Auto Pulse

Community initiative by GaragePlug

OCT 2023

Transforming the Auto Service Industry: Overcoming Perceptions and Building Trust

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(DIRECTOR JCS BOSCH)

Industry trends, Business models and Electric vehicles

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EXCLUSIVE CONVERSATION

WITH THE CEO OF NATIONAL CAR MAINTENANCE COMPANY - A PETROMIN COMPANY

DRIVING INNOVATION AND TRANSFORMATION: INSIGHTS FROM MR TARIQ JAVED

ISSUE NO. 1

WHY WE'RE MAKING THIS MAGAZINE?

AutoPulse isn't merely another automotive publication; it represents a sincere community initiative led by GaragePlug, driven by an unwavering commitment to elevate the automotive service sector. Our motivation is not financial gain – we operate as a non-profit entity.

We extend a warm invitation to industry leaders, recognizing the considerable desire among professionals in our field to contribute meaningfully, often without a suitable platform. AutoPulse aspires to fill that void.

In our realm of machinery, precision and business building, unity stands as our most potent catalyst. We firmly assert that without collective action and collaboration among automotive service leaders, we cannot attain greater heights or match the standards set by other industries. AutoPulse emerges as the critical link that connects individuals, garages, and enterprises within our extensive community.

Our magazine does not have a profit motive; it serves as a platform for empowering the automotive service community through the dissemination of knowledge, fostering innovation, and promoting teamwork. Together, we shall steer transformative change, elevate industry standards, and improve our sector. We invite you to participate in this exhilarating journey, where every strategic turn motivates us toward a brighter, more prosperous future for our industry.

-Team AutoPulse

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Featuring 7+ industry leaders

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GENDER EQUALITY IN AUTOMOTIVE AFTERMARKET GAINS MOMENTUM IN THE MIDDLE EAST

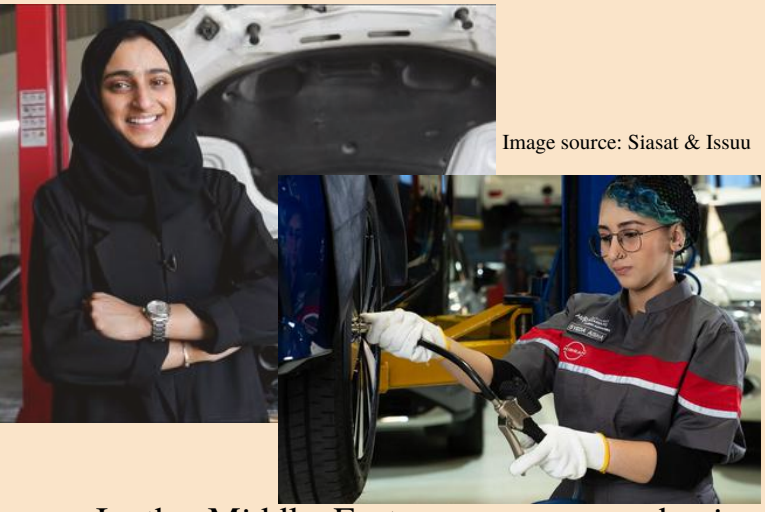


Image source: Siasat & Issuu

In the Middle East, women are reshaping the automotive sector by actively participating in car maintenance and challenging gender stereotypes.

The UAE is at the forefront of this change, dispelling the notion that car repair is solely for men. On Emirati Women's Day, the Al-Futtaim Lexus showroom celebrated women's achievements.

Huda Al Matroushi, a pioneering female mechanic, emphasized that gender doesn't matter under the hood. Meanwhile, at the Arabian Automobiles Company, Syeda Aisha, the first female technician, empowered women with car maintenance skills.

These events highlight women's growing influence in the male-dominated automotive industry, breaking barriers, and steering it toward a more inclusive future. *Source: Zawya & Issuu*

DUBAI POLICE INTRODUCE FREE CAR REPAIR SERVICE FOR MINOR ACCIDENTS

Had an accident in Dubai? Now, you have the option to get your car repaired right after filing a report at a fuel station.

Dubai Police has launched the 'On The Go' initiative, offering a streamlined service for motorists involved in minor accidents with unidentified parties. The Dubai Police teamed up with car repair shop Autopro at Enoc stations to deliver a new express service to the emirate's residents.

Here are the steps:

- After getting the minor accident report at Enoc station, head to the Autopro shop
- Your damaged vehicle will be taken to an authorized workshop.
- Submit necessary documents (accident report, Emirates ID copy, vehicle license copy, driving license copy) to Dubai Police.
- After repairs, your vehicle will be delivered to your home.

Notably, repair services are free for seniors, People of Determination, and pregnant women, while others will incur a Dh 150 fee. This marks the fifth phase of Dubai Police's commitment to enhancing services, providing a convenient and efficient solution for post-accident vehicle repairs for residents. *Source: Khaleejtimes*

6,500 USED VEHICLE IMPORTS WERE BLOCKED IN THE UAE

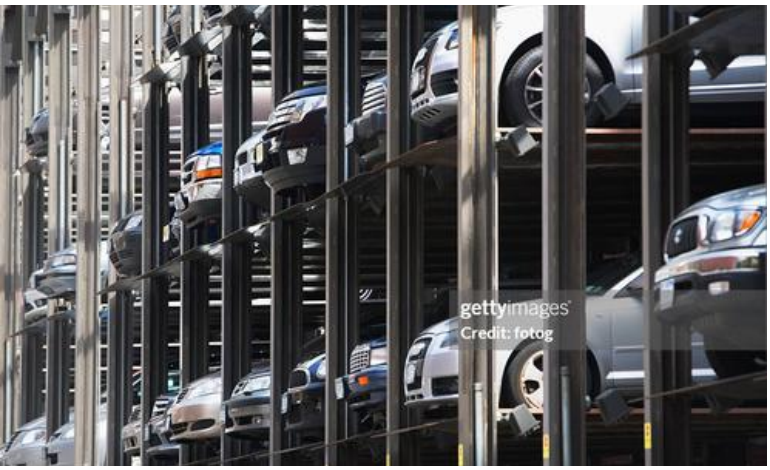


Image used for illustrative purpose. Getty Images

Used cars are very popular in the UAE. In the past year, UAE authorities have halted the import of 6,500 used vehicles that failed to meet the nation's technical standards and requirements.

The UAE employs an electronic import regulation system, a collaborative effort between the Ministry of Industry and Advanced Technology (MoIAT), customs authorities, and insurance agencies. This system bars entry to seven categories of vehicles due to safety and sustainability concerns.

Dr. Farah Al Zarouni, MoIAT's Assistant Undersecretary for Standards and Regulations, highlighted that the UAE's restrictions apply to unregistered, uninsured, damaged, or defective vehicles. The Ministry's smart search engine cross-references used vehicle data with originating countries' databases, aiding import decisions. *Source: Zawya*

DUBAI SHEIKH'S INCREDIBLE 46-FOOT HUMMER WOWS

UAE's Sheikh Hamad bin Hamdan al Nahyan has unveiled an enormous Hummer 'X3', claiming it to be three times larger than a typical Hummer H1 by scale and a staggering 27 times more voluminous. As a well-known member of the UAE's ruling royal family and a car enthusiast, his love for massive vehicles is evident.

His custom-built Hummer H1 is nearly as tall as a two-story building, with the world's largest Hummer, towering at 6.6 meters (about 22 feet), making it an extraordinary display. The Hummer X3, featuring a 14-meter total length and 6-meter width, rides on four diesel engines and can reach a top speed of 32 kmph.

This colossal machine is showcased at the Off-Road History Museum in Sharjah, UAE, alongside other impressive vehicles owned by Sheikh Hamad, including the world's largest pickup truck and an immense Willys Jeep. *Source: Legitparrot*

Image source: Legitparrot.com

FROM IPHONES TO ICARS: APPLE'S AMBITIOUS LEAP INTO THE AUTO INDUSTRY.

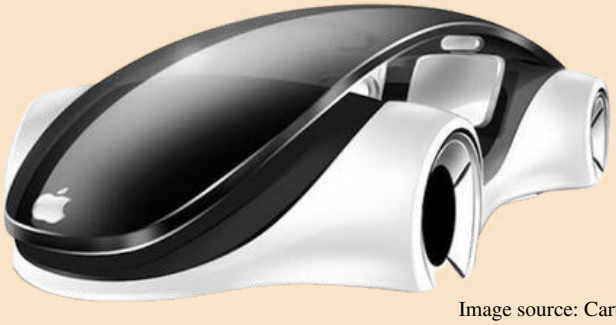


Image source: Cartoq

Apple, known for its groundbreaking technology, is set to disrupt the automotive industry with its secretive "iCar" project. Initiated in 2014, the project aims to deliver an electric, self-driving car by 2026, priced below $100,000.

