

Business intelligence to inform proactive decisions

The complexities involved in running a dealership effectively can mean some automotive managers will be pulled from pillar to post trying to identify opportunities and manage risks from swathes of reports and yesterday's data.

But, spending days poring over last month's data no longer cuts it in the 2020s when technology can come to the dealer's aid to deliver business intelligence in a clear, mineable way and help them react or pre-empt in order to achieve positive outcomes.

It is this which is the speciality of the team at AutoBI, based in Telford. Jonathan Sharman co-founded the business in 2019 after realising that the problems and inefficiencies that he'd been required to manage, while spending 20 years as a sales manager, service manager and then head of business in franchised dealerships, were shared by others in the same roles.

He says: "One of the things I always found tricky was getting data to be able to make changes within the business to improve customer satisfaction and, more importantly, bottom line profitability. We have a lot of systems within retailers, some connected and some not, but nothing could deliver me a report showing precisely this is where we are and this is where we should be."

So, AutoBI built it. Now AutoBI Workspaces offer a comprehensive analytics suite which provides near real-time updates on critical information about all aspects of an automotive business including customer relationship management, sales, finance, service and parts.

It seamlessly gathers the information a business leader needs and turns it into clear visual representations of headline key performance indicators (KPIs), which are bespoke to the client dealer and which can be drilled down into for the detail.

Harnessing the power of Microsoft PowerBI – which Sharman



WE LIKE TO FOCUS ON LOOK AT WHAT YOU COULD HAVE WON'

JONATHAN SHARMAN, CO-FOUNDER

described as "the best business intelligence (BI) toolset available today" – AutoBI Workspaces are secure, scalable and affordable, with potential to grow in line with the retailers that use them.

He adds: "Our solution delivers that information, never more than around a half-hour to an hour out of date. You don't have to do anything to get it; it's already there for you in an online dashboard. And you can see as you make changes and improvements just what effect they are having on your profitability in real time."

And, because it is web-based, users have remote and secure access from any location. At a glance, managers can see what is happening in their dealership, with no risk of human error in report writing and data collection, and make proactive decisions which will turn any employee idle time into chargeable time.

Barely four years since its foundation AutoBI is already in use by a growing number of UK retailers representing brands

including BMW, Mini, Kia, Vauxhall, Ford, Jaguar Land Rover, Peugeot and Citroën, and the company is also supporting nine importers in the Middle East region.

Sharman says AutoBI will work with customers to deliver the level of reporting they want, and AutoBI is valuable for all from sales and service managers who need team members to see their own productivity – and understand how close they're coming to triggering bonus payments – to franchise directors who want to encourage a bit of intra-group competition between dealerships.

AutoBI can bring into focus when a department is drifting away from the required run rate so the manager can ramp up the team motivation early before an objective becomes almost unachievable.

"You empower people to make better decisions," he adds. AutoBI can even provide a consultancy service to help clients get the best from their DMS data or identify improvements to their processes."

Alongside Sharman, AutoBI's other



co-founders Joe Lake and Michael Golden bring extensive DMS and IT consultancy experience and Paul Mellings is a former retailer accountant and financial controller.

This is a company which "speaks the retailer's language" and because of the directors' experience it can design a solution to fix the problem a customer is trying to solve "because we understand what opportunity you're trying to maximise, the conversation is already a few steps ahead".

Sharman says: "We like to focus on 'look at what you could have won'. There are a lot of things people can do to improve performance, but the first thing you need to understand is where you are now and what opportunity exists with what you've currently got."

The AM100 dealer group Barretts of Kent, which operates five multi-

franchised dealerships plus bodyshops and parts hubs in the Ashford and Canterbury region, turned to AutoBI for help in 2022.

Running such a busy and complex operation, Barretts has a huge amount of data to work through on a day-to-day basis, all centralised through its DMS.

Once its group aftersales director David Banfield saw what the analytics suite could do, he signed up for AutoBI across all sites. He credits it for saving more than four hours a day of his assistant's time, as she was having to pull all sorts of reports for him previously.

Banfield says: "Everything I could possibly wish to know about my business can be on my screen at the touch of a button. If I want to check the status of my parts stock, it's there. If I want to see how one of my sites is performing against

another, or see the productivity of my technicians, or to find out how we're doing financially at any given moment, I can do it."

"The biggest benefit for us is that it's brought our focus onto opportunities that we may have been missing before. We can see the areas that we are weak and where we're strong and dedicate our attention to the parts of our business that really need it."

AutoBI's Sharman knows from his own experience that helping busy managers to save time, make proactive and informed decisions and motivate their team members to dig deep will ensure his customers reap the rewards of starting a partnership with AutoBI.

It's never been easier to have a clear – and rapid – picture of how a dealership is performing.

With AutoBI, it's time well spent.

For more information about how AutoBI can help you, call 01952 443900, email hello@autobi.co.uk or visit its website at www.autobi.co.uk

