting area', think 'coffee shop'. If you can put a customer into the right environment, it no longer becomes a case of 'waiting'."

At Swansway's six Audi sites its breakfast initiative, introduced about a year ago, has gained in popularity as well as saving the aftersales department time and money on collection and delivery or courtesy cars. Service customers order a complimentary breakfast as part of its 'while-you-wait' option with around 20 service and breakfast bookings made each week.

Threlfall said: "We always play the music too loud, I learned that from the Disney University. If the music is in the background, you can't quite make it out, but if it's louder, you can hear it. It makes the showroom feel more alive."

The biggest issue for most customers is parking, so at Pebbley Beach a reserved parking area enables customers to park quickly and easily. Their car is then moved, freeing up the reserved parking for the next customer.

Train your staff in prospecting calls that work

In the plate-change month of March, as they achieved their biggest sales volumes of the year, car dealers were said to be presented with 500,000 customer retention opportunities.

But what if a business considers that it may be beneficial to equip itself with the tools to hit manufacturers' often ambitious sales targets at other times of the year? What if retention was a term not exclusively attached to customers?

For MFG Group, both of these considerations sit near the top of the agenda.

Former BMW UK colleagues Declan Gaule and Jerry Sutton set up the dealer training business ten years ago. It specialises in telephone prospecting campaigns, delivering sales results to retailers at a time of their choosing and delivering skills that leave a legacy of continued sales success.

This is retention in a new guise. Retention of sales skills.

Jason Cranswick, commercial director at long-standing client Jardine Motors Group, said: "The training provided by MFG sticks in the minds of our staff like a muscle memory, meaning that the training is delivering skills that are retained long after a session."

Declan Gaule, MFG group director and co-founder, said instilling confidence in dealership sales staff to carry out prospecting calls is key to his business's success. He said: "Equipping sales executives with the confidence and the processes they need to

carry out prospecting calls that will deliver results is central to what we do.

"Telephone prospecting is not something most sales executives relish in most circumstances and if they have not received high-quality training it is a poor use of their time.

"When we have been in, delivered the training and they can see it has delivered results, attitudes soon change. When prospecting results in great leads and multiple sales, it soon becomes less of a chore."

Gaule originally joined BMW UK's graduate training scheme and rose through the ranks to become a specialist training provider within the group, eventually holding the post of regional corporate sales manager.

After spotting that a decline in dealer footfall had left a gap between the type of training delivered and the aspirations of retailers, he teamed up with Sutton to set up MFG.

"What we did was to assist sales executives to drive footfall without using a distress message," he said.

MFG specialises in delivering one- to two-day training courses, which are pre-empted by dealer marketing and incorporate a prospecting sales campaign while trainers are still at the dealership.

It can work with a dealer's existing database – be they customers from the past 24 to 48 months or those considered 'lost sales' – to market a prospecting campaign and then follow up with a structured calls programme.

Gaule said a two-day exercise is ideal,



with training and some live calls taking place on day one and a supervised calls session on day two.

"It's always an advantage that trainers are there when the calls are being made at first. We can make sure the processes have been taken on board and also work to instil confidence," said Gaule.

The calls process starts with an early introduction of "a very compelling offer in a short amount of time", he said, but emphasised that a professional introduction and posing the question of whether a customer is interested or not is key. He said: "Do it right and the worst you will get is a 'yes', 'no' or 'maybe'."

Measured at seven days out from a training event, MFG claims that its call techniques result in an average 52% conversion rate, despite working with premium brands such as Rolls-Royce, Maserati and McLaren.

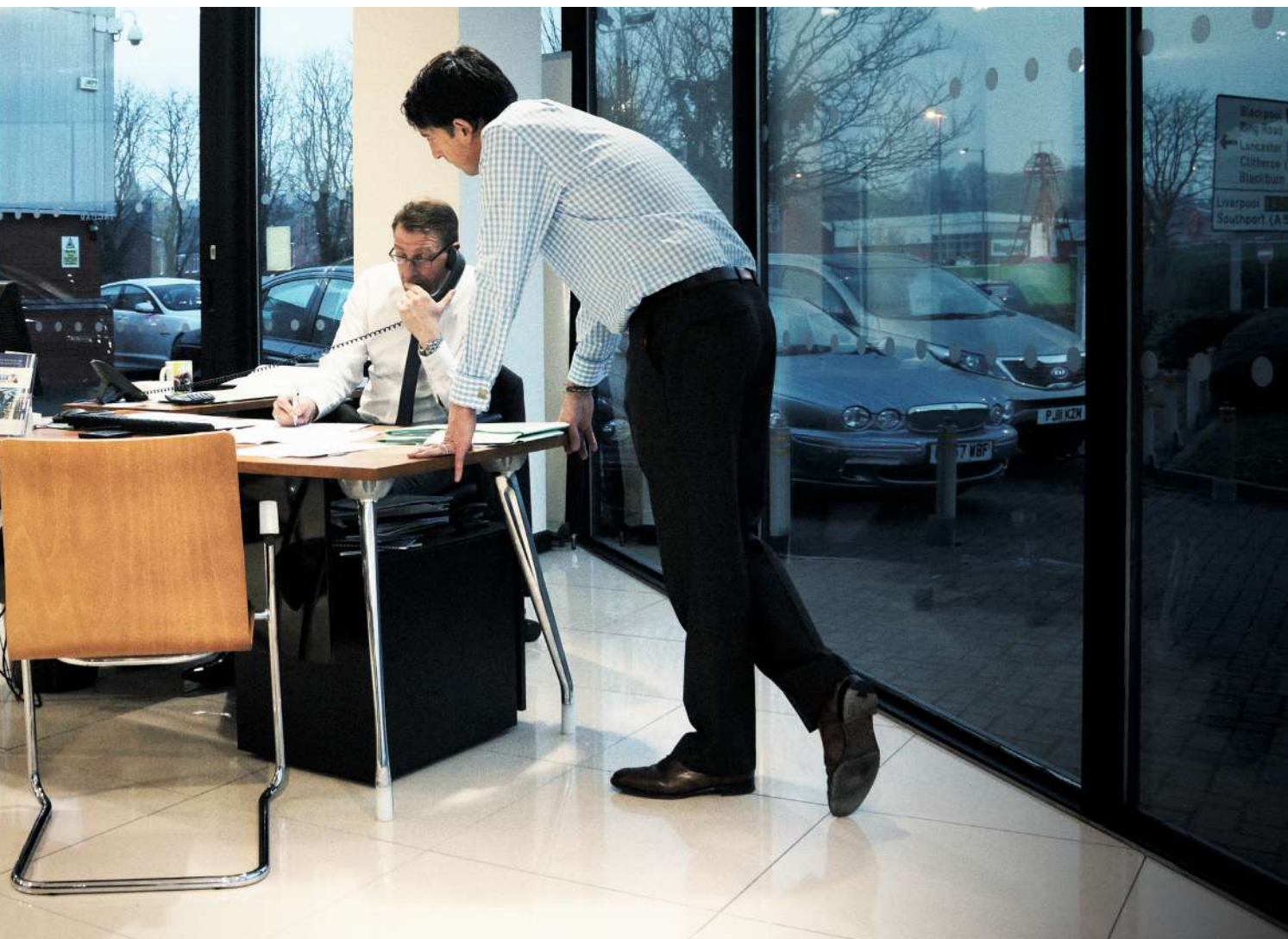
In some cases, training and prospecting sessions have resulted in a boost of 600 incremental sales, said Gaule.

Among its clients is Jardine Motors Group, a top AM100 group split into six divisions, with 70 locations representing 23 brands.



“RETAILERS CAN NO LONGER AFFORD TO VIEW PROSPECTING AS AN 'OPTIONAL EXTRA'. IT HAS GONE FROM 'NICE TO HAVE' TO 'MUST HAVE'”

DECLAN GAULE, MFG



Commercial director Jason Cranswick said MFG was selected as a preferred training provider two years ago and said they are a key component of injecting structure and "a little urgency" into prospecting campaigns.

He added: "There is a reasonable cost attached to using MFG, but what it does is adds focus and priority to making sure that we are doing things right and there is always a positive recollection of the work they do."

"What MFG do extremely well is tailor their training sessions to the brands they are dealing with and quickly get a team working co-operatively together. They make it fun too. It can't always be hard work."

"We certainly get a good return on investment from using MFG and the fact that we keep using them time after time is testament

to the value of the service they offer."

Cranswick said the changing nature of automotive retail meant MFG had become an operational necessity.

He said: "Ten years ago it might have been the type of thing that was used to recover performance, but now it's very much something we return to in order to enhance it throughout the year."

When the MFG business was set up it had just three trainers. Now there are more than 20 trainers – all from automotive backgrounds – and five back-office staff supporting its operation, with the business growing an average of 15% to 20% each year.

While it started out in the UK and Ireland, it now carries out manufacturer and dealer training through satellite businesses in

France, Germany, the Netherlands and Scandinavia.

It is also working with long-standing client BMW on a training initiative involving 55 dealerships in South Africa.

In the UK alone, MFG now completes many hundreds of training events every year.

Gaule said many clients consider their investment in prospect training with MFG as a "cost of business" as the drive to achieve sales in a high-volume market becomes ever more "tough and aggressive".

He added: "The business has changed. Retailers can no longer afford to view prospecting as an 'optional extra'. It has gone from a 'nice to have' to a 'must have'. Done properly, it soon becomes an integral part of the business."

**For more, email declan.gaule@mfg-group.co.uk
or call 07779 303 849 or 01308 802 030**



mfg



◀ Mitsubishi Eclipse Cross

The new Mitsubishi Eclipse Cross will join Mitsubishi's ASX compact and Outlander SUVs when it enters UK showrooms early in 2018.

Battling the likes of the Nissan Qashqai and Seat Ateca, the Eclipse Cross will feature an infotainment system that includes both Apple CarPlay and Android Auto smartphone connectivity and features a head-up instrument display among its specification highlights.

No hybrid version was confirmed at the Geneva unveiling. Instead, there is a new 1.5-litre direct-injection turbocharged petrol model fitted with a CVT gearbox or 2.2-litre common rail direct-injection turbocharged diesel fitted with a new eight-speed automatic transmission at launch.

Mitsubishi will be hoping the new model arrests 2016's 19.6% decline in sales, from 22,693 to 18,237. Prices are expected to be in the region of £17,000.