While specific details remain under wraps, the iCar will seamlessly integrate with Apple's ecosystem. Users can unlock and start the car via their Apple devices, while voice commands enable hands-free calling, texting, and GPS navigation. Advanced LiDAR sensors and cameras promise superior self-driving capabilities compared to rivals like Tesla.

Apple's innovative "mono cell" battery design maximizes efficiency, and a central iPad-style monitor, alongside gesture-controlled operations, will adorn the dashboard. Integration with Apple devices ensures features like Siri and facial recognition have no bounds. If Apple maintains its EV commitment, it could forever transform the automotive landscape. *Source: Autoevolution*

GARAGEPLUG PARTNERS WITH TECALLIANCE TO DRIVE DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Patnership image taken during the event

Know more about this ground-breaking partnership at the upcoming Automechanika Dubai, 2-4 October 2023, where TecAlliance will showcase its latest innovations and new partner programme at booth 5-A33 in hall 5.

AUTOMOTIVE SERVICE STATIONS: TRANSFORMING INTO ENGAGING DESTINATIONS

In the heart of the Middle East, a transformation is underway. Service stations, once mere stops to refuel, are evolving into vibrant destinations.

Travellers no longer rush past them; they pause, relax, and enjoy meals and the ambience. They can stroll through the convenience stores, selecting snacks and souvenirs. Lush gardens provide moments of serenity, while quiet prayer rooms offer solace.

These service stations are no longer just pit stops; they are the beginning of comfortable journeys. *Source: PetrolPlaza*

PETROMIN AND HPCL TIES UP, TO INVEST $700 MILLION IN FUEL STATIONS AND EV INFRASTRUCTURE

Image source: Business Standard

Petromin Corporation KSA and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited (HPCL) have announced a major $700 million investment in fuel stations, vehicle service workshops, and EV charging infrastructure.

Over the next five years, Petromin Express India, a subsidiary of Petromin Corporation, will dedicate $100 million to establish 1,000 vehicle service centres within HPCL's Indian retail outlets. Additionally, the companies will invest $100 million in the deployment and operation of up to 5,000 EV charging units at HPCL stations throughout India.

The companies will invest an extra $500 million to operate around 500 fuel stations in the Middle East & Africa through a joint venture, as announced.

Source: Business standard

AL-FUTTAIM AUTO CENTERS OPENS ITS BIGGEST MULTI-BRAND SERVICE CENTER IN DUBAI

Image courtesy: Al-Futtaim Automotive

Al-Futtaim Automotive has unveiled its largest service and maintenance facility, a 47,000-square-foot centre in Dubai Festival City, becoming its 14th UAE location. It will have the capacity to service up to 100 vehicles per day. Located next to Dubai Festival City Mall, it provides service and repairs for all car brands and models with transparent, fixed pricing. The facility boasts ten service bays with cutting-edge tools and a mobile van service, accessible via the CAFU app, bringing services to customers' doorsteps.

David McNamara, Director of Tier 2 Aftersales at Al-Futtaim Automotive, stressed their dedication to customer satisfaction and plans to open three additional Auto Centers by year-end. The facility provides shuttle service to the mall and stocks 500+ tires for quick repairs.

Source: CBN

ADNOC DISTRIBUTION LAUNCHES ITS FIRST THREE STATIONS IN EGYPT

Image source: Petrol Plaza

ADNOC Distribution has announced the launch of its first three service stations in Egypt, following its acquisition of a 50% stake in TotalEnergies Marketing Egypt. Located strategically in Greater Cairo, these stations mark the company's expansion into the Egyptian market.

The joint venture includes an extensive portfolio of fuel retail stations, convenience stores, lube changing stations, car washes, lubricants, wholesale, and aviation fuel operations. ADNOC also introduced its Oasis convenience stores, featuring a range of food and beverages tailored to Egyptian customers.

By year-end, an additional six outlets are set to open across Egypt as part of ADNOC's ambitious growth strategy. *Source: PetrolPlaza*

OMAN OIL MARKETING COMPANY VENTURES INTO SAUDI ARABIA WITH 14 SITES

image source: PR Newswire

Oman Oil Marketing Company (OOMCO) is set to expand its footprint in Saudi Arabia with the addition of 14 all-in-one service stations. This strategic move will bring OOMCO's total service station count in the Kingdom to 26 by the end of 2023. These stations offer premium fuel, a variety of dining options, convenience items, and high-quality automotive services.

This expansion is a testament to OOMCO's commitment to regional growth and service excellence. The announcement coincided with the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) between OOMCO and Tamiyoz for Fuel, a prominent investment and development company specializing in fuel stations in Saudi Arabia. *Source: Zawya*

MG MOTOR TEAMS UP WITH JIAD MODERN MOTORS AS SAUDI DISTRIBUTOR

Image source: Motory

MG Motor has partnered with Jiad Modern Motors, a Mohamed Yousuf Naghi subsidiary, as its official distributor in Saudi Arabia. The agreement was formalized at Mohamed Yousuf Naghi's headquarters, attended by MG Motor's Tom Lee and senior executives from Mohamed Yousuf Naghi. This collaboration strengthens MG Motor's presence in Saudi Arabia and the Middle East, coinciding with its upcoming centenary celebration. Jiad Modern Motors will establish showrooms in Jeddah, Riyadh, and Dammam, with plans for three more facilities by the end of 2023, totalling six. *Source: Motory*

NEWEAST TO INVESTS $136.2 MILLION FOR AUTO PARTS DISTRIBUTION IN DUBAI'S JAFZA

Neweast has sealed a significant agreement to invest $136.2 million (AED 500 million) in the development of an expansive 165,000-square-meter automotive spare parts distribution hub in Jebel Ali Free Zone (Jafza), Dubai. Expected to be operational by October 2024, this ambitious project is set to streamline order processing and delivery for over 160 prestigious aftermarket brands across the region.

The facility will serve as a one-stop shop for a wide range of automotive spare parts, including engine and transmission components, braking and suspension parts, air conditioning system components, lubricants, batteries, and tires. These parts will cater to various vehicles, including passenger cars, vans, buses, trucks, trailers, and heavy equipment. *Source: Zawya*

SHELL SERVICE STATION EXPANDS TO SAUDI ARABIA

The British mobility firm has inked a deal with ASYAD Group for entry into the Saudi mobility market to establish the first Shell-branded fuel station in Riyadh.

This strategic move aligns with the Saudi Energy Ministry's drive to attract international companies to the country.
The initial stations are set to open in Q4 2023. *Source: Arabnews*

ADNOC LAUNCHES "FILL & GO" AI SERVICE

ADNOC Distribution has unveiled its 'Fill & Go' service, powered by AI and computer vision tech, to enhance the refuelling experience. This technology employs machine learning models to enable computers to identify vehicles and provide a highly personalized refuelling process. Customers can register their vehicles on the ADNOC Distribution app and then simply drive into a supporting station where smart cameras automatically recognize their vehicle.

Upon arrival at the pump, the system uses customer data to initiate the refuelling process, catering to preferred fuel types and spending limits. This ensures a faster and more seamless refuelling experience. Drivers receive notifications on a digital screen when refuelling is complete and can also access personalized offers at ADNOC's Oasis stores.

ADNOC has launched this service at three flagship stations in Dubai and Abu Dhabi and plans to expand it to key locations nationwide. *Source: PetrolPlaza*

ROYAL ENFIELD EXPANDS UAE PRESENCE WITH AW ROSTAMANI

Royal Enfield, a leading player in the midsize motorcycle sector (250cc - 750cc), has unveiled its expansion plans in the Middle East and Africa by partnering with AW Rostamani Group as their official distributor in the UAE.

This partnership is set to strengthen Royal Enfield's presence in the UAE market. AW Rostamani Group marked this significant alliance with the opening of its inaugural Royal Enfield store on Umm Suqeim St. in Dubai.

The newly opened store showcases the iconic Royal Enfield motorcycles, along with a comprehensive range of apparel and accessories. A dedicated service centre has been established in Al Quoz.

They also plan to expand further with new branches in Sharjah and Abu Dhabi, addressing the evolving needs of the local riding community. *Source: TOI*

TRANSFORMING THE AUTO SERVICE INDUSTRY: OVERCOMING PERCEPTIONS AND BUILDING TRUST

MR ATIF ALI
DIRECTOR OF SERVICE MANAGEMENT,
JCS BOSCH

Mr. Atif Ali, the visionary Director of Service Management at Jeri Bosch Car Service (JCS) in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. In just 1.5 years, he's catapulted JCS Bosch into a symbol of automotive service excellence.

His journey, including leadership roles at Petromin Corporation and Pakistan State Oil, exemplifies his prowess in crafting strategies, fostering loyalty, and driving growth.

