

Connecting processes in aftersales for greater efficiency and consumer focus



Strong competition in the aftermarket will drive dealers to consider how they can preserve their aftersales profitability and work smarter.

Technology and new operating processes are helping dealers to make aftersales operations more effective for the future. Connecting the entire process digitally in the long run will save time and provide greater traceability, and support dealers as they strive to remove mistakes and achieve that mantra of 'fix first time, every time'.

Workshop efficiency

Dealerships are under pressure because consumers are measuring them against other industries, said Marcus Dacombe, International Product Marketing Director, CDK Global.

Thanks to mainstream retailers and food delivery services, customers now expect a painless, connected experience and they want communications to be credible, relevant and useful. Dacombe said CDK's focus on getting the journey

right for the motorist will ultimately bring benefits for its dealer partners. Currently around 68% of aftersales customers are unengaged or neutral – they view the process of having their car serviced as a chore.

But making it easy through CDK's Connected Workshop can boost their engagement and leave more data at dealers' fingertips.

"A core part of the Connected Workshop is having to consult the CRM data held about that customer. From that, you'll know how often they visit and the sort of work they're having done, and with your marketing team you'll build a picture of how important they are to your business," said Dacombe.

CDK is tackling key stages in the aftersales process: how cars are booked in, the process of taking them into the service workstream, how the work required is explained to the driver, how they can be kept informed and how to simplify the booking of the next service. It has built synergies between its aftersales applications within the DMS. Service Online now gives dealers the chance to let

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MARCUS DACOMBE

customers get a transparent price and book their service 24/7 through a feed direct into its workshop system, ready for staff to view when they log in. Dacombe said dealers can configure parameters to suit the workshop resources and lead times, and the application ensures the business is not taking bookings it cannot keep.

Consumers also want smoother, faster check-ins. Mobile Service Advisor gives the dealership the ability to call up a customer's information as they arrive on site by

keying in the registration number. Mobile Service Technician also makes workshop clocking more efficient. In the years ahead, some drivers may wish to self-check in, dropping their keys in a secure cabinet, and in the USA there's a pilot scheme with an Uber driver on site to take them away.

The VHC Touch application, used on tablets and partnering with CitNow for personalised video, enables dealers to record vehicle condition and log items that need attention immediately or in the future.

Additional work required can be communicated as clearly as possible, using the customer's chosen method, whether that be by video message, mobile phone or email, and providing the full information to let them make an informed choice.

"We want to ensure we're giving the customer the most accurate, up-to-date information," he said.

How a customer likes to engage should be a crucial part of the data in the CRM system – dealers which meet their customers' needs best will benefit in the long run. Too many customers hear little or nothing from their dealer in between visits, but Dacombe believes dealers should be using their CRM data to "pinpoint moments in the lifetime of that car ownership" where the dealer can make timely and valuable contact, such as for services, seasonal health checks, or winter tyres. This helps to build trust with the customer while also driving revenue.

The strongest dealers will have a contact plan that reflects a real understanding of each customer.

Dacombe said: "Concentrate on looking at things from a driver's perspective. Is it going to be useful?" It's so important to stay connected to the customer and one step ahead of everything they need, by keeping them connected to the dealership and away from any competition.

Modernising the parts operation

Although there are still dealers operating traditional, small parts departments very well, there is a growing trend in large franchised dealer groups introducing centralised systems and processes.

"Dealers are now looking at new ways, or new channels, to sell parts. Whereas in the past there'd be faxed orders, today they want new ways to bring in orders without increasing

costs," said David Anderton, product manager, CDK Global. Operations such as Ford's Parts Plus network and Volkswagen Group's TPS business have shifted parts expertise into regional rooftops. A benefit for the wider dealer network is that individual dealerships no longer have cash tied up in holding their own parts stock. Anderton said having the resources in one place also provides focus – "It's not about reduced staff, but making them more efficient" – and the industry is increasingly able to accurately supply parts, bundled up for a specific job, to the workshop just a few hours before the car comes in for the work. "The better service and the less stock the dealer has, the better," said Anderton.

He said major hubs are delivering 60 to 70 jobs per day. CDK's Advanced Parts app allows for central order processing and a warehouse management system integrated with the DMS including visibility of what orders are coming in.

Such accuracy and delivery will set the standard for the future. "If you can get the right part to the right customer in a timely fashion, that's how you retain your customers," he said.

He said there are still cases where dealers have staff typing in orders received by phone from workshops, independent repairers, and corporate customers such as fleets

KEY CONTACTS



Marcus Dacombe,
International Product
Marketing Director,
CDK Global
Tel: 01488 662 662

and roadside rescue organisations, which risks inaccurate data entry and potentially wrong parts being sent out. Some hubs use a scanner module, which does much of the work for the parts pickers – displaying a picking ticket, informing the user where the part is, and refusing to let them scan in a wrong part. Major warehouses can alert a supervisor when a picker has claimed there are no parts available.

The scanner improves efficiency too. At one manufacturer's warehouse, which had many parts bins with only one part in each, time was being lost as staff clicked on the screen. By implementing a 'termination' barcode on each parts bin, scanned after each bin was counted, the warehouse saved five hours on a stock check.



For more information, call 01488 662 662, or visit www.cdkglobal.co.uk