GENEVA MOTORSHOW

AM walked the halls of the 87th Geneva International Motor Show to bring you a sneak preview of the new lines, new models and refreshes on their way to UK showrooms



◀ McLaren 720S

The first McLaren to utilise a new Yorkshire-built carbon-fibre monocoque chassis, the 720S will replace the 650S coupé as the brand attempts to reach 4,000 global sales in 2017.

Speaking to AM at Geneva, Jolyon Nash, McLaren Automotive executive director of global sales and marketing, said the new car would help sales to a 20% growth this year after selling 3,286 cars globally in 2016, compared with 1,654 in 2015.

Nash said: "The growth has shown that there are places where we could accommodate new franchises and we currently have two open points we are exploring in the UK. We are hopeful of adding dealerships in the north of London and the north-east of England."

McLaren's existing six-site dealer network achieved 4% return on sales in 2016 and could expect impressive aftersales growth, as the brand's car parc is predicted to grow 300% by 2022. The 720S will be priced at £208,600 when it arrives in UK showrooms in the summer.

Nissan Qashqai facelift

Nissan's push towards an autonomous future starts with the launch of the facelifted Nissan Qashqai in July.

Showcased at Geneva, the latest versions of the popular SUV include ProPilot, a system with the capability to control the steering, acceleration and braking in a single lane on a motorway.

Nissan will also add a new range-topping Tekna+ trim grade in the revised Qashqai, introducing new seats trimmed in high-quality soft nappa leather, with luxurious 3D quilting on the centre panels.



Alpine A110

Nine UK car dealers will retail the new Alpine coupé when it arrives in the UK in early 2018 and they got their first view of the production version at the Geneva Motor Show.

The A110 is compact, at just 4,178mm long, 1,798mm wide and 1,252mm high, and sits on a lightweight aluminium chassis that gives it a claimed kerb weight of just 1,080kg.

However, the French coupé, which is set to do battle with the likes of Porsche's Cayman, comes with a heavyweight price. A limited run of 1,955 Premier Edition derivatives will be priced at more than £50,000.



HOW



Renault Captur

A facelift to Renault's top-selling car will aim to maintain the compact SUV's momentum in the market.

In 2016, the Captur was responsible for 25,841 of Renault's 85,102 registrations and the new version, with its more assertive face, aims to boost its popularity when it arrives in the summer.

Among the highlights of the new specification are LED headlights, LED daytime running lights and a debut in the Captur for Renault's blind-spot warning system and hands-free autonomous parking system.

A seven-speaker Bose sound system is also standard on a new, range-topping Signature S Nav trim level.

Prices for the new Captur range are expected to start at about £15,000.



Kia Optima Sportswagon and Niro plug-in hybrids

Fresh from celebrating his franchise's success in the NFDA's Winter Dealer Attitude Survey, Paul Philpott, chief executive, Kia Motors UK, was purring at the prospect of delivering new products to retailers.

Philpott told *AM* he was "punching the air" after Kia's dealer network rated it the second-best manufacturer, behind Mercedes-Benz. He said its dealers would soon benefit from a wider range of drivetrains to combat the faltering take-up of diesel.

The petrol/plug-in hybrid version of the Sportswagon offers power output of 205PS and 375Nm of torque and claims an electric range of more than 37 miles (60km), emitting 34g/km CO₂ on average. It will hit showrooms in Q3.

Philpott said: "Optima Sportswagon is growing in popularity in a segment that is decreasing and the plug-in adds another dimension to that."

Kia's hybrid-only SUV, the Niro, was also unveiled in plug-in form at the Geneva Motor Show – with claimed CO₂ emissions of just below 30g/km. Due in Q3, the Niro is already a huge success, said Philpott: "We have sold out to the end of March."

Kia Picanto

The new Kia Picanto made its global premiere at Geneva, alongside two other newcomers to the Korean brand's line-up.

Aiming to bring a more youthful and energetic character to Kia's A-segment offering, the new Picanto will include a performance-inspired GT-Line model for the first time.

A 'floating' seven-inch touchscreen and connectivity features including Android Auto, Apple CarPlay and a wireless smartphone charger all aim to add appeal to a young audience, along with a level of customisation thanks to 11 exterior colour options and a range of interior packs. The Picanto also claims to be the first car in its class to offer autonomous emergency braking, which is sure to score brownie points from Euro NCAP.

From launch at the start of Q2 2017, the new Picanto will be available with 1.0- and 1.25-litre petrol engines, with CO₂ emissions from just 89 g/km.

Kia's new 100PS, 1.0-litre turbocharged petrol direct injection (T-GDI) power unit will be available from Q4.



Volvo XC60

Volvo has equipped its new XC60 SUV with a range of autonomous technologies as it prepares to launch its first "fully autonomous" vehicle in 2021.

Håkan Samuelsson, the Swedish manufacturer's president and chief executive, told journalists in Geneva that the brand planned to offer an EV before 2020, followed later by a car with fully autonomous features.

The new XC60 features Steer Assist, a new autonomous system that has been added to Volvo's City Safety system.

Oncoming Lane Mitigation uses Steer Assist to help mitigate head-on collisions, while Volvo's Blind Spot Indication System (BLIS) will also use Steer Assist to avoid lane-changing collisions.

The new XC60 is due to go into production in April.



Silver 430



Do you manage your customer experience?

View the range of luxury gifts for enhancing the automotive experience, from events & test drives to a gift with purchase, the handover moment and even awards for your top performing team members!

For further information on how Mussay can help your business, please call: 020 3011 0211 or email: business@boxcouk.com

www.mussay.co.uk



Hyundai i30 Tourer

Hyundai's key Geneva Motor Show debut was handed to the i30 Tourer, which should prove popular among fleet drivers.

Despite an identical width (1,795mm) and wheelbase (2,650mm) as the i30 hatchback, the i30 Tourer adds 224 litres of boot space, for a total 602 litres.

It also claims fuel economy as strong as 65.3mpg alongside 95g/km CO₂ emissions, thanks to Hyundai's new range of small-capacity turbocharged engines.

Expect the i30 Tourer to arrive in UK showrooms this summer, priced from about £17,000.

Volkswagen Arteon

Volkswagen aims to move into a more premium part of the market with its new Arteon saloon car.

Volkswagen hopes the styling of the four-door coupé – a replacement for the CC, which racked up 2,544 UK sales in 2016 – will see their newcomer contend with the likes of BMW's 3-Series Gran Coupé when it arrives in UK showrooms this autumn.

The Arteon will be powered by either Volkswagen's new 1.5-litre TSI petrol engine with cylinder deactivation or a 276bhp, two-litre TSI all-wheel-drive model range-topper.

Alison Jones, Volkswagen UK brand director, will be hoping that a move to the burgeoning premium segment will boost profitability among a disgruntled dealer network.

Volkswagen were joint second-last in the NFDA Winter Dealer Attitude Survey with Mitsubishi when dealers were asked to rate their manufacturer overall.

Speaking to *AM* at Geneva, Jones said: "The two issues that arose were, one, network profitability, and two, complexity and we have been working hard to address that.

"I wrote to the partners in an attempt to foster more openness and address the issues that the survey raised."



Subaru XV

Subaru has introduced its first product to sit on a new global platform in the shape of the new XV.

The compact SUV is all-new and features a new 156PS version of the brand's two-litre direct injection boxer engine and symmetrical all-wheel drive on all models.

Body-hugging seats and a revised eight-inch touchscreen infotainment system form part of a new interior and the standard introduction of EyeSight autonomous emergency braking will help the brand realise its aspiration to have five-star Euro NCAP ratings, according to Paul Tunnicliffe, Subaru UK and Isuzu UK managing director.

He said: "Our volumes are relatively modest, our PCP penetration doesn't compare with other brands and our dealerships are quite unique in the modern retail environment, but we know the strengths of our products. Range-wide five-star Euro NCAP scores will be another strength."



Automotive management LIVE

In association with
NFDA
NATIONAL FRANCHISED DEALERS ASSOCIATION

Bringing together the motor retail industry

NEW VENUE FOR 2017

NEC, Birmingham

Following a fantastic launch event in 2016, Automotive Management Live is proud to announce the move to a new and larger venue for 2017 – the NEC Birmingham.

This one-day event will again provide suppliers with the opportunity to showcase the scope of their businesses, products and services. It promises to be high-profile, fast-paced, insightful, enjoyable and unlike anything else on offer for the sector today.

November 9, 2017

NEC, Birmingham

automotivemanagementlive.co.uk

MORE THAN JUST AN EXHIBITION ■ Networking ■ Best-practice sessions ■ Insight theatre ■ Advice clinics



DS Automobiles DS 7

A 300PS plug-in hybrid will top the line-up of the new DS 7 Crossback when the premium SUV arrives in the UK later this year.

The 4WD 'E-Tense' drivetrain combines a 1.6-litre petrol engine and two electric motors, giving the DS newcomer a claimed pure-electric range of 37 miles.

Technical highlights of the DS 7 include a suspension that scans the road ahead and tunes itself accordingly, a night-vision pedestrian detection system and semi-autonomous active cruise control system.

An interior that features a pair of 12-inch screens and a BRM Chronographes clock, which leaves its setting and pivots through 180 degrees when the DS 7 is started, is part of the brand's push to be seen as 'avant garde'.

Vauxhall Insignia Grand Sport and Grand Tourer and Crossland X SUV

Although Vauxhall hit the headlines with the PSA Group takeover announcement two days before the motor show opened, the manufacturer used its 'centre stage' moment at Geneva to unveil the Insignia Grand Tourer saloon and Crossland X SUV.

Forming the first part of Vauxhall's 'Five-Star' 2017, which will see five major product launches in one year, the two new models were unveiled by Opel chief executive Karl-Thomas Neumann.

The Crossland X joins the Mokka X in Vauxhall's SUV offering – a Grandland X will also arrive later in the year – and will do battle against the Renault Captur and Peugeot 2008.

Vauxhall claims the newcomer is distinct from the big-selling Mokka X (2016: 41,689), which competes with the Nissan Juke and Škoda Yeti.

At 4.21 metres in length, the Crossland X is 6cm shorter than the Mokka X, and a full 16cm shorter than the Astra hatch.

The new Insignia Grand Sport and Grand Tourer present a sleeker new generation of D-segment Vauxhall contenders in the saloon and estate markets.

Prices for the new Insignia are nearly £1,500 less than the entry price into the outgoing line-up, with an all-new 1.5-litre turbocharged petrol model priced from £17,115.