INTRODUCTION -

The automotive service industry has long struggled with a tarnished reputation. For many consumers, the thought of getting their vehicle serviced evokes feelings of inconvenience, scepticism, and even dread. This perception stems from a variety of factors, including the industry's historical resistance to change, concerns about unprofessionalism and trustworthiness, and the impact of a service provider's appearance. In this thought leader article, we will explore ten hard-hitting points that everyone in the auto service industry should consider to transform and revitalize their businesses.

1. EMBRACING TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCEMENTS

The auto service industry is often criticized for lagging behind in technological advancements. Customers today expect seamless and efficient service experiences. To address this issue, auto service businesses must invest in technology that streamlines operations, enhances communication with customers, and ensures transparency in service processes. From digital appointment scheduling to real-time updates on service progress, technology can make the service experience more convenient and less of a chore.

2. REBUILDING TRUST

One of the industry's biggest challenges is overcoming its reputation for unprofessionalism, untrustworthiness, and the practice of upselling unnecessary services. Building trust with customers is paramount. Service providers should prioritize transparency, educate customers about their vehicle's needs, and avoid pushy sales tactics. A commitment to honesty and integrity can go a long way in restoring faith in the industry.

3. THE POWER OF AESTHETICS

First impressions matter, and the appearance of your auto workshop significantly influences how customers perceive your business. A clean, well-maintained, and aesthetically pleasing workshop can instill confidence in customers. Investing in the visual appeal of your service center not only attracts customers but also enhances their overall experience.

4. TRUSTWORTHY TECHNICIANS

Technicians play a crucial role in customers' perception of your business. Even the most skilled service advisor cannot build trust if customers encounter unprofessional and unhygienic technicians on the shop floor. It is imperative to maintain high standards for technician appearance, behaviour, and technical competence to bolster customer confidence.

5. PRICING PERCEPTION

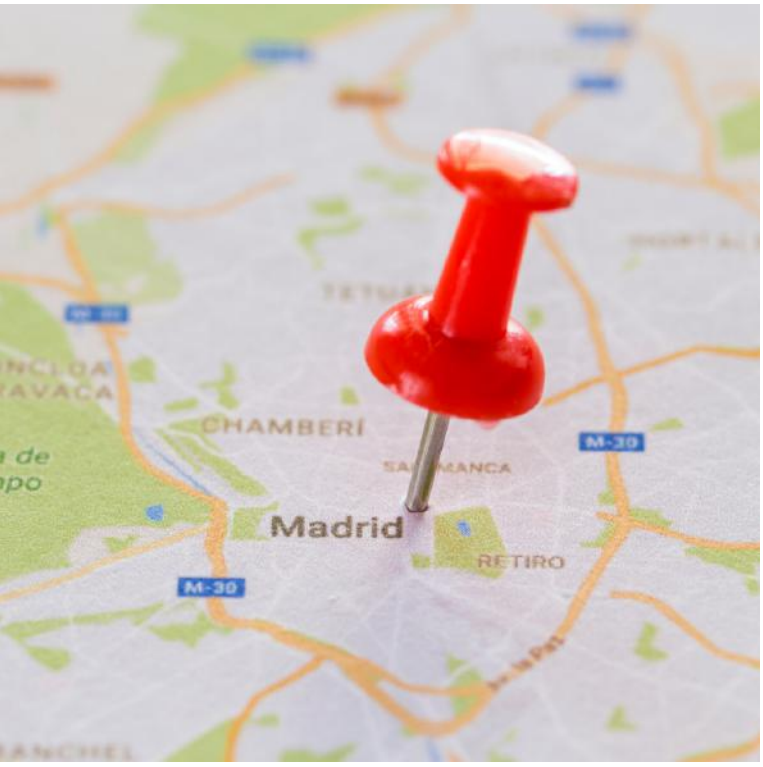
Customers subconsciously judge the fairness of pricing based on the aesthetics and professionalism of the workshop. A well-presented workshop is more likely to justify its pricing in the eyes of customers. To overcome pricing skepticism, auto service providers should emphasize the value they provide and ensure transparency in pricing.

6. THE FRAGILITY OF CUSTOMER LOYALTY

The auto service industry operates in a highly competitive environment where one negative experience can permanently deter a customer. Unfortunately, businesses cannot control every aspect of customer interactions, but they can focus on consistent excellence in service delivery to minimize negative encounters.

7. THE ROLE OF SERVICE ADVISORS

Service advisors are the face of your business, and their professionalism and communication skills can make or break your reputation. Investing in training and empowering service advisors to provide exceptional customer service is essential. Additionally, all customer-facing employees should be trained to represent the brand positively.



8. LOCATION MATTERS

The location and placement of your auto workshop can significantly impact your business's success. Being conveniently located in areas with high vehicular traffic and accessibility can attract more customers. Choosing the right location is a strategic decision that can drive business growth.

9. FOCUS ON CUSTOMER LOYALTY

Auto service businesses should recognize that the majority of their revenue comes from repeat customers. While acquiring new customers is important, nurturing existing relationships and turning first-time visitors into loyal patrons is the key to sustained success. Implementing customer loyalty programs and actively seeking feedback can foster loyalty and retention.

10. THE PURPOSE OF DIGITALIZATION

In the age of digitalization, auto service providers must understand that the goal is to simplify and improve the customer experience, not merely automate processes. Digital tools should enhance convenience, facilitate communication, and provide customers with greater control over their service experiences. From online appointment booking to digital service records, the integration of technology should prioritize customer satisfaction.

CONCLUSION

Transforming the auto service industry requires a collective effort to change perceptions and prioritize customer satisfaction. By embracing technology, rebuilding trust, enhancing aesthetics, and focusing on customer loyalty, auto service businesses can reinvent themselves and create a more positive and customer-centric industry. It's time to leave behind the negative stereotypes and usher in a new era of professionalism, transparency, and excellence in the automotive service sector.

5 TIPS TO IMPROVE CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT IN QUICK SERVICE CENTERS

MR ABIJITH MENON

BDM - DIGITAL PROCESSES
PETROMIN CORPORATION

Abijith is an automotive engineer turned business growth and digital transformation specialist with equal interests in new technologies, economics and consumer behaviour.

A visionary in digital transformation and automotive innovation, has played a key role in driving Petromin Corp's initiatives in advanced lubricants, multi-model mobility, and sustainable transportation solutions. With over a year at the company, his expertise in large-scale digital transformations is evident.

Unlocking Success Through Customer Engagement

In the ever-evolving landscape of quick service centres, the key to triumph lies in engaging with your customers effectively. Discovering and understanding your local customers' personas is the crucial first step in crafting a winning customer engagement strategy.

TIP 1: LOCAL CUSTOMER PERSONAS

To embark on a journey toward unparalleled customer engagement, start by delving into the personas of your local clientele. By conducting insightful local surveys, you can glean valuable information, such as their technological inclinations, purchasing habits, and preferences for online or offline transactions.

Understanding these facets of your customers' behaviour provides a solid foundation upon which you can build tailored engagement strategies. With this knowledge in hand, you'll be well-equipped to create meaningful connections, offer relevant services, and enhance the overall customer experience.

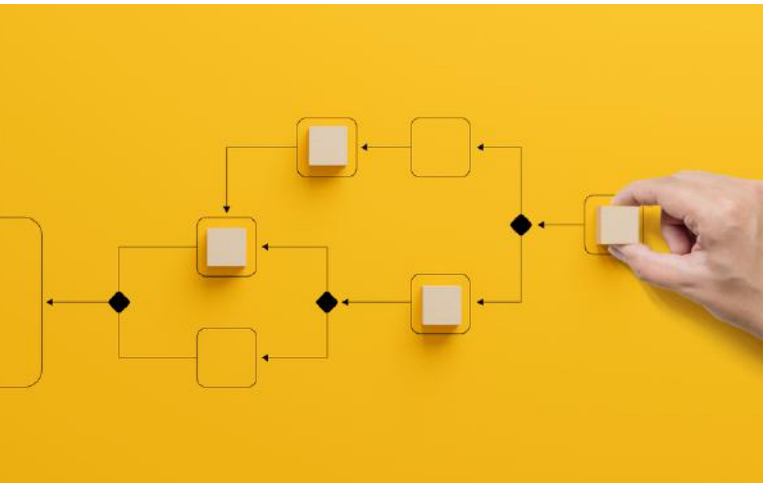
TIP 2: ELEVATING CUSTOMER CONVENIENCE

In the competitive landscape of the oil and gas industry, customer convenience is paramount.

To achieve this, first, understand your customer personas and their preferred communication channels, be it Email or WhatsApp. Implement user-friendly features, such as direct "Request a Quote via Email" options, to simplify interactions. Leverage modern digital tools like automated quoting systems and personalized mobile apps. Offer 24/7 accessibility to accommodate diverse schedules and explore feedback-driven improvements to fine-tune your services.

