



Moving with the times

Autoclenz sales director Martin Peters said that meeting the varied and evolving demands of car retailers across the UK has helped the car preparation provider diversify to deliver unexpected new profit streams. With 1,600 self-employed operatives on its books across the UK, Derbyshire-based Autoclenz is a go-to solution for many of the UK's top car retail groups when it comes to the provision of high-quality and compliant staff and equipment to fulfil their valeting, cosmetic repair, delivery and collection, premises cleaning or imaging services.

As the opportunity to profit from straightforward valeting services plateaus, the business – which this year celebrates its 50th anniversary – has found itself involved in user-friendly software solutions, alloy wheel refurbishment and rapid-turn roadside valeting for a new breed of urban mobility provider.

"For a business that started with a husband and wife partnership operating out of a single Transit van when a mobile valeting service was considered 'a bit new age' it's hard to believe where we find ourselves," said Peters.

"The business has moved through various phases, from the 1980s when valeting was considered a highly-skilled profession and individual operators were paid the same as some solicitors at the time, to a point where we really have reached an all-time low in terms of what we charge for the same service.

"What has ensured that Autoclenz survived has always been an ability to innovate to meet customers' needs to the very highest standards with maximum flexibility."

Autoclenz's valeting services are a far cry from those of 1969, with contracts with eight of the top 10 AM100 retail groups and newly-extended agreements with Tesla,

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Mercedes-Benz Retail Group and BMW Park Lane, who are among the latest clients to benefit from a wide range of cutting-edge services.

Billed as "the ultimate tool in controlling the movement of your stock through the valet, preparation and imaging process while controlling the spend", its cloud-based Paperless Vehicle Management system (PVMS) now gives a live view



50 Years of Automotive Solutions

of jobs awaiting, progressing and completed through the valet bay.

PVMS allows retailers to control or eliminate the unnecessary cost of duplicate valets and configure sign-off by managers for "exceptional" valets. Early signs suggest this can save up to 3% of annual valet spend.

Peters said: "Auditing a dealership will reveal a single vehicle could go through three or four full valets at a cost of around £30 a time.

"PVMS eliminates that unnecessary cost and the savings are quite significant.

"People might say we are selling ourselves short by providing this kind

of transparency – we are the valet providers, after all – but it boils down to our desire to provide a cost-effective service that ensures car retailers stick with us long term."

Autoclenz's partnership with AutosOnShow means that product marketing can also be streamlined into the valeting process and monitored through the PVMS platform to ensure rapid and efficient delivery of a vehicle to market.

Helping Autoclenz to get vehicles sales-ready is the Smartshop service that offers a complete cosmetic repair solution on-site in an innovative weatherproof booth.

Five such booths are currently operational – helping to drive the fast turn of stock at businesses including car supermarket operator Motorpoint – and fulfil a full range of services, including smart repair, paintwork and alloy wheel refurbishment.

Peters said: "With mobile preparation services we found that we were often where the work wasn't. The Smartshop facilities are a great solution for a retailer because they benefit from our skilled staff and the very best equipment.

"Each of these booths costs us £60,000 to £90,000 but we charge the retailer only on a repair-by-repair basis."

Fulfilling a very specialised repair service to car retailers has created its most diverse new offering of recent times – its first retail location and, perhaps, its biggest single investment.

The creation of a new mobile diamond cut alloy wheel service in September 2018 saw the business invest over £110,000 in a 3.5 tonne lorry manned by trained technicians.

Made available for dealership visits via an online booking service, the service allows batches of wheels to be refurbished on the facility's on-site £50,000 specialist lathe.

Within two months of the launch of the mobile service Autoclenz opened its first Alloy Wheel Repair Centre at Unit 2, Counterpoint, Crewe, for both trade and public customers.

Peters revealed: "That is a business that has taken off in a way that we never expected. We thought it would be 70% B2B business, but it has ultimately proved to be the exact opposite.

"I suspect that in a world where many people run a car on a lease or PCH people are keener than ever to



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have repairs like this to avoid any end-of-term penalties."

Peters said that Autoclenz now has plans to open a second Alloy Wheel Repair Centre and is currently considering where it might be located.

Moving with the market has seen Autoclenz's ability to source a fully-compliant workforce for car dealerships evolve into a major USP.

Around 40% of applicants are now rejected due to the absence of the correct paperwork allowing them to work in the UK, according to Peters. Eliminating the risk of being exposed to illegal workers removes a considerable burden for retailers in terms of fines and potential reputational damage.

All Autoclenz staff now comply with a 'driving licence' scheme which sees them accrue points for infringements of any one of 54 workplace guidelines which include incorrect uniform or a radio being turned up too loud.

A new 'high five' scheme also outlines a list of on-site safety guidelines that must be adhered to, via a graphic printed on Autoclenz's official uniforms. These include: always driving with hazard warning lights on; a 5mph speed limit; and always reversing into a valeting or parking bay.

Peters said: "While we have clearly evolved and innovated, the core traits have to be quality and results-driven.

"That's why our USP remains recruiting the right people with the right skills to fulfil our clients' needs.

"The market might be changing but we have to ensure we remain the very best at what we do. As an outsourcing partner it's essential that we make life as effortless as possible for our customers."

For more information, email sales@autoclenz.co.uk or call 01283 554682