The Sports Tourer prices start from £18,615. A range-topping 260PS, two-litre 4X4 petrol is available in Elite Nav trim from £26,455.



Range Rover Velar

Land Rover is looking to plug the gap between the Range Rover Sport and Evoque with the sleek new Velar.

A rival to Porsche's Macan, the new model is the brand's most road-biased model yet and is underpinned by the same technology as the Jaguar F-Pace.

The Velar will be priced from £44,830 and go on sale this summer.

Gerry McGovern, Land Rover's design director, described the Velar as "the most car-like Range Rover we've done so far, but just as capable."

"It's a new type of Range Rover for a new type of customer."

Land Rover claimed to have received 40,000 expressions of interest from potential customers – 12,000 of those in the UK – following the publication of a teaser image of the Velar in February.



Seat Ibiza

The Volkswagen Group used the all-new Seat Ibiza hatchback to debut its MQB-A0 production platform, which will be used to build the new VW Polo, Audi A1 and Skoda Fabia.

Richard Harrison, brand director, Seat UK, said the move was a "vote of confidence" in the Spanish brand and its historic best-seller – a car which has more than 5.4 million global sales to its name and is in its fifth generation.

The new Ibiza will be sold with a one-litre, three-cylinder TSI with 95 or 115PS, with a new 150PS 1.5-litre TSI becoming available in late 2017. A 1.6 TDI diesel engine will be available in 80, 95 and 115PS guises.

Harrison said: "The better-specced cars have traditionally been the best seller for us and we fully expect the new FR to be the most popular in the new line-up too."

Suzuki Swift

Suzuki's new Swift will be a welcome addition to the Japanese brand's showrooms when it sweeps into the UK this June.

Registrations of the hatchback fell 16.45% to 11,115 in 2016, but newer product took up the slack as the brand registered a 10.83% overall increase to 38,167.

Suzuki hopes the new Swift, which claims to be up to 10% lighter, 19% more powerful and 8% more fuel efficient than the outgoing model, will bolster the manufacturer's fortunes in the B segment.



Smarter Stocking.

NextGear Capital Stocking Plans are the smart way to buy the stock you want from the source you choose.

It's all about freeing up the cash you need to transform your sales, and maximise your profit.

**Fill up your forecourt.
Apply for a Stocking Plan at
nextgearcapital.co.uk**

NEXTGEAR
CAPITAL™

The Dealer Stocking Specialist.

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.

COX AUTOMOTIVE®



Alfa expects to sell 3,900 Giulias this year

ALFA ROMEO GIULIA: DRIVERS WILL LOVE IT, BUT WILL DEALERS?



This is the car that will put Alfa Romeo back on the map' is a phrase often heard from the Italian manufacturer, but one that has never really rung true.

At the launch of the all-new Giulia saloon, country director Damian Dally said it "really is the car to relaunch the brand".

However, sales aspirations are low – Alfa expects to sell 3,900 Giulias this year.

Under the skin is an all-new platform, which will form the basis for a range of new Alfas to 2020, including the upcoming Stelvio SUV – which is expected to be the big seller.

The Giulia is Alfa's first saloon since 2006 and it drops into the playpen with some of the biggest names in the business. With a conquest sale aspiration of 80%, it needs to steal customers from the Audi A4, BMW 3 Series, Jaguar XE and Mercedes C-Class.

To give the car the best possible start, Alfa Romeo focused on developing the flagship Quadrifoglio version first, then reverse-engineered the mainstream models.

Unlike most D-segment saloons, the Giulia harnesses high-performance technology such as a carbon-fibre propshaft and aluminium suspension and body panels. The focus on weight-saving not only improves performance, but also efficiency.

The range starts at £29,190 for the base spec 'Giulia' with a 2.0-litre 200PS turbo-charged petrol engine. There are three further trim levels; Super, Speciale and

Veloce. A fleet-specific Tecnica model is also available, priced from £30,750.

Standard specification is generous and includes an eight-speed automatic transmission, alloy wheels, LED rear lights, dual-zone climate control, cruise control with speed limiter, 8.8-inch Connect infotainment system and 'DNA' driving mode selector.

Super models cost from £30,880 and get larger 17-inch alloy wheels, leather and fabric seats and steering wheel paddle-shifters. Buyers can choose the 200PS petrol engine or a 2.2-litre JTDM diesel with either 150 or 180PS.

In Speciale trim, the wheels are 18 inches. Bi-xenon headlights, powered and heated sports seats, sports bumpers, black gloss window surround and rear sports diffuser with dual exhausts are also included. This model costs £34,150 and is only available with the 2.2-litre 180PS diesel engine.

The Giulia Veloce is exclusively available with a 280PS petrol engine and shares the Speciale's sporty exterior styling and spec.

At the top of the range is the £59,000 Giulia Quadrifoglio. It utilises a Ferrari-inspired 510PS 2.9-litre bi-turbo petrol engine. Alongside its more aggressive body, which uses a carbon fibre bonnet and roof, there are 19-inch alloy wheels. Inside, it is equipped with sports seats trimmed in leather and Alcantara with white/green stitching, lashings of carbon-fibre trim and a sports steering wheel with red power button.

Safety kit comes in abundance on all



£29,190 -
£59,000



2.0 PETROL TURBO
200PS OR
280PS/2.2 DIESEL
150PS OR
180PS/2.9V6
BI-TURBO 510PS



0-60MPH: 3.9
TO 8.2 SECONDS
TOP SPEED: 137
TO 189MPH



EIGHT SPEED
AUTOMATIC



34.4-67.3MPG



109-189G/KM CO₂

KEY RIVALS



BMW 3 Series

- ✓ DRIVING THRILLS, LOW CO₂ FROM EFFICIENT DYNAMICS MODEL
- ✗ POOR LEVEL OF STANDARD EQUIPMENT



Mercedes C-Class

- ✓ LUXURIOUS CABIN AND COMFORT
- ✗ NOT AS GOOD TO DRIVE



Jaguar XE

- ✓ GREAT EFFICIENCY AND STANDARD EQUIPMENT
- ✗ REAR LEGROOM AND SMALL BOOT

REVIEW RATINGS (Quadrifoglio)

CAR



EVO



AUTOCAR



[THE GIULIA]
REALLY IS THE
CAR TO
RELAUNCH
THE BRAND

DAMIAN DALLY,
ALFA ROMEO



The rear-wheel drive Giulia will have a three-year/60,000 mile RV of 38.2%



Standard specification on the Giulia is generous

G iulias. Forward collision warning, autonomous emergency braking with pedestrian protection, lane departure warning, adaptive cruise control (optional) and blind-spot monitoring (optional) are all available. In any guise, it's an extremely safe car, scoring the highest ever result in the Euro NCAP occupant safety test (98%), with an overall five-star rating.

Alfa Romeo is expecting the 180PS diesel in Super trim to be the big seller. It costs £31,950 and despite having a 30PS advantage over the lower-powered model, returns identical fuel consumption of 67.3mpg (combined) and CO₂ emissions of 109g/km. Acceleration from 0-60mph takes 7.1 seconds (8.2 for the 150PS) and maximum speed is 143mph.

With 450Nm of torque on offer, the JTDM serves up strong pace. Its eight-speed automatic gearbox is well matched to the engine and executes smooth shifts. The engine note is slightly intrusive, but overall it's a well-suited engine for this type of car.

Tipping the scales at 1,374kg and with perfect 50:50 weight distribution and rear-wheel drive, the Giulia delivers an immersive driving experience. Despite erring on the firm side, it's hard to fault the manner in which the car gets down the road. Where previous Alfa saloons have appealed to the eye, the Giulia is, at last, an Alfa you can fall in love with for the way it drives.

All models are fitted as standard with Alfa's DNA drive mode select. It adjusts a multitude of settings (where specified) including those of the engine, suspension, steering, transmission, rear differential,

Q&A



DAMIEN DALLY, COUNTRY DIRECTOR, ALFA ROMEO

How will sales be split?

Fleet to retail will be roughly 50/50. We are anticipating the 180 JTDM Speciale to be the volume-seller, or the Tecnica with business customers. However, with the current uncertainty over diesel it is possible the 200PS 2.0-litre petrol could have greater appeal to private buyers. The Quadrifoglio will account for about 20% of all Giulia sales this year.

What have you done to protect residuals?

Residual values are a result of one's own behaviour. Unfortunately, Alfas in the past have had less favourable residuals than some of our competitors, but we are more confident with this new car.

We have done a route-to-market study with CAP, they have seen the car very early on and had an involvement in the option packs that have been developed.

CAP predicts the Giulia will retain up to 38.2% of its value over three years or 60,000 miles. What's really positive is the diesel Speciale sits in front of the BMW 3 Series and Mercedes C-Class

in equivalent spec. We aren't doing any short-term cycle business and dealers can't sell their Quadrifoglio demo for six months – so there won't be any in market until that time.

What challenges will dealers face this year?

When you are looking to grow, you have to take from someone else. These people will be coming from a group of two clusters. Some from premium – who are used to a certain level of service, which is going to be a challenge for us. The other, because of the emotional aspect for the brand, will come from mainstream and will be paying more than they are used to.

We are trying to focus the dealers on getting the product out and about and getting people behind the wheel. Once they sit in the car, their expectations will be exceeded.

Will dealers be expected to invest in a new brand identity?

We are already half-way through a project to update our existing 54 dealers. The idea is the whole network will be done by Q2 next year. We also have six sites joining the network this year.

The key thing is when someone walks in the showroom it meets what they expect from a premium brand and the experience is good. It's a brand sold on emotion and passion and that lives or dies by the people that are selling it.

Our network model is to try and put Alfa and Jeep together, some sites have all four brands, but there is a specific corporate identity for Alfa and Jeep.

“WE ARE TRYING TO
FOCUS THE DEALERS ON
GETTING THE PRODUCT
OUT AND ABOUT AND GETTING
PEOPLE BEHIND THE WHEEL

DAMIEN DALLY, ALFA ROMEO

instrument display, brakes and driver aids.

Non-Quadrifoglio models get a choice of three modes: Dynamic, Natural or Advanced Efficiency. Opt for the flagship and an additional Race Mode option is available, which uncovers this car's true identity.

In Race, the Quadrifoglio unleashes the full might of its powertrain – 510PS and 600Nm of torque means it can reach 60MPH in just 3.9 seconds and go on to 189mph.

Its fierce power isn't reserved for straight lines though; an advanced torque-vectoring double-clutch rear differential system and

computerised chassis control helped this car lap the Nürburgring in 7m32s, the same time as a Porsche 911 Turbo and 20 seconds faster than rival BMW M4.