TIP 3: STREAMLINE PROCESSES FOR BETTER CUSTOMER EXPERIENCES

In the Quick service sector, prioritize optimizing the customer journey. Examine the entire process, identify delays, and streamline operations to enhance relationships. Focus on customer-centric touchpoints that provide smoother interactions and continually refine processes to meet evolving needs. Discover more insights in our magazine on elevating customer experiences.



TIP 4: EMBRACE INNOVATIVE CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT TECH

In today's rapidly evolving business landscape, staying ahead means embracing innovative technologies that transform customer engagement. By harnessing the power of emerging technologies like blockchain, IoT sensors, data analytics, and cognitive computing tools like chatbots, you can open doors to new and exciting ways of connecting with customers.

Even today, these cutting-edge tools are reshaping the customer engagement landscape across industries. They not only enhance interactions but also predict customer behaviors, offering valuable insights. Early adoption allows you to gain a deeper understanding of customer insights, behaviors, and usage patterns, ultimately boosting customer engagement.

TIP 5: MEASURE, LEARN, ADAPT, AND SUCCEED

Achieving customer engagement success requires an ongoing cycle of improvement. Monitor your engagement rate closely, analyze results, distinguish effective from ineffective strategies, and adapt to industry trends while aligning with customer-centric goals.

Repeat and refine proven processes to meet evolving customer needs for enduring success.

FOUR SMART WAYS TO ENHANCE WORKSHOP EFFICIENCY IN YOUR AUTO SERVICE BUSINESS

MR KHALID FAROOQ

GENERAL MANAGER
WORLD AUTOMOTIVE GROUP

Khalid Farooq is a seasoned industry leader with over two decades of unparalleled expertise in sales and after-sales within the automotive, lubricants, and industrial products sectors.

His remarkable track record includes successfully establishing new ventures, expanding retail and corporate segments, and consistently driving substantial revenue growth through strategic leadership and customer-focused approaches.

In the world of auto repair, success isn't a matter of chance; it's a carefully crafted equation. To unlock the full potential of your business, you must understand the key variables that drive it forward.

Here are the equations -

(Increased lead/ service booking flow) + (higher rate of vehicle services/day) + (repeat customers)

= Increase in revenue

= Business Success

This above equation simply implies the following -

- Service booking flow is directly proportional to your business success.
- The rate of vehicle services/per day (Efficiency) is directly proportional to your business success.
- Repeat customers are directly proportional to your business's success.

While many auto service businesses focus on improving service bookings (first part) and fostering repeat customers (third part), they often overlook the second part of the equation: enhancing workshop efficiency.

Increasing workshop efficiency is absolutely a must for "Quick Service/ Oil change businesses". The same applies to a large extent for general auto repair businesses as well.

Therefore, here are some essential tips for increasing efficiency on the shop floor.

1. IMPROVE OVERALL COMMUNICATION

Aspect 1 - Technical Communication with Staff/Employees:

- Skills-Based Vehicle Allocation: Implement a system for assigning technicians to vehicles based on their skills, ensuring seamless and instant communication.
- Real-Time Service Status: Provide floor supervisors with real-time visibility into the service status of each vehicle on the shop floor.
- Technician Clock-In System: Introduce a clock-in system to measure and maintain peak efficiency among technicians.
- Daily Inventory Briefings: Conduct daily sync-ups between technicians and managers for efficient inventory management.
- Vehicle Movement Management: Establish a system for managing and communicating the movement of vehicles within the shop floor and delivery bay.

Aspect 2 - General Communication with Staff/Employees:

- Clear Employee-Management Communication: Foster transparent communication between employees and management.
- Review Meetings: Hold regular review meetings to gather employee input and drive improvement.
- Productivity Workshops: Conduct motivation-boosting productivity workshops on a consistent basis.

Aspect 3- Communication with Customers:

- Impressive First Impressions: Ensure a positive first impression for your customers.
- Automated Appointment Reminders: Utilize automated text messages to remind customers of appointments, reducing the workload on office staff.

2. OPTIMIZE FOR OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCY

Unlocking operational efficiency revolves around two core principles: increasing daily vehicle services for enhanced revenue and reducing expenses for greater savings.

To put this strategy into action, follow three pivotal steps.

- First, streamline your workflow to ensure smoother operations.
- Second, empower your workforce with multi-skills to boost flexibility.
- Finally, optimize your workspace for improved efficiency..

3. IMPROVE WORK ENVIRONMENT

When it comes to your employees spending most of their day on the shop floor, achieving peak productivity is a top priority.

To make this a reality, it's crucial to create an environment that radiates positive energy and comfort.

- Cleanliness and hygiene are prioritized.
- Sufficient cooling for the hot months and heating for the cooler months, to ensure the employees' comfort.
- Modern and up-to-date tools and gadgets to get the job done efficiently.
- A foundation is set up for the team to confidently let management know where the hold-ups are and work together
- Free refreshments are provided for the employees to keep them motivated.

By nurturing such a workplace, you pave the way for a highly productive and harmonious team.

4. EMBRACE TECHNOLOGY

In the fast-paced business landscape of today, embracing technology isn't just an option; it's a necessity to stay competitive.

- Use automated text messaging communications.
- Implementing fully wireless multi-point inspections, for instance, will reduce time. (May not be entirely necessary)
- Implement automated appointment scheduling.
- Use a technology that automates most of your manually done workflows. Ex- Automated invoice generation.
- There actually are many possibilities that technology can offer. This one article may not be enough.

In closing, these four tips will help vastly to improve efficiency. By prioritizing communication, optimizing operations, creating a conducive work environment, and embracing technology, you'll unlock the full potential of your workshop efficiency. This journey will not only boost profitability but also ensure your place in the competitive landscape of the auto service industry.

UNLOCKING THE POWER OF INTELLIGENT DATA: A PARADIGM SHIFT IN AUTOMOTIVE SERVICE ENTERPRISES

MR RASHID

Managing director,
EXP Oman

Rashid Al Sabqi, is a visionary leader and the Managing Director of EXP, a cutting-edge automotive service company.

With unwavering dedication, Rashid spearheads a skilled team in delivering unparalleled services, setting industry standards, and prioritizing customer delight. His commitment to ongoing learning keeps EXP at the forefront of the automotive industry. Rashid is a business data enthusiast.

In the ever-evolving landscape of oil and lube companies and automotive service enterprises, data has emerged as a critical asset. Yet, the true challenge lies not in the mere absence of data but in the quest for what can be termed as "Intelligent Data." This distinction marks a pivotal shift in how businesses navigate the sea of information to make decisions that truly matter.

THE DATA DILEMMA

In recent years, an increasing number of businesses have recognized the importance of data. They have embraced various software solutions to keep pace with emerging trends, with a particular focus on enhancing the customer experience (CX) and other facets of their operations. While these initiatives seek to access more data, they often fall short of delivering quicker and more precise decision-making capabilities.

Several hurdles impede the progress of businesses in harnessing the true potential of data:

1. Data Fragmentation:
Data is often fragmented into various variables or aspects, dispersed across multiple software tools. Each tool caters to a specific area of the business, leading to isolated data silos.

2. Data Incomparability:
The fragmented nature of data makes it challenging to compare and assess its relevance across different tools. It becomes unclear if the data is even comparable at all.

3. Integration Complexity:
Even if a business acknowledges these challenges, finding effective means to integrate all software tools and collate data can be elusive. Some resort to Information Management Systems (IMS), but these systems may not always align with modern software solutions.

THE QUEST FOR INTELLIGENT DATA

The ultimate solution to these challenges lies in the pursuit of "Intelligent Data" – data that transcends mere statistics and offers actionable insights. Here's how businesses can embark on this transformative journey:

1. Embrace Intelligent Tools:
Seek out intelligent software systems that have the capability to manage most, if not all, aspects of your business using a single, unified platform.

These systems are designed to seamlessly connect the dots between data sources, enabling holistic insights.

2. Prioritize Actionable Insights:
Look beyond raw data. Focus on software solutions that deliver "Intelligent Data" – information that guides real-time decision-making with maximum impact. These insights should provide a clear path to improving business processes and enhancing customer experiences.

3. Pursue Integration Solutions:
Recognize the need for comprehensive integration solutions that harmonize your diverse software tools. The goal is to collate data from disparate sources and transform it into cohesive "Intelligent Data."

THE IMPACT OF INTELLIGENT DATA

Embracing the concept of Intelligent Data carries profound implications for businesses across the automotive service sector:

1. Informed Decision-Making:
With access to Intelligent Data, businesses can make informed decisions swiftly. These insights go beyond superficial trends, offering a deep understanding of customer behaviour, market dynamics, and operational efficiencies.