This is no track-monster-with-number-plates though. Switch to Dynamic or Natural and the Quadrifoglio will soak up the miles in as dignified a manner as the diesel. Furthermore, if you engage advanced efficiency mode, half of the V6 shuts down to boost fuel consumption. This means the high-performance Giulia can return 34.4mpg with CO₂ emissions of 189g/km. **MATT DE PREZ**



Digital. Automotive. Performance.

When it comes to automotive digital marketing, Modix is leading the way. Drive leads and business growth with innovative solutions for everything from search marketing and stock management to used vehicle locators, websites and imagery.

Accelerate your digital performance today.
Find out more at

modix.co.uk

NISSAN NP300 NAVARA TEKNA

REPORT
PROGRESS



NISSAN'S CAPABLE NAVARA HAS FRESH RIVALS FOR 2017

Competition in the UK's pick-up market is likely to intensify in 2017, as several brands enter the segment for the first time. Fiat has just launched its Fullback, Renault is introducing the Alaskan and waiting in the wings is the Mercedes-Benz X-Class, the first premium brand pick-up.

The new entrants have lifestyle buyers in their sights as much as tradespeople and agricultural workers, as pick-ups bring tax benefits for certain customers. For company directors, pick-ups that are purchased by a business are eligible for writing off against capital allowances much quicker than company

cars. Because LCVs qualify as plant and machinery, the purchase cost can usually be written off in the first year, and company car drivers choosing these behemoths incur lower benefit-in-kind tax, as we detailed in our previous report.

Over the years, Navara and its rivals, as detailed below, have built a reputation for access-all-areas ability. An off-road excursion in coastal Norfolk and fording the River Lse was enough to convince me of the Nissan's capabilities. Yet analysis of its specifications alongside its rivals shows it is one of the segment leaders, but not outright champion in all crucial aspects. **TIM ROSE**

	Nissan Navara Tekna	Ford Ranger Wildtrack	Mitsubishi L200 Barbarian	VW Amarok Aventura
Ground clearance (mm)	224	229	205	192
Approach angle (degrees)	32	28	30	29.5
Departure angle (degrees)	25	28	22	18
Breakover angle (degrees)	22.2	25	24	15.6
Wading depth (mm)	600	800	500	500
Max payload (kg)	1,054	1,011	1,045	1,112
Towing capacity (tonnes)	3.5	3.5	3.1	3.1

☒ HILL DESCENT CONTROL, LOAD LINER PROTECTS AGAINST SCRATCHES

☒ VW AMAROK HAS A HIGHER PAYLOAD; QUIRKY SAT-NAV

CURRENT MILEAGE 0 3 0 3 1

START MILEAGE 0 1 3 0 7

MITSUBISHI OUTLANDER 2.2 DI-D GX4

REPORT
PROGRESS



DIGITAL OUTLANDER OFFERS PAINT A FASCINATING PICTURE

As we say goodbye to the Outlander, this final review looks at the role new digital tools play in the car search and purchase process.

An enquiry to Carwow, based on our test car, generated a fascinating insight into how dealers are exploiting the digital opportunity and how much information is being made conveniently available to consumers.

The first dealer response came in 24 minutes from Grays of Holbeach, 20 miles away; the second from my nearest dealer, 14 miles away in Corby, after two hours, 45 minutes.

The third response wasn't until 10.50 the following day. Subsequently, there were two more.

One of the slowest to respond offered the best price: £2,340 off the RRP on a cash deal and a 14.2% saving on finance. The dealer was also the furthest away – at 73 miles. It would cost me £15 in diesel to get there. The dealer offered a free tank of fuel. A compelling offer.

He had only six Carwow reviews, but all were 100% positive over four measures: friendliness, communication, knowledge and ordering process.

A closer dealer (83 miles) had 134 reviews, 99% of them four stars or above.

In addition to these offers, Carwow sent details of five nearly new and used DI-D auto and manual 'special offers'. It also sent another three emails nudging me towards a decision between February 16 and 25.

JEREMY BENNETT



CURRENT FUEL
ECONOMY
32.4MPG



VED COSTS
AFTER APRIL 1,
2017 £500
(BEFORE APRIL 1: £185)



PCP PAYMENT
£208.38 (36 MONTHS)
(2.2 DI-D 3 LEATHER MANUAL)



NUMBER OF NEARLY
NEW ON AUTO
TRADER: 10

☒ PLENTY OF ROOM FOR ALL THE FAMILY AND THEIR LUGGAGE ON WEEKENDS

☒ NOT BEING ABLE TO ACHIEVE THE MANUFACTURER'S COMBINED MPG

CURRENT MILEAGE 0 9 0 4 2

START MILEAGE 0 3 6 4 4

» GUESS THE CAR COMPETITION

THIS MONTH'S WINNER



Adam Smith,
parts adviser at
Harwoods
Land Rover
Pulborough,
correctly named
the Saab 99
Turbo.

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, April 7.





Buy the **used cars** you want,
direct from private sellers.



**Buy direct
from the public**
Save on auction fees.
New stock hourly.



All the info you need
Photos, condition report,
MOT, Experian autocheck
and service history.



Quick and easy
Browse listings, make
offers and set alerts
from your phone or PC.



No subscription fee
No monthly charges to
browse. Market-leading
sourcing fees.

Sign up for free at www.tootle.co.uk/dealers

Any questions, call **020 3327 2240**
or email **mike@tootle.co.uk**



Are we ready for autonomous cars?

Auto Trader Operations Director,
Nathan Coe



We've just launched our latest Market Report. Based on data from the UK's largest automotive marketplace, twice a year Auto Trader carry out an in-depth review of the UK car market where we share insights and observations of consumer car buying behaviour. Helping you to use these insights to sell more cars and grow your business.

In this latest edition we set out to better understand the future of car ownership, and what impact new and emerging technologies might have on our industry.

Levels of car ownership are currently high in the UK, with 85% of driving licence holders claiming to own at least one car, and 81% of current owners telling us they intend to continue owning cars in the future. This is very positive news for the automotive industry as it instils great confidence in the future of car buying.

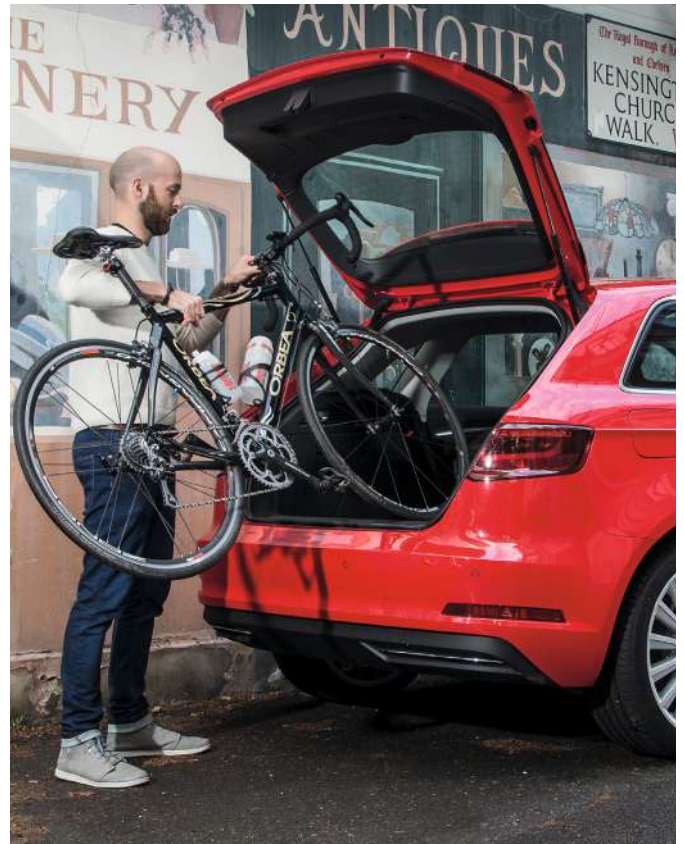
Interestingly, 73% of motorists identify 'independence' as the primary motivation for car ownership, which could help us understand why many disruptive models that have attempted to challenge the conventional idea of car ownership have failed to reach mass adoption with motorists to date. In fact, only 3% of current car owners say they would definitely consider peer-to-peer car sharing, with 4% agreeing the same for vehicle subscription services, and fleet-enabled car hire.

But how will the future of car ownership look? The future of the car is a very topical subject today, as fully-autonomous vehicles are rapidly becoming a reality in light of progress made by manufacturers and technology companies.

There are clear challenges that lie ahead, whether they be technological, infrastructural or legislative. Our full Report gives a detailed view of the awareness, desirability and confidence levels today's motorists have in fully-autonomous vehicles – arguably a largely overlooked assessment at this point in time.

Despite the evolution of the car, changes in buying considerations and new methods in which car buyers can purchase vehicles, it seems there is a fundamental sense of convenience and independence that comes with vehicle ownership.

So whilst fleets of autonomous vehicles may one day substitute some forms of public transport, taxis or rental vehicles, it will be some time before we can envisage large numbers of people parting with 'their' vehicle.



Defining ownership and the role of finance

Ownership is a subjective concept – like with our homes, we don't need to have bought it outright to feel that we actually own it, but to have exclusive access to it is essential. Whilst it is a loose idea, as the market accelerates and the purchase cycle becomes shorter (on average four years) as a result of more accessible and personalised financing options, the concept of ownership is becoming even more ambiguous.

The growth of the market has been attributed to a number of key factors, but arguably no factor has had more influence than the increasing role of finance in the purchase process.

New finance models enabling greater accessibility to a wider range of new and used cars are having a clear effect on how we perceive car ownership. Of those that bought a car using finance, 98% said that they owned their car, highlighting how the financing model has reshaped the concept of 'ownership'. Yet, our largely exclusive and independent relationship with the car has remained unchanged.

There is little doubt that these finance models have stimulated sales for the industry, particularly new cars, however, as opposed to driving the market it has really just accommodated a far more significant trend, and that's our fundamental desire to buy and own a vehicle.

The future of car ownership: car ownership in a world of autonomy

When we look to the future of car ownership and the impact more advanced vehicles may have, we can learn a lot from the challenges that electric and hybrid vehicle makers face in raising levels of confidence with consumers, as well as desirability. Examining the challenges for consumer awareness, confidence and even desirability, we can envisage that fully-autonomous vehicles are likely to see a similarly progressive adoption, where it increases in line with infrastructure developments and general confidence and desirability levels with car buyers.