2. Enhanced Customer Experiences:
Intelligent Data empowers businesses to tailor their services with precision, addressing customer needs and expectations more effectively. The result is a heightened customer experience that breeds loyalty and trust.

3. Operational Efficiency:
Streamlined data integration and intelligent insights pave the way for improved operational efficiency.

Businesses can identify bottlenecks, optimize processes, and allocate resources judiciously.

4. Competitive Advantage:
Companies that harness Intelligent Data gain a distinct competitive edge. They can respond proactively to industry shifts, adapt strategies swiftly, and maintain a consistent brand presence that resonates with customers.

CONCLUSION: A NEW ERA OF DATA TRANSFORMATION

In conclusion, the journey towards Intelligent Data represents a paradigm shift in how automotive service enterprises navigate the complex terrain of data management. It's not merely about accumulating data but about converting it into a powerful tool for growth and innovation.

While the concept of Intelligent Data may seem futuristic, it is rapidly becoming a reality for forward-thinking businesses. As the automotive service sector continues to evolve, those who embrace this transformation will stand at the forefront of innovation and customer-centricity.

The future belongs to those who seek not just data but the intelligence to decipher its true potential. It is a journey well worth undertaking, as it heralds a new era of data-driven excellence for the automotive service industry.

INDUSTRY TRENDS, BUSINESS MODELS AND ELECTRIC VEHICLES - A CHAT WITH ELIE NASR FROM BOSCH

Mr Elie Nasr

Workshop Concept Manager,
Robert Bosch, ME

Elie Nasr is a seasoned Automotive Service industry visionary with over 25+ years of industry experience. He is now the workshop concept manager, leading the workshop strategy for all Robert Bosch branded workshops in the Middle East.

Note-
This transcript is a highly condensed version of the full episode.

AutoPulse team's thoughts on this episode -

The whole episode was almost 2 hours of conversation between the AutoPulse team and Elie Nasr.

Elie shared some really high-standard expert-level insights and his strategic experience with the industry.

With his corporate experience, Elie shared the current industry trends, business model evolution, EV trends and his expert thoughts on how OEMs are aggressively competing with the Aftermarket industry.

The conversation went deep and this magazine only highlights a severely condensed version of the original episode.

About Elie and his experiences:

AutoPulse team: Can you highlight some of your most exciting and challenging projects at Robert Bosch and the key lessons learned from them?

Elie Nasr: Certainly. One of the notable challenges has been building brand awareness for Bosch car service in the GCC and Middle East region.

It's been an uphill battle because the Bosch name was more associated with home appliances than automotive services. This required persistent efforts to educate customers and workshops about Bosch's offerings. Another significant project has been the development of dealer management systems, an ongoing endeavour that began in 2015. It involves understanding workshop requirements, reporting needs, customer and vehicle details, and tailoring a software solution accordingly. This project has taught me the importance of adaptability and continuous improvement.

Elie's view on the current OEs vs Aftermarket & access to repair data:

AutoPulse team: What are the key trends in the automotive and aftermarket sectors, and how do they impact workshop operations and business models?

Elie Nasr: The automotive industry is constantly evolving. One key trend is workshops looking up to OE (original equipment) workshops as role models. In regions like the UAE, OE workshops set high standards in terms of workshop layout, facilities, and services. Independent workshops strive to match or even exceed these standards. Specialization in services, such as gearbox repair, AC repair, or diagnostics, is also prevalent.

This specialization instils trust in customers, similar to how we trust specialized doctors for specific medical issues.

Moreover, OE workshops are adopting multi-brand strategies to retain customers beyond the warranty period. This helps them compete with independent workshops and maintain customer loyalty.

AutoPulse team: Speaking of challenges, what advice would you offer to workshops in areas without access to a Robert Bosch network to obtain essential data for vehicle repairs?

Elie Nasr: Workshops in regions without established networks have their own means of sourcing data. They might rely on connections, contacting friends in other countries, or exploring online sources. It's essential to stay resourceful, but the challenge lies in obtaining authorized access to data, which often remains restricted.

Electric Vehicles (EVs)- Elie's views, experiences & strategies:

AutoPulse team: Elie, could you shed more light on how independent workshops should prepare in terms of skills and materials for electric vehicle (EV) training?

Elie Nasr: Absolutely. For EV training, we've (Robert Bosch ME) developed three levels of training.

The first level introduces what EVs are and how they work, including hybrids.

The second level covers how to repair these vehicles, and the third level focuses on specialization in a specific brand.

To become EV certified, workshops need to undergo this training, which we (Robert Bosch) currently offer. For instance, we have ongoing training in Dubai covering levels one and two, with level three planned for the future.

In addition to training, having the right equipment is crucial. This includes specialized tools for electrical repairs, such as high-voltage multimeters and diagnostic tools, as well as insulated hand tools like screwdrivers and pliers. Safety gear like gloves, goggles, and suits is essential. The workspace should also be well-prepared, with a rubber mat on the floor and clear safety markings.

It's important to note that there's currently no specific legal legislation in Dubai or the GCC regarding who is authorized to repair EVs. However, we follow German law as a guideline. According to German law, technicians must be well-trained and certified to work on EVs. Even if a person drives an EV daily, they cannot open the hood or touch critical components unless they are EV certified. Safety is paramount.

Lastly, access to technical information and support is vital for EV repair. Software updates and technical support may be required, similar to how we update our phones. Technicians should be knowledgeable about software aspects as well.

AutoPulse team: You mentioned the importance of authorization and proper certification. Clearly, OEs have the advantage. Should aftermarket workshops shift to a quick-service model to compete with OE workshops or directly challenge them?

Elie Nasr: It's crucial to consider legal requirements when it comes to working on EVs. Currently, there may not be clear regulations, but technicians should be certified to work on these vehicles. Transitioning to a quick-service model for EVs isn't advisable unless workshops are authorized. Regulating parts availability & and technician knowledge is crucial for safety, both for technicians & and vehicle owners.

The OE workshops have an upper hand due to their specialized knowledge, but there's room for independent workshops to compete if they meet the necessary requirements. However, it's essential to approach this transition cautiously and professionally.

AutoPulse team: Elie, could you share your insights on the OE strategy for EV services? What type of business model will OEs have with respect to EV repairs and services?

Elie Nasr: Well, most of the dealers, especially the big giants in Europe, have embraced electric vehicles (EVs), and I'm not just talking about hybrids; I mean fully electric ones. They've realized the trend and the demand, so they want their share of the market. For example, Tesla entered the scene, and others followed suit, understanding the trend and its potential. You have newcomers like Saudi Arabia and Turkey with purely electric vehicles.

Then there are Chinese EVs entering the market with various brand names. People are buying them, and whether they're reliable or not remains to be seen. However, the point is that manufacturers are trying to tap into this growing market. They want to offer these vehicles to customers and build a relationship of trust with them.

Now, as for whether the OE dealerships will serve both EV and non-EV vehicles in the same location, it's highly likely. They'll have special areas designated for EVs, and this will continue. They may also consider franchising or collaborating with independent workshops based on the number of EVs they sell and their willingness to provide service.

In some cases, OE workshops have even outsourced body shop repairs to independent workshops that meet their standards. So, it's a matter of adapting to the market and being ready to provide the required services.

Customer behavior pattern evolution- Elie's views, predictions and strategies on CX (specifically for the EV future)

AutoPulse team: How do you foresee the transition to electric vehicles impacting the way customers interact with automotive service providers, repair centres, and the aftermarket?

Elie Nasr: The transition to electric vehicles has already begun to impact the customer experience. For example, when petrol prices surged in August 2022, people in our region began considering EVs. However, they had concerns about the reliability and repairability of these vehicles. They wondered whether they could trust independent workshops with their EVs.

Initially, customers tend to buy EVs from OE dealerships because of the trust they have in these established brands. They believe that if anything goes wrong, they can rely on the OE dealership for repairs. As a result, customers build a relationship of trust with the OE.

However, as the number of EVs on the road increases, OE dealerships may become overwhelmed with service requests. At that point, they may begin directing some customers to independent workshops. Whether these workshops are ready or not depends on their preparedness and certification.

The key factor is trust. Customers need to trust that independent workshops can properly service their EVs. Trust is not automatic because working on EVs is not common knowledge. It's a specialized field that requires specific training and equipment. Customers may be hesitant to entrust their EVs to independent workshops until they see evidence of their readiness and certification.

AutoPulse team: Tell us about the differences in ownership patterns and usage habits between electric vehicle (EV) owners and traditional vehicle owners.

Elie Nasr: EV owners have distinct habits compared to traditional vehicle owners. For example, they tend to prefer Original Equipment Suppliers (OES) for their repairs and maintenance. The key factor here is that EV owners rely heavily on the availability of charging infrastructure. In Dubai, the government has done a commendable job by installing charging stations across the city. This means EV owners are less likely to be stranded with a dead battery, which is essential for their peace of mind.

AutoPulse team: How can the aftermarket industry tailor its business models and services to gain the trust of EV customers?

Elie Nasr: To gain EV customer trust, the aftermarket industry must prepare, and promote certifications and expertise via social media (Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat).

Highlight readiness to offer EV-specific services, like charging, pick-up, mobile assistance, and vehicle recovery, to build trust and attract EV owners. Also, being authorized or certified goes a long way in building trust and attracting EV owners to these workshops.

ROBERT BOSCH AND THEIR WORKSHOP CONCEPT EVOLUTION

(Credit- Elie's linkedin)

AutoPulse team: How has the workshop concept evolved at Robert Bosch over the years, and what innovations have been introduced to enhance customer experience and drive business growth, especially concerning EVs?

Elie Nasr: Robert Bosch has been proactive in anticipating industry trends. They have focused on training, equipped themselves with specialized tools and diagnostic equipment for EVs, and developed specific EV parts.

Technical support, both online and offline, is readily available to ensure swift problem resolution.
The company also emphasizes customer service excellence, ethics, and customer relationship management, enhancing the overall experience. Utilizing business intelligence through proper software is vital to efficiently manage customer data and enhance productivity. This knowledge is shared with workshops under their umbrella to keep them competitive.

AutoPulse team: How has digital technology changed workshops at Robert Bosch, and what's being done to stay ahead in digital transformation?

Elie Nasr: Robert Bosch, as a company, has a long history of research and development. They have pioneered technologies like ABS, ASR, and ESP.

They consistently stay ahead in terms of technology trends and demands in the market. Training, advanced test equipment, specialized parts, and technical support are all part of their strategy. They also emphasize customer service excellence, ensuring a professional and quality experience.

Utilizing business intelligence through robust software to manage customer data and the introduction of Dealer Management Systems are essential for staying competitive in the digital age.

(Credit- Elie's linkedin)

ELIE'S ADVISE FOR THE INDUSTRY AND HIS INDUSTRY PREDICTIONS

AutoPulse team: What advice and innovative strategies can you offer automotive service businesses to excel in the electric vehicle market and stay competitive?

Elie Nasr: The key advice for automotive service businesses is to prioritize customer satisfaction. Active listening, understanding customer needs, taking detailed notes, and exceeding expectations at every step of the service process are vital.

Create a comfortable and enjoyable atmosphere for customers while their vehicles are being serviced.

Provide amenities, entertainment, and small gestures of goodwill. Training is essential for staff, and staying updated with EV technology is crucial.

Leveraging technology for efficient data management, tracking, and reporting can improve business operations. Ultimately, focus on providing exceptional service and building long-lasting relationships with customers to thrive in the competitive EV market.

AutoPulse team: What are your predictions for the Middle East automotive market in the next five years, particularly regarding trends and changes in the mix of OE and independent workshops?

Elie Nasr: Over the next five years, the Middle East automotive market is expected to see a gradual increase in electric vehicles (EVs). However, the shift from traditional vehicles to EVs may not be dramatic in this short period. Independent workshops are likely to prepare themselves for this change, upgrading their services and knowledge to cater to the growing number of EVs.

The mix of OE and independent workshops may not see a significant shift in the short term. Government regulations and incentives will play a crucial role in influencing the market trends.

The Middle East may see a more substantial change in the mix of workshops beyond the five-year mark as the EV market matures and evolves.

The episode ends with heartful gratitude & thanking each other for the opportunity

DRIVING INNOVATION AND TRANSFORMATION: INSIGHTS FROM THE CEO OF PETROMIN EXPRESS

MR TARIQ JAVED

CEO of National Car Maintenance Company
(Parent Company of Petromin Express & Petromin AutoCare)
Saudi Arabia and International Markets

Mr. Tariq Javed is an automotive aftermarket visionary leader and the driving force behind a remarkable success story.

He's the CEO of National Car Maintenance Company (NCMC), managing a vast automotive service ecosystem with over 700+ retail centres and 3,000 employees, that include brands like Petromin Express, Petromin AutoCare, Petromin Tristar, and Petromin Body and Paint.

Note-
This transcript is a highly condensed version of the full episode.

AUTOPULSE TEAM'S THOUGHTS ON THIS EPISODE -

We were honoured to have Mr Tariq as our guest for the inaugural episode of AutoPulse CEO's Talk.

He graciously hosted our AutoPulse team in his office for the recording.

For authenticity, the AutoPulse team had only shared the genre of questions and Mr. Tariq came prepared with just small pointers to answer the potential questions.

The conversation was refreshingly candid, with Mr. Tariq offering authentic insights into business-building and the journey behind Petromin Express.

This episode is a must-watch for aspiring leaders and current business professionals looking to learn from seasoned experts.

It was a truly captivating episode.

A warm intro was given by Shubhra (CEO of GaragePlug) and Ashish (COO of GaragePlug) introducing AutoPulse's episode and Mr Tariq to the first-ever episode of AutoPulse CEO's talk - then asking Mr Tariq to talk about his professional journey.

Tariq: Thank you, Shubhra, and thank you, Ashish. It's indeed an honour to be a part of your series. My journey began as an engineer, heavily involved with machines. However, I soon discovered my passion for solving business problems. This led to a significant career shift, and in 2005, I joined Petromin. During my initial years, I worked in the lubricant industry, gaining insights into assessing customer needs and crafting customized business solutions.

Four years ago, I transitioned to the retail service sector with Petromin Express, embracing a more agile business model. This change allowed me to explore new ideas and have a more substantial impact on a broader platform than my previous roles. Over the years, I've had the privilege of working alongside exceptional leaders and a talented team, all within a company that identifies and nurtures talent within its ranks, empowering individuals to reach leadership positions.

ABOUT PETROMIN'S GROWTH & ASKING MR TARIQ HIS SECRET SAUCE

AutoPulse Team: Impressive, Tariq. Petromin Express has experienced remarkable growth, expanding to 700 substations within a decade. Could you share the secret behind this achievement with the world? What set Petromin apart in scaling to such a significant presence?

Tariq: Certainly. Every successful solution begins with identifying a market need and then executing rapid scaling with adaptability to address the evolving market dynamics and changing consumer sentiments.

To elaborate, when we look at the automotive sector, we find two dominant segments. First, there are the Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs), where customers often return for services due to warranty commitments. On the other hand, there are the smaller, unorganized "mom and pop" shops, colloquially known as puncture shops.

In the subsequent years, particularly from 2014 to 2018, our expansion accelerated, with two stations opening each week. This aggressive growth strategy allowed us to achieve 200 to 250 stations annually.

Moreover, our ability to adapt to the changing market dynamics and evolving consumer needs has been crucial. In summary, the success of Petromin Express can be attributed to two key factors: identifying a market need and agile scaling to meet that need while remaining responsive to changing dynamics and customer requirements.

The gap we identified back in 2001 was in the post-warranty service space. Customers faced uncertainty about where to go for vehicle maintenance once their warranties expired. Petromin Express was born to fill this gap. We initially established quick service centres, starting with oil changes. By 2010, we had reached 100 stations.

AutoPulse Team: Could you unveil the secret sauce, if possible, and share a couple of things that set Petromin apart in achieving 700 outlets—a feat that's far from easy?

Tariq: Well, you know, they say a magician never tells, but I believe in sharing our experiences for the betterment of the industry as a whole.

It's essential to promote learning and growth among industry leaders. As for Petromin Express, one of the key factors that set us apart was embracing the first-mover advantage. We initiated a unique solution that addressed an existing gap in the market.

While establishing 700 brick-and-mortar locations may seem like a daunting journey today, we believe that the industry will continue to evolve.
Our extensive network, with touchpoints in nearly every city across Saudi Arabia, gives us a distinct advantage.

Admittedly, our success didn't happen overnight. Like any other business, we faced challenges in the early years. We had to fine-tune our model and adapt it to evolving market conditions. In the initial years, we operated around 50 to 70 locations, but once we optimized our approach, we rapidly scaled up. The combination of speed to market and being the first in our industry to offer such a solution made a significant difference.

In recent years, the industry has transformed, with digital channels gaining prominence. Even oil changes now offer vehicle pickup, service, and return options for customers.

Moreover, we've expanded beyond borders and are now present in five different countries. We're in the process of setting up our network in two more countries, sharing our expertise and exploring markets outside Saudi Arabia.

One significant focus has been on enhancing the customer experience.

Establishing a trusted brand is vital for network expansion. Our customer-centric approach prioritizes exceptional experiences, with a constant focus on meeting market needs and enhancing the Petromin Express customer journey.