Awareness and perception

Only 21% of motorists claim to know what a fully-autonomous vehicle is, with awareness levels dropping consistently with older motorists. But there also seems to be low awareness even with semi-autonomous cars, despite the fact that many vehicles available to purchase today come with varied semi-autonomous features. Only 19% of motorists claim to know fully what semi-autonomous means, with 37% claiming they 'know of it' but admit to knowing little about it; and 27% claiming to have only 'heard of it'.

What's more interesting, however, is that 17% of motorists say that semi-autonomous cars won't be available in their lifetime. 19% say they will be available in more than 10 years' time and 27% predict that semi-autonomous vehicles will be available in the next six to 10 years.

Interestingly, electric vehicles which have been in production for some time still have their own awareness challenges, with 61% of UK consumers saying they are aware of electric vehicles, but they also claim they aren't 'fully aware' of what an electric vehicle is.

Fully autonomous car adoption

Our Report revealed that almost half (49%) of current car owners say they would not be interested in a fully-autonomous vehicle. 30% of motorists said they were undecided, with 21% claiming they would consider purchasing a fully-autonomous car in the future. This suggests that driving desirability amongst motorists may be as important a challenge to overcome, as the required infrastructure and the technology itself.



The impact on our industry

The observation we can't ignore with each Auto Trader Market Report is that the automotive landscape is continually evolving in response to changes in consumer buying behaviour, energised by digital platforms and new technologies.

Up until now, the key challenge for retailers within the industry has been to understand these changes in consumer behaviour, and adapt their businesses to meet the increasing consumer expectations of the retail experience, both online and offline. But now the industry faces a new challenge, where it's not only consumer behaviour that will continue to change, but the very product itself.

Despite these anticipated changes, the findings present a positive outlook for UK retailers; even in a world of fully-autonomous vehicles, consumers still see car ownership as central to their future driving. Today's successful retailers are those that embrace change, and whilst the car buying process and the cars consumers buy will undoubtedly evolve, the fundamentals will remain true.

Understanding the customer and placing their needs at the heart of your business will always be essential. As it is today, car buyers will look for retailers that are open and offer full transparency across their digital and physical forecourts. Well-presented and clear imagery that reflects the true condition of a car, pricing that is in line with the live retail market and reviews that offer genuine insight are all key to building all-important trust. However, with increasing choice and complexity, these factors are likely to move beyond being just a competitive advantage, but a fundamental part of automotive retailing.

To read the Market Report in full, please visit: trade.autotrader.co.uk/market-report

Motor finance. With added flexibility.

startline
MOTOR FINANCE

Startline is a different kind of lender. Many forward-thinking dealer groups place us alongside their established prime lenders to add agility and flexibility to their lending panel.

Using a unique mix of technology, financial acumen and human skills, we can often approve applicants who have been previously declined, with sensible rates and highly attractive terms.

We call ourselves a **flexible prime lender** because we offer service standards and products comparable to a conventional prime lender but work harder to meet your needs.

Wouldn't your lender panel benefit from a little flexibility?



✓ Your customer, your rate - our highly competitive terms mean you can offer the customer equally competitive rates



Fast decisions, fast payouts - with responses while the customer is still in the showroom



Direct access to underwriting staff - sometimes, getting the best outcome for the customer involves dialogue and we are always available to talk



Technology and people - we work hard to find and employ the best of both in order to deliver people-based finance that really works



enquiries@startlinemotorfinance.com
www.startlinemotorfinance.com



FULFILL YOUR POTENTIAL



Study while working full-time and use your work experience to gain a qualification in the automotive sector.

Develop the skills needed for successful management and personal development on one of our programmes:

- MSc Strategic Automotive Management
- Postgraduate Certificate and Diploma Automotive Retail Management

www.lboro.ac.uk/cam

68179/C&PS/March17

APPLY NOW
FOR OCTOBER 2017

Centre for Automotive Management
T. +44 (0)1509 228839
Ruth Cufflin (R.Cufflin@lboro.ac.uk)



**Loughborough
University**

HOW DEALERS CAN BENEFIT FROM GREATER WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Flexible working can increase staff retention and attract women to the industry

Flexible working remains one of the biggest challenges facing the motor retail industry, given the long hours and commitments required to run a dealership.

By law, any employee with at least 26 weeks' service has a right to make a request for flexible working. Under the statutory provisions, workers can apply to vary their hours, the times they work and their place of work.

However, with staff often having to work long weekdays and regular weekends to provide customer service and hit sales and commission targets, it can be difficult for employers to approve their requests, particularly in smaller dealerships that have more limited resources.

Among the hardest jobs to work flexibly are those where the tools and equipment needed are only available at the dealer, or those whose roles rely heavily on customer interaction.

Long hours, little flexibility

Henry Knill, head of employment solicitors at Motor Industry Legal Services, said it was difficult to see requirements for long hours changing significantly in the motor trade, largely because of the commitment to selling or leasing a high-value asset, aftersales and stiff competition.

"Pitted against these conditions are, of course, the government policy for greater work-life balance. It is the clash of the irresistible force against the immovable object," said Knill.

He said employers have traditionally argued that full-time working is the only option in sales, partly because of customer service requirements and the often commission-based pay structure.

"FLEXIBLE WORKING IS A REAL OPPORTUNITY THAT THE INDUSTRY NEEDS TO EMBRACE BECAUSE YOU DON'T NECESSARILY NEED TO HAVE THE SAME PEOPLE WORKING 24/7"

LOUISE WALLIS, THE RETAIL MOTOR INDUSTRY FEDERATION



flexible working, while the internet and better technology allow more people to work from home or on a flexible basis.

"It may be easy to create a job-share, but the problem comes when one employee wants to work four days a week instead of five and you then have to find the appropriately skilled person to fill in for that extra day," he said.

"Even so, there are many positives to come out of flexible working, facilitated by the massive change in online purchasing, which has allowed for home-based workers to respond to initial enquiries."

Julia Muir, CEO of Gaia Innovation and founder of the UK Automotive 30% Club, said Rockar pioneered a flexible working model aligned to shopping centre hours that cover long working days and weekends on a variable-length shift and rota basis. Meanwhile, the Chorley Group recently successfully introduced a four-day working week for all employees, she said.

"Due to the introduction of technology and the 24/7 customer shopping behaviour, more dealer groups are also investigating changes to job design to implement agile and flexible working, which can serve to attract and retain women," said Muir.

Ksenia Zheltoukhova, research adviser at the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, said open communication between employers and employees was key.

"Thinking about an employee's role in terms of the tasks they perform can help identify parts of the job that could be performed while working from home or with alternative working hours."

ALEX WRIGHT

"That said, it is obviously important employers do take requests seriously and don't react with a knee-jerk reaction of 'no,'" he said. "Tribunals are increasingly sceptical of the argument that job shares are not possible and most jobs can't be done flexibly with some good system of handover and cooperation – systems the employer can devise and enforce."

Force for change

However, Louise Wallis, the Retail Motor Industry Federation's head of business management, believes the shift towards flexible working is already happening.

"Flexible working is a real opportunity that the industry needs to embrace, because you don't necessarily need to have the same people working 24/7," she said. "For example, you might have some people who are happy to work evenings instead of during the day."

Simon Boxall, chief operating officer at Jemca Car Group, which has agreed to flexible working hours for five of its roles, said an increase in requests will prompt employers to be more accommodating.

He said job-sharing and redefining job descriptions are two ways of achieving

RESOURCES

FLEXIBLE WORKING PODCAST



The Chartered Institute of Professional Development has a series of podcasts that cover flexible and family-friendly working: am-online.com/FlexiblePodcast

COMPANY CASE STUDIES

ACAS has a guide on the right to request flexible working, including making a request, handling requests, resolving a dispute, working from home, training for employers and a video by SME company directors on the benefits of flexible working: am-online.com/FlexibleCaseStudies

EMPLOYER'S GUIDE TO FLEXIBLE WORKING



Timewise's guide for employers on how to enable talent progression through flexible working in retail: am-online.com/FlexibleGuide

TALENT ON THE MOVE

ADVERTISING FEATURE

Brush up your phone skills

How good are you at converting telephone enquiries into showroom appointments, asks Simon Bowkett of Symco Training



This month, I want to compare the 'road to the sale' process for walk-in customers with the way we handle telephone enquiries.

With the walk-in customer, we need to start by getting our attitude right. Then we do the meet and greet, qualify needs and wants using their part-exchange as a qualifying tool, and give a presentation and demonstration to raise their desire for the product. At the end of the demonstration drive, we test their commitment with a trial close question, then we negotiate, and finally close. That is the classic 'road to the sale'.

Telephone enquiry process

The telephone enquiry process is quite similar in that we need to get our attitude right first and introduce ourselves to the customer. Then we have to qualify them, find out what they are interested in and what it was about that car that put it on their shopping list.

The next stage of the telephone enquiry is converting the call into a showroom appointment. The presentation and demonstration stages of the road to the sale do not apply. However, the purpose of the presentation and demo is to raise the customer's desire for the car, and what I think we need to focus on with telephone enquiries is raising the customer's desire for a showroom appointment. We need to convince them to come in and speak to us, rather than visit another dealership.

Why should they visit your dealership?

Let's look at another industry for a moment. Let's say I want to buy a new laptop. Stock, price and location are all important, but if I speak to someone on the phone who really knows their stuff, and who takes a real interest in me, I might well decide to go in and speak to them.

So what we need to do is raise the desire for an appointment, not just for the car. Think about that every time you are dealing with a telephone enquiry, and watch my new sales training video on the AM website (am-online.com/symcotraining, or at symcotraining.co.uk) this month for more tips on raising the desire of your telephone customers.

Visit our website for free training trial

To find out how our low cost, IMI-approved online training programme can help train your team, visit symcotraining.co.uk/freetrial and get your FREE trial started today.



**MATT BENNS,
VOLKSWAGEN**

Volkswagen has appointed Matt Benns as its new head of customer quality and network development.

Benns has worked for Volkswagen Group since 2007. He held a number of franchising roles at Seat before becoming Seat's head of customer quality and network development four years ago.

In 2016, he oversaw the launch of a new retail store concept to sell Seat cars across shopping centre environments, including a new site at the Lakeside shopping centre in Essex. He was also responsible for creating and implementing the international network strategy for Seat's future growth to 2018.

Before working for Seat, he held five roles at Mazda, including area and aftersales manager and dealer operations manager.

In his new role, Benns will report directly to Alison Jones, brand director, Volkswagen UK, with responsibility for customer quality management, people development and network development.

Volkswagen said Benns would lead the team that continues to improve services offered to Volkswagen customers and "maintain Volkswagen's position as a brand with a strong retailer network".

Benns said: "I'm very much looking forward to joining the Volkswagen brand and to working with the customer quality and network development team. We have a strong platform to move this area of the business forward and I'm excited about getting started."

Jones said: "I'm looking forward to making the most of Benns' in-depth understanding of driving retailer profitability, and working with him to capitalise on our network and people development activities."

**"I'M
LOOKING
FORWARD
TO MAKING THE
MOST OF BENNS'
IN-DEPTH
UNDERSTANDING OF
DRIVING RETAILER
PROFITABILITY**

**ALISON JONES,
VOLKSWAGEN**



**CHRIS BROWN,
MOTORPOINT**

Motorpoint has promoted Chris Brown to head of group operations.

Brown was general sales manager at Motorpoint's Newport car supermarket. He will oversee a 50-strong team based at the company's branch near the Newport Retail Park.

Brown said: "I look forward to working closely with my colleagues to increasing Motorpoint's market share."



**GARY MONAGHAN,
G3**

The G3 Group has appointed Gary Monaghan as operations director and a client relationship manager.

Monaghan, previously the operations director and co-founder of JTK Automotive, will work across all sectors, including G3 Remarketing and Asset Management.

G3 also recruited Hazel Anstey, who will take on the newly created position of client relationship manager.



**SIMON DENNISON,
BRISTOL STREET MOTORS
WEST BROMWICH FORD**

Bristol Street Motors has appointed Simon Dennison as general manager of its West Bromwich Ford dealership.

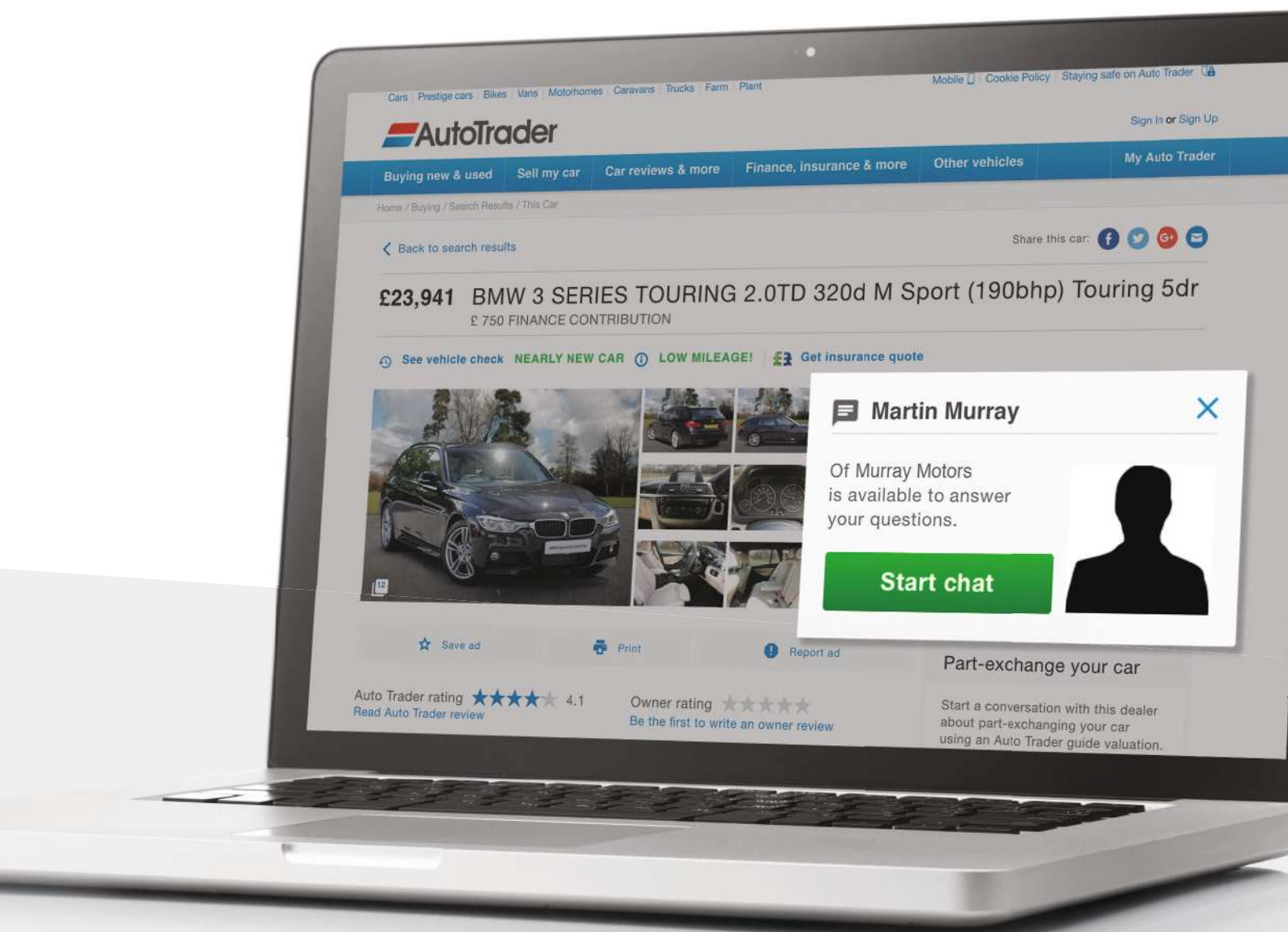
Dennison previously worked as a sales manager at the group's Worcester Ford dealership, before going to another car dealership.

Dennison said he aimed to "maintain the high standard of service that our customers have come to expect".

Don't miss out on potential sales

84% of consumers are more likely to search outside of working hours. With Live Chat you can talk directly to buyers at a time that suits them.

Now included in all packages.



ADVERTISING FEATURE EXECUTIVE PANEL

Industry professionals share

Knowledge is power, and businesses need as much expert advice and insight as possible to succeed. For senior managers in franchised dealerships, who are ultimately responsible for a multi-faceted service, retail and business-to-business operation, that need is even more pronounced. This is where AM's Executive Panel can be of real help. The Executive Panel is made up of AM commercial partners who are all experts in their key industry segment – segments that can have a major influence on a motor retail business's bottom-line profitability and customer experience.

VALETING

Imaging – partnering the best

By Martin Peters, sales director, Autoclenz Group



Autoclenz is proud to announce that it will be partnering with AutosOnShow to give clients the best possible imaging solution in the marketplace.

By teaming up with AutosOnShow, Autoclenz can plug into its cutting-edge technology to provide clients with video, still images and automatic backdrops on every stock vehicle.

The process is simple, but very effective. Autoclenz has trained operators in the valet bay, so once a valet is complete and quality-checked, the vehicle moves to imaging where a 60-second video and still images will be taken. This is then uploaded via iPad/iPhone technology and the vehicle is identified by number plate recognition, all in a matter of seconds. In fact, the upload is often completed before the vehicle has left the valet bay and moved on-site available for sale. Images can also have the backgrounds replaced automatically.

This solution delivers consistency of imaging, quality and speed of upload by making imaging part of the vehicle preparation process. It is also important to emphasise that video imaging versus still photography will significantly improve search engine results for your stock. Link this with the AutosOnShow stock-imaging portal and you have complete control over your shop window.

Autoclenz makes a one-off imaging charge per vehicle, which is driven through our PVMS (paperless vehicle management system) to give your business complete transparency.

■ To find out more about the difference at Autoclenz, please call Rebecca on 01283 554 682.



AUCTIONS

Independent dealers value funding support

By Simon Henstock, BCA chief operating officer, UK remarketing



Rising volumes and strong demand in the used vehicle market have driven BCA Partner Finance to a record month, with more than 500 units a day funded in January. Churn in the used vehicle market, fuelled by strong retail sales, has significantly reduced the average stocking period from December's seasonal high.

The strength of the used vehicle market, coupled with an investment in innovation, has seen this service grow rapidly. BCA Partner Finance had a busy start to the year, with the expectation that demand for quality stock from the independent sector would generate a busy few months for our stock-funding business. With a growing customer base, we have rolled out a national customer service network, which advises buyers in each BCA auction centre.

BCA Partner Finance offers franchised and independent dealers of all sizes 120 days' funding on vehicles bought at BCA auction centres. It was the first finance product specifically designed for the UK remarketing sector.

Underlining the demand for this specialist funding support, the business has grown rapidly to support more than 1,300 customers with finance facilities for used vehicle stocking. Penetration of BCA sales reached 9% in January, and the operation is on track to fund more than 75,000 units during the current financial period.

Our customers use the service to free up funds, which enables them to grow their business how they see fit. BCA Partner Finance has allowed dealers to trade more flexibly, with many now looking to source stock seven days a week.

The service funds the whole auction purchase, including fees and VAT where applicable. Interest is charged at a competitive flat rate – equivalent, on average, to less than £2 a day – with both cars and LCVs eligible for funding.



FOR THE LATEST INFORMATION FROM
DEALER SUPPLIERS VISIT:
am-online.com/news/supplier-news/



PEOPLE

Six tips to help you manage CHANGE

By Nigel Banister, director, GMD People



Self-driving electric vehicles, car stores in shopping centres, changing customer attitudes to car-buying, access to more online data – these are some of the changes facing the motor retail industry. Change is difficult. We feel comfortable with the status quo and when this shifts, it can make people nervous. As leaders

and managers, how we handle these changes will be critical to business success. Here are some hints and tips for becoming more savvy in change management:

C = Communication: Regular, consistent communication before, during and after any change process is critical.

H = Help: Provide help and support to those affected by change – let people voice concerns. Keep an open-door policy and listen with genuine interest. Engagement is key.

A = Action: Be clear on the changes needed and have a clear plan of action to implement these. By embracing change and keeping a focused attitude will influence others to do the same.

N = New (not negative): Change is about transitioning to a new place. It needs people working together to achieve this – focus on the positive aspects and not the negatives.

G = Goal: As part of the preparation for change, be clear on the goal of the intended change. Ensure all key stakeholders are clear on this.

E = Expect the unexpected: You can have the most detailed plan about how a change will be implemented, but it is best to be ready for those unexpected situations. Resilience is key!