These insights have allowed us to diversify our service portfolio. Starting from oil change service centers, we now offer multiple services for various brands. This expansion has not only added scale but also given customers the confidence to choose Petromin Express for their product and service needs, resulting in higher customer satisfaction.

individual buyers from offline to online purchases. Considering our presence in the automotive service sector, where most activities occur at workshop facilities, we recognized the need for a transformational journey.

We needed to reevaluate and restart. Specifically, we looked at how we could leverage digital channels to provide customers with more choices.

GROWTH STRATEGIES (PETROMIN EXPRESS 2.0)

AutoPulse Team: Could you shed some light on your Petromin Express 2.0 vision and where you stand in its realization? We're eager to learn more.

Tariq: So, we labeled it as Petromin Express 2.0, marking the second phase of our business evolution. This phase predominantly emerged in the post-COVID era, during the late stages of the pandemic. One significant shift brought about by COVID-19 was the transition of

Petromin Express 2.0 focused on five core transformational aspects: Among others, two prominent cornerstones were enhancing the customer experience and embracing digitization, all while fostering a culture of operational excellence within the organization.

Our extensive network across the kingdom was a valuable asset. Recognizing the potential of our facilities beyond oil change centres, we transformed them into versatile retail outlets, expanding our offerings to provide added value for both customers and their vehicles.

We built our transformation on five pillars:

Maximizing Asset Value: We explored opportunities to create new value and evaluated whether to collaborate or compete. This led us to partner with industry leaders in their specific segments, introducing new products and services to enhance our CVP and network ROI.

Customer Experience: We delved deep into understanding contemporary customer preferences and identified their shift from an in-facility service experience to online-offline interactions. Consequently, we redesigned the entire customer journey, ensuring a seamless transition between online and offline phases. We recognized that the post-service phase was critical, as it allowed us to engage with customers, understand their experiences, and gather feedback.

Digitization: We initiated a comprehensive digitization strategy. Recognizing the dynamic landscape of the Kingdom and the exceptionally high internet usage (99%) and social media engagement (94%), we initiated a comprehensive digitization strategy. We deployed plate recognition cameras, offering seamless entry and exit experiences. Our user-friendly chatbot swiftly directs customers to the nearest locations while providing real-time bay availability information. We introduced an EVHC system, giving customers data-backed maintenance recommendations, boosting transparency and trust.

After every service, we solicited customer feedback through ratings. However, the real difference lay in how we processed this feedback. We closely examined customers who rated us below a certain threshold and analyzed their retention rates. Engaging with these customers allowed us to address their concerns and guide them back to our services. Simultaneously, we overhauled our Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), retraining our staff to align with modern customer experience expectations.

Operational Excellence: We provided training to our extensive network of over 2,500 technicians, focusing on the Petromin Express philosophy of delivering superior customer experiences. This encompassed the entire customer journey, from welcoming customers at our service bays, to transparently sharing vehicle evaluations, and capturing their experiences while waiting for service. Post-service interactions were also a crucial part of this journey, and we set specific KPIs and measuring tools to evaluate and continuously improve the post-service experience.

Cultural Transformation: Achieving a superior customer experience required a cultural shift within our organization. We needed our staff to unlearn and relearn new modes, models, behaviours, and attitudes and adapt to new technologies aligned with modern customer expectations.

This extensive training ensured that our entire network was aligned with the new Petromin Express ethos of providing exceptional customer experiences.

This journey is ongoing, and we remain committed to measuring customer satisfaction and continuously evolving to meet changing customer needs and expectations.

INDUSTRY TRENDS AND MR. TARIQ'S STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS THEM

AutoPulse Team: What are some significant emerging trends in the automotive aftermarket industry? Specifically, which trends are you closely monitoring in this market?

Tariq: In the segment we operate in, which is the aftermarket automotive service, one of the most significant transformations we're observing is the shift from Internal Combustion Engine (ICE) vehicles to Electric Vehicles (EVs). This transition is pivotal for the automotive industry as a whole.

The current infrastructure of traditional service centres is not entirely equipped to accommodate this shift on a broader scale. However, this is where the concept of the "first mover advantage" comes into play. We are closely monitoring and actively participating in this transformation.

As you may be aware, last year, Petromin, through one of its subsidiaries, Electromin, installed 100 charging points at Petromin Express stations.

One of the primary challenges with EV adoption is what we commonly refer to as "range anxiety." Customers are concerned about the range limitations of their electric vehicles. To address this, and in line with the local government's focus on achieving net-zero carbon emissions, we are ensuring that our service centres are equipped to cater to the needs of this new generation of vehicles.

We have witnessed significant developments in the automotive sector, with the establishment of manufacturing plants such as Lucid and the upcoming Sears plant.

These initiatives are shaping the future of EVs in the region, and we aim to be at the forefront of servicing these vehicles.

In the evolving service landscape, traditional offerings like lubrication will decline significantly for EVs, but services like tires, batteries, air conditioning, body and paint repair, and glass repair will remain relevant. However, it's crucial to highlight that EVs may see up to a 65% reduction in service needs compared to ICE vehicles.

Consequently, service centers will need to adapt. This adaptation might involve network consolidation and a transformation of the services offered. Technicians will require different skill sets, with Level 2 and Level 3 technicians being essential for basic EV service, and Level 4 technicians for specialized services. Service centers will also need to be designed to handle EV batteries properly during service, ensuring safety and efficiency.

Moreover, inventory management will change significantly, with traditional parts making way for EV-related components. Additionally, EVs often require over-the-air updates for their electronics, reducing the need for repetitive in-person services.

In summary, the shift to EVs is a profound transformation in the automotive aftermarket industry.

Service centers must evolve by diversifying their service offerings related to automotive services while adapting to the changing needs of EV owners.

AutoPulse Team: How do you foresee these changes in the automotive service sector impacting profitability and the overall business model?

With the evolving landscape, what role do you think the aftermarket service industry will play, and how do you visualize its future in this context?

Tariq: In every changing market dynamic, there are both challenges and opportunities. As the automotive product itself evolves, the service requirements will naturally change along with it.

This presents an opportunity for service networks to either embrace these changes today or prepare for them in the future. At Petromin, we firmly believe in the first-mover advantage and staying ahead of the curve.

As I mentioned earlier, through Electromin's initiative, we are already taking proactive steps to prepare for the transition to EVs. We are embracing agility and flexibility in our approach.

The products on our shelves will change, the technical skill sets required will change, the space requirements will change, and the standards we maintain will evolve. We see this as an opportunity, not a threat.

PETROMIN'S FUTURE PLANS - REVEALED BY MR TARIQ

AutoPulse Team: Can you provide some insights into how you envision Petromin evolving over the next five to ten years? What will be the new version of Petromin, and what key developments do you anticipate in that time frame?

Tariq: Certainly. Petromin's vision for the future is one of readiness and adaptability. We will continue to actively engage in initiatives that facilitate and drive the transformation of the automotive industry. Our commitment is twofold: to support the industry's transition to cleaner and more sustainable transportation solutions and to ensure that our service offerings are aligned with the evolving needs of consumers.

In the future, Petromin will be ready to serve both traditional ICE vehicles and EVs. We'll invest in infrastructure, technology, and skill development to meet evolving demands, ensuring our service centres can handle new-gen vehicles safely.

Additionally, we'll expand our product range to align with changing consumer preferences and priorities.

Whether it's through partnerships, digital innovation, or a commitment to exceptional customer experiences, Petromin will remain at the forefront of the industry. Our goal is to be more than just a service provider; we want to be a trusted partner for consumers as they navigate the evolving automotive landscape. Petromin's future version will be defined by its readiness, adaptability, and commitment to sustainability.

ADVICE FROM A SUCCESSFUL AFTERMARKET CEO TO OTHER INDUSTRY LEADERS

Autopulse Team: What is the one key learning you want to pass on to your fellow industry leaders?

Tariq: I'd like to emphasize two key points. Firstly, prioritizing customer centricity is crucial. Understanding our customers and utilizing both offline and online data to derive insights, analyze behaviors, and track buying trends is vital. It's not just about addressing their needs but also enhancing their overall experience.

Secondly, investing in your team is paramount. People are at the core of any strategy, and a strong corporate culture should align with it.

Strategy is a roadmap, and the culture within the organization greatly influences the experience throughout the journey. Ensuring your team is content and well-equipped can result in happier employees and, subsequently, happier customers.

SOP TO BEEF UP SECURITY MEASURES

MR MANIKANDAN T K

Ex-Vice President
Customer Service
Lanson Toyota,

Manikandan is a retired automotive professional with 40+ years of experience.

He has had experience in a variety of companies and sectors in the automotive industry such as Lanson Toyota, Rane TRW Steering System Ltd, Hindustan Motors Ltd Mitsubishi Chennai Car Plant.