"I believe the auto industry will change more in the next five to 10 years than it has in the last 50" – Mary Barra, CEO, General Motors

■ Visit our website for our previous AM articles at gmdpeople.com/news or contact us on 01327 831 371.



VIDEO

Cut through the white noise with video

By Adam Price, MD & founder, AutosOnShow.tv



With more than 205 billion emails sent a day, cutting through the digital noise has never been harder. On average, about a quarter of emails are opened, with click-through rates of about 4%.

It is clear the content most likely to be clicked on is that which people feel they have to engage with. Fear of missing out is a powerful incentive and one that drives much of digital and social marketing.

The good news for dealers is that continued investment in innovation by AutosOnShow means advanced technology can be used to create content for attractive email and digital campaigns that both grab the attention and generate the engagement crucial to making sales.

The advanced AutoCOMMS marketing solution for vehicle manufacturers and retailers is a centrally managed marketing and communications platform that creates interactive marketing messages around video and image assets created through the AutoCAPTURE solution.

It creates time-sensitive interactive video content that informs and engages car buyers researching online. To help in a time-pressured work environment, users can centrally control their content, communicate corporate messages and launch special offers as car buyers search for their next vehicle.

Marketing campaigns can be scheduled based on make, model, derivative or any other search criteria desired. The technology also automatically allows 'top and tail' videos to be shown around different vehicle videos, and even allows messages to dynamically appear over existing content to highlight special offers or regional promotions.

AutoCOMMS leads potential customers on a journey to the dealership by delivering the right marketing message at the right time to convert browsers into buyers.





GROUP 1 AUTOMOTIVE®

HEAD OF BUSINESS

Do you have a passion for the BMW & MINI products? Group 1 Automotive are looking for a Head of Business to join their Spire Watford BMW/MINI Centre.

As Head of Business, your key objective would be to drive performance of the departments in order to ensure that excellent customer service is provided and all financial targets are achieved.

You will be a dynamic leader with proven track records in developing Sales and Aftersales departments, with responsibility to establish and develop the Retail Centre organisation and control systems in order to ensure the efficient operation of each department, consistent with its present and future objectives.

You will be managing resources available within the Brand to achieve set objectives, including customer satisfaction, employee happiness, sales volumes, profitability and high loyalty levels.

If you recognise yourself in the description above, we want to meet you to discuss how you can help Group 1 achieve their exciting objectives in the UK and how we can help you achieve job satisfaction and career progression.

About us

Spire Watford BMW/MINI is part of the Group 1 Automotive network, a well-established and growing automotive group in the UK, with offices in America and Brazil as well. Group 1 Automotive is the 10th largest dealership group in the UK, has a strong history of success and is looking to grow their presence in the UK over the coming years.

All dealerships in the Group 1 Automotive network offer fantastic career opportunities, state of the art resources and training and competitive earnings packages.

In the first instance please forward your CV and covering letter to: recruitment@group1auto.com



Are you an energetic, driven individual who wants to make a difference? Are you passionate about great Sales Process?

BTC is one of the longest standing automotive training and development companies established 28 years ago. As part of our expansion, we require talented full time and associate training consultants for both our training and auto VHC customers.

The role:

- Ability to deliver high quality classroom and in- dealership coaching to both vehicle sales departments and aftersales departments
- Conduct system and sales process training
- Identify additional training opportunities

The people we want as part of our team will be:

- Sales professionals with a good knowledge of the automotive industry
- Process driven and sales orientated
- Outgoing, energetic and ambitious
- Hard working, flexible and results driven

We will reward the right people with:

- A substantial basic salary with an uncapped bonus scheme (minimum £50k OTE) or a substantial day rate for associate trainers
- Company car and expenses (Full-time consultants only)
- Terrific career development opportunities with one of the fastest growing automotive businesses

**Please apply in writing with a full CV to Emma Bonsall at:
BTC (Business Training & Consultancy) Limited,
2 Mallard Court, Mallard Way, Crewe, Cheshire, CW1 6ZQ
or alternately by email: bonsalle@b-t-c.co.uk**



www.b-t-c.co.uk autoVHC®

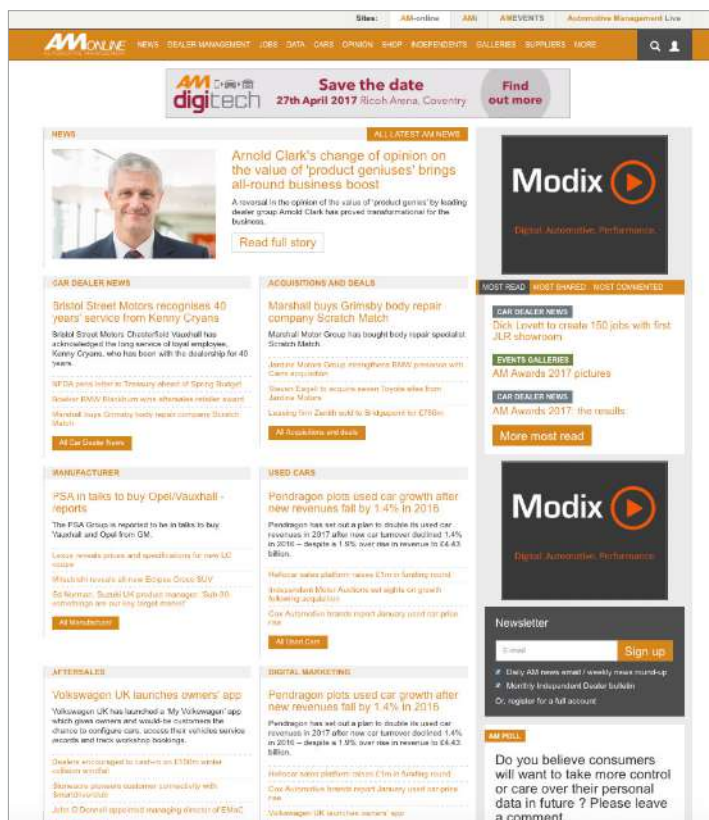
AM ONLINE AUTOMOTIVE MANAGEMENT

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.

Visitors can also sign up for our daily newsletter and Saturday news digest to catch up on the most important stories from the week.



VISIT WWW.AM-ONLINE.COM



SIGN UP TO AM'S FREE NEWSLETTERS AT: WWW.AM-ONLINE.COM/NEWSLETTER





The talent's out there
The trick is finding it!

ACCOUNTANCY

12138	Dealership Accountant	Gtr London	£52k pa ++
12121	Dealership Accountant	Herts	To £50k pa +
12120	Financial Controller	Leices	£45k pa ++
12119	Dealership Accountant	Herts	£40k pa Neg
12116	Finance Director	South East	To £80k pa ++
12115	Assistant Accountant	Hampshire	£24k pa +
12114	Temp Dealership Accountant	Berkshire	£Neg
12112	Temp Management Accountant	Oxfordshire	£Neg
12110	Management Accountant	London	£41k pa
12108	Group Accountant	Northants	£45k pa ++
12107	Financial Controller	Hampshire	£50k pa ++
12105	Financial Controller	Essex	To £60k pa
12117	Accounts Administrator	Dorset	to £24k pa

OPERATIONAL

12137	General Manager	Oxon	£95k OTE
12136	Vehicle Administrator	Herts	£23k Neg
12134	Aftersales Manager	Surrey	To £60k OTE
12133	Contact Centre Supvrs	Oxfordshire	OTE £35k
12131	General Manager	Cambs	OTE £100k
12128	Workshop Controller	Aberdeen	OTE £34k
12127	Product & Devpmt Mgr	W Midlands	To £56k
12126	Technical Advisor	Surrey	OTE £34k +
12124	Sales Controller	London	OTE £50k
12123	Sales Controller	Gtr London	OTE £50k
12122	Service Team Leader	Cheshire	£28k + OTE
12111	Sales Admin Supervisor	Herts	£27k Neg
12125	Parts Advisor	Gloucs	To £20k + OTE

Chris Eastwood Automotive Ltd
Suite 10, The Chestnuts, 4 Stortford Road, Dunmow, Essex CM6 1DA
Tel: 01371 874516 Fax: 01371 871572
Email: admin@ceauto.co.uk visit our website on www.ceauto.co.uk

STEELE SD DIXON

Steele-Dixon Est 1961

UK

- Electric Vehicle Store Manager – Central London - £60K
- General Sales Manager – West London - £65K
- Service Manager – Essex - £60K OTE
- Workshop Manager – Gloucester - £42K
- Group Finance Director – South East - £90K
- Group Sales Director – South East - £110K
- Group Aftersales Manager – Ireland - £100K
- Service Manager Volume – East Scotland - £50K
- Regional Aftersales Manager volume – North West - £65K
- Sales Manager Volume – Hampshire - £55K

Overseas

- Bentley/Audi Master Tech – UAE - £55K tax free
- Bodyshop Manager – North Africa - £40K tax free

For all other vacancies please visit www.steele-dixon.co.uk
or call the team on 01235 536 440

MB&G INSURANCE

An AROS Holdings Company

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT MANAGER – SOUTH (FIELD BASED)

ABOUT US: MB&G Insurance are a leading provider of warranty and other insurance products operating in the Automotive, Leisure and Domestic sectors. Established in 1978, MB&G Insurance work with London-based specialist brokers Genesis Special Risks Ltd. Like MG&G, GSR have considerable experience together with access to a range of insurers. We partner with UK General Insurance, an underwriting agency working with some of the best-known insurers in the UK market.

THE ROLE: As Business Development Manager, you will be field based and will cover a large territory travelling to key market areas south of Birmingham but mainly focussing on the South East. Extensive travel with therefore be necessary and location will be key to effective performance in the role.

The primary focus of this role is to assist us to grow our market share in the Automotive sector where we are able to offer a full range of competitive products in an already established market. You will be responsible for selling these products to automotive retailers across your territory and building long term and mutually beneficial relationships with those clients.

As this is a business to business sales role, previous experience in a similar role is essential together with a well-developed knowledge of the retail automotive sector. Your client base with vary widely from small independent retailers to larger multi-site operations so your ability to communicate with credibility at all levels is essential.

THE SUCCESSFUL CANDIDATE WILL BE:

- Socially adept
- Good with numbers
- A credible and professional communicator

THE SKILLS YOU NEED TO EXCEL IN THIS POSITION INCLUDE:

- Strong communication and IT fluency with email, Word, Excel and Powerpoint
- Creative talents and the ability to solve tough problems
- In-depth knowledge of the automotive industry and its current events
- The ability to handle pressure and meet deadlines
- Skill in prioritising obligations
- Attention to detail
- Excellent time management and organisation
- Previous experience and demonstrable success in a field sales role

BENEFITS: COMPETITIVE SALARY, COMMISSION WITH UNCAPPED OTE, CAR ALLOWANCE, COMPANY PENSION AFTER QUALIFYING PERIOD.

To apply for this position please email your up to date CV and covering letter including salary expectations to:

Chris Whitham, Head of Business Development
cwhitham@mbginsurance.com

MB&G Insurance Limited, Cobalt Business Exchange, Cobalt Park Way
Newcastle upon Tyne NE28 9NZ

FINANCIAL CONTROLLER

An opportunity has arisen for a suitable candidate to join Drive Motor Retail Ltd. as Financial Controller of our Leicester Dealership.

Drive Motor Retail are the largest privately owned Vauxhall Dealer Group in the UK, established in 2003 and with twelve sites, an annual turnover of £220 million and over 800 employees. Drive is well regarded in the Vauxhall network and has gained significant recognition throughout the industry winning many National Awards.

THE PERSON

We are seeking an industry professional with a recognised accounting qualification. We require a stable work history with a minimum of three years in their current role and a track record that can demonstrate a thorough understanding of all departments within a dealership. The ideal candidate will have experience of volume franchises and ADP Autoline.

THE ROLE

To have full responsibility for preparation of the Dealership Management Accounts, Balance Sheet reconciliation, Budget preparation and all statutory requirements relevant to the Dealership whilst managing a small team plus the use of off-site central functions. To report to the Finance Director, but working with the site management team to develop the business.

THE REWARD

To be part of a dynamic and exciting group that would allow your future personal and professional development and career progression within the group. To be involved in creating and shaping the future of both dealerships and the group. The role comes with a remuneration package that reflects the experience and qualifications required for the role.

WHAT NEXT?

If you believe that you are ready for the next step in your career and have the dedication and commitment to deliver consistent results then email your CV along with a covering letter detailing why you should be considered for the role to stuartharrison@drivevauxhall.co.uk



EIGHT QUESTIONS TO...

A PROPERTY MANAGER

An in-house architect, Phil Lambert loves the challenge of making sure Chorley Group gets the best value for money from fit-for-purpose buildings



What are the main responsibilities of your role?

LAMBERT: It is split between existing sites, current developments, and future developments. For existing sites, I am in the process of upgrading the facilities to make them more energy-efficient and cost-effective to run, reviewing everything across the portfolio from internal and external lighting through to our security strategies and equipment.

The work being undertaken for the business can be as big as a new showroom or workshop building, through to minor repairs to existing facilities.

For current developments, I oversee the work, ensuring the standard and specification are as required. I also act as the primary point of contact from both the business side of the works and the contractors' side.

For future projects, I produce feasibility studies to allow discussion with the board, as well as negotiating land and property deals with both public and private land owners. We currently have a few ongoing.

What are the most significant challenges ahead in your field of work?

LAMBERT: The primary challenge I face is not a new one. It's about getting the right balance between achieving a fit-for-purpose end product in a cost-effective way. But this is a challenge in all industries, from building a new car to constructing a building.

How might these challenges be overcome?

LAMBERT: At the Chorley Group, we recognise that the key to combatting this problem is knowledge and a well thought-out and interrogated brief. With all projects, it is critical to establish a realistic and specific list of requirements and specifications. Generic specifications for non-critical items are not good enough. Being clever with product selection can help you achieve huge savings.

If you combine that approach with good design and a tight brief, it can lead to something that meets with the needs of the end user at a reasonable price.

It is therefore extremely important that professional consultants employed to undertake any work are told from the start of any project what is expected of them.

Working as an in-house architect allows me to have complete control over both the design and specification of any project, allowing me to ensure with every aspect

of a building, the business is getting optimum value for money.

What attracted you to this area of expertise?

LAMBERT: I have always loved being an architect. Buildings and property have long been a passion for me, but working within the automotive industry has allowed me to bring together my love of cars with my love of buildings.

Prior to my appointment at Chorley Group, I had worked for the business as a consultant, so when they approached me to join it was an easy decision to make.

Working for Chorley Group is as much about the people as it is the industry. From working in the business, it is clear to me the success of this business is not just about the hard work put into it, but the personalities of those involved.

What's the most important thing you've learned in your career, and how have you made use of it at your company?

LAMBERT: When I speak to other consultants and clients, I am constantly told that my understanding of both design and value is unique. The available budget doesn't seem to be something of concern to many architects, so I am told.

Designing an impressive building with an endless budget is very easy, it is designing a building to a tight budget that is more challenging, and I love a challenge.

MATT DE PREZ

QUICK-FIRE QUESTIONS

What drives you?

I am passionate about everything I do; therefore, I want to be the best I can be.

What's your favourite app?

I have two, Auto Trader and Rightmove

How do you relax?

Some may say it's not relaxing, but I like to lift heavy weights in the gym.

AM

AM, Media House, Lynch Wood, Peterborough PE2 6EA
Email: AM@bauermedia.co.uk

THIS MONTH'S QUESTION TO THE AM TEAM:

What's your favourite smartphone app?

EDITORIAL

Editor-in-chief Stephen Briers 01733 468024
stephen.briers@bauermedia.co.uk

► **The International Space Station tracker – I never tire of seeing it arc overhead**

Editor Tim Rose 01733 468266
tim.rose@bauermedia.co.uk

► **OneNote – very useful when on the move**

News and features editor Tom Sharpe
01733 468343

tom.sharpe@bauermedia.co.uk

► **Easy. Spotify. The CDs are staying in the loft**

Head of digital/associate editor Jeremy Bennett
01733 468261

jeremy.bennett@bauermedia.co.uk

► **Spotify**

PRODUCTION

Head of publishing Luke Neal 01733 468262

► **eBay**

Production editor Finbarr O'Reilly 01733 468267

► **BeyondPod**

Designer Erika Small 01733 468312

► **Amazon**

CONTRIBUTORS

Mike Allen, Matt De Prez, Debbie Kirlaw,
Chris Phillips, Jim Saker, Tom Seymour, Alex Wright

ADVERTISING

Commercial director

Carlotta Hudgell 01733 366466 (maternity cover)

Group advertisement manager

Sheryl Graham 01733 366467

Head of project management

Leanne Patterson 01733 468332

Project managers

Kerry Unwin 01733 468578

Lucy Peacock 01733 468327

Katie Lightfoot 01733 468338

Account managers

Sara Donald 01733 366474

Kelly Crown 01733 366364

Recruitment enquiries 01733 366473

EVENTS

Event director Chris Lester

Event manager Luke Clements 01733 468325

Event planner Nicola Baxter 01733 468289

PUBLISHING

Managing director Tim Lucas

Office manager Jane Hill 01733 468319

Group managing director Rob Munro-Hall

Chief executive officer Paul Keenan

Subscriptions

01635 588494. Annual UK subscription £99, two years
£168, three years £238. Overseas one year/12 issues
£149, two years £253, three years £358.

AM is published 12 times a year by Bauer Consumer Media Ltd,
registered address Media House, Peterborough Business Park,
Lynch Wood, Peterborough, PE2 6EA.

Registered number 01176085.

No part of the magazine may be reproduced in any form in whole
or in part, without prior permission of the publisher. All material
published remains the copyright of Bauer Consumer Media Ltd.
We reserve the right to edit letters, copy or images submitted
to the magazine without further consent.

The submission of material to Bauer Media whether unsolicited
or requested, is taken as permission to publish in the magazine,
including any licensed editions throughout the world. Any fees
paid in the UK include remuneration for any use in any other
licensed editions.

We cannot accept any responsibility for unsolicited manuscripts,
images or materials lost or damaged in the post. Whilst every
reasonable care is taken to ensure accuracy, the publisher is not
responsible for any errors or omissions nor do we accept any
liability for any loss or damage, howsoever caused, resulting
from the use of the magazine.

Printing: PCP

Complaints: Bauer Consumer Media Limited is a member of the
Independent Press Standards Organisation (www.ipso.co.uk) and
endeavours to respond to and resolve your concerns quickly. Our
Editorial Complaints Policy (including full details of how to
contact us about editorial complaints and IPSO's contact
details) can be found at www.bauermediacomplaints.co.uk. Our
email address for editorial complaints covered by the Editorial
Complaints Policy is complaints@bauermedia.co.uk.



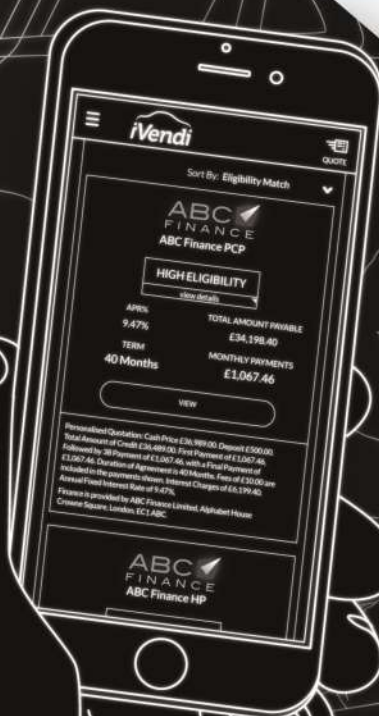
The text paper used in this publication
is 100% recycled, produced from
post-consumer waste.

MANAGE YOUR CONSUMER JOURNEY

digital

to

physical



engage



convert



transact

Contact us to discuss how we can help you **manage** your **consumer's journey**

☎ 0845 226 0503
✉ info@ivendi.com
🌐 www.ivendi.com/AM



iVendi
become empowered.

FOLLOW UP ON REVENUE

OPEN UP NEW REVENUE OPPORTUNITIES WITH A STRUCTURED FOLLOW-UP PROCESS



Customers often find reasons to decline recommended repair work on the day of service, but with Superservice Triage, the revenue opportunity is not lost.

Superservice Triage is an electronic Vehicle Health Check (eVHC) system that automatically records all declined repair work, and alerts Service Advisors to systematically follow up with customers at a future date.

This maximises service revenue by empowering Service Advisors to close sales that could be lost to competitors.

The timely follow up also demonstrates care, and encourages customers to return for future repairs.

www.superservice.com

+44 (0) 1223 896 920

service@ifmeurope.com

YouTube superservicesolution