Note 1-
The following article presents the security protocol designed by Manikandan to enhance safety measures in automotive repair and service workshops.

These SOP steps were originally created for a certain enterprise, and the AutoPulse team has converted the SOP into an article format.

Note 2-
As Manikandan tailored these SOPs for a specific enterprise, not all guidelines and workshop setups mentioned here may be relevant to every business.

Readers' discretion is required and this article is only for information purposes.

1.ADMINISTRATIVE BLOCK NEAR SECURITY GATE

A Multi-Functional Administrative Block:
The block exclusively houses the following:

- **Guest Lounge:** Visitors may meet with any employee in this lounge, but only with prior permission from authorized heads of their respective departments. Except for emergencies, scheduled visiting hours should be observed.

- **Purchase Department:** Handling the inward and outward flow of materials for official use, this department often hosts business associates. Their movement should be restricted to this block, featuring exclusive discussion tables for interactions, negotiations, sample validations, and more. Unauthorized access areas like the showroom and workshop will be prevented.

- **Accounts Department:** Operating from this block, the Accounts Department will limit the movement of business associates visiting for payment collections and follow-up queries.

- **Insurance Department:** To manage customer visits related to insurance renewals, policy collections, and inquiries, the Insurance Department should operate from this block, ensuring controlled access.

- **HR & Admin:** Functioning on the ground level, HR and Admin teams will oversee coordination, administrative control, CCTV monitoring, liaising with government officials, and more.

- **Locker Room:** Adjacent to the security cabin in this Admin block, a locker facility and lounge will be provided for all employees. The locker facility should be strictly for personal belongings, with access restricted to defined schedules in the morning before office hours and during closing hours.

In emergencies, access can be approved by department heads. Additionally, an exclusive locker facility can be arranged for vendors and service providers under contractual obligations.

2. CONTACTOR'S ZONE

A Dedicated Space for Valued Service Providers:

- In your commitment to smooth operations, a special zone should be designated exclusively for service providers who have been validated and approved by the HR department for contractual obligations.

- There should be limited access to this zone, and service providers will be expected to use the locker facilities provided in the admin block. No arrangements will be permitted in the main work areas.

- To maintain consistency and security, a clear Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) should be established for service providers. HR should work closely with branch service heads to ensure that these guidelines are followed diligently and monitored effectively.

- Clear identification is crucial on the premises. Contractual employees should be required to wear a unique uniform provided by their respective contract owners. This uniform serves as a visible identity, ensuring easy recognition.

- In addition to uniforms, employees should be mandated to wear ID tags provided by the HR department. This step adds an extra layer of security and helps facilitate entry at the security gate.

- **Handling Materials and Belongings:** A well-defined SOP has to be established for handling materials left in vehicles, such as old parts or customers' belongings. This procedure ensures that the materials are appropriately deposited with the relevant authorities.

- Commitment to transparency and customer service means following clear guidelines for the return of items to customers or their proper disposal.

- **Regular Vigilance for Peace of Mind:** To maintain a high standard of service and security, random audits should be conducted on a monthly basis. These audits, akin to mystery shopping, should be carried out by authorized personnel. This practice helps maintain vigilance and ensures that everything runs smoothly, providing peace of mind.

- The goal is not only to provide top-notch service but also to maintain a safe and secure environment for all stakeholders, including valued service providers and customers.

3. SECURITY GATE STANDING INSTRUCTIONS

An exclusive security officer should be responsible for ensuring the following measures are adhered to:

Validation of Gate Pass: All vehicles leaving the premises must possess a valid gate pass issued by authorized personnel. The gate pass confirms delivery after repairs.

Declaration of Old Parts: Only upon customer request should the declaration of the delivery of old parts be recorded.

Logging Vehicle Movements: For vehicles going out on road tests or test drives, the officer is responsible for logging both the entry and exit times. This includes confirming the physical condition of the car before and after the test.

Authorized Companions: Only authorized individuals are permitted to accompany the vehicle with a gate pass when going for a road test or test drive.

Stringent Vehicle Control: Parking yard security gate officials should be equipped with clear standing instructions for permitting the entry and exit of various vehicles, including Customer Vehicles and, Company Vehicles. These instructions must be diligently maintained in a register, and periodically validated by HR/Admin authorities. To enhance control, a physical count and visual control board should be implemented in such yards.

These measures create a secure environment, ensuring smooth vehicle and employee operations with high security standards.

4.CCTV AND MONITORING ROOM

- Strategic camera placements throughout the premises are a must, including the parking yard, to provide comprehensive coverage.

- A vigilant security team should conduct regular reviews of CCTV footage to promptly identify and address any suspicious activities or internal incidents.

- This ensures a secure environment for everyone, with a watchful eye always in place to maintain safety and peace of mind.

5.ELECTRONIC ACCESS CARDS

Introduce electronic access, strictly limiting entry to authorized personnel in restricted zones.

- Access logs should undergo thorough validation, reinforcing security and preemptively addressing potential concerns.

- This approach guarantees that restricted zones maintain their security and are accessible solely to authorized individuals, resulting in heightened safety and peace of mind for all.

6. ENQUIRY COMMITTEE

- A robust inquiry committee, comprising a company vigilance officer, legal advocate, management representative, and HR head, should hold the authority to investigate unfavourable incidents, including internal accidents.

- This committee not only investigates but should also provide recommendations for suitable disciplinary actions, which may include termination and the filing of legal cases when deemed appropriate.

This policy applies universally, holding any employee accountable for any offence, regardless of their level, to maintain a safe and just work environment without limitations.

7.CONSOLIDATION OF OTHER OPERATIONAL ISSUES

- To initiate the process, feedback on areas of concern should be solicited from select senior managers. These concerns should then be consolidated and addressed with suitable actions, fostering a high level of discipline and control.

- Periodic meetings, typically held once a quarter, should serve as a forum for this consolidation and resolution process.

This approach ensures a collaborative and constructive environment where concerns are heard and addressed, promoting a disciplined and controlled workplace.

REVOLUTIONIZING FRANCHISE MANAGEMENT: THE POWER OF MODERN TECHNOLOGY

MR NABIL NAAMO
MANAGING DIRECTOR
TOPAZ DETAILING GROUP

As the Managing Director and Co-Founder of Topaz Detailing since December 2009, Nabil has been instrumental in transforming the Topaz brand from concept to the epitome of excellence in vehicle presentation and protection.

Alongside his partner, Mazin Naamo, their shared passion drives their vision to new heights. Nabil's leadership has led to the expansion of Topaz Detailing, offering Detailing and Paint Protection Film services across 11 locations nationally and internationally.

In today's rapidly evolving business landscape, maintaining and expanding an already extensive automotive service franchise network presents a unique set of challenges. As the franchise network grows, the complexities of managing and ensuring uniformity across multiple locations can become overwhelming. However, with the integration of modern technology and streamlined processes, these challenges can be transformed into opportunities for sustainable growth and success.

FRANCHISE NETWORK DYNAMICS

Franchise networks thrive when franchisors establish a robust power dynamic with their franchisees, cultivating an environment where both parties can prosper. Through my own experience with the Topaz Detailing franchise network and interactions with others, I have come to understand that maintaining strong relationships with franchisees is at the core of sustaining a franchise business. The most successful franchisors have mastered these three key principles :

1. Setting Clear Targets:
They define precise targets for their brand, which in turn inform achievable goals for franchisees. This approach provides franchisees with a clear return on investment (ROI) perspective, fostering trust and collaboration.

2. Franchisee Selection Criteria:
Successful franchisors recognize that franchisee retention begins with the initial selection process. Striking the right balance in franchisee selection criteria ensures that franchisees are aligned with the brand's values and objectives.

3. Uniform Brand Experience:
Establishing a consistent brand experience across all locations is paramount. This consistency not only strengthens the brand's fundamentals but also creates a solid foundation for future growth.

CHALLENGES AND THE NEED FOR TECHNOLOGY

Despite the implementation of these strategies, challenges persist, and the need for modern technology becomes evident:

1. Lack of Consistency:
Training franchisees on standard operating procedures (SOP) to maintain uniform branding is futile without the tools to enforce consistency.

2. Data Reliance on Franchisees:
Business data is entirely reliant on franchisees, leaving room for errors or intentional discrepancies.

3. Inspection Limitations:
Scheduled visits to assess uniform branding may not always provide an accurate picture, and mystery visits have limitations due to their scalability.

4. Customer Experience:
Franchisors often lack direct insight into the customer experience, as franchisees are the primary point of contact. Customer feedback may not always reach the franchisor directly

THE TECHNOLOGICAL DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

In essence, while the brand belongs to the franchisor, managing a large franchise network is not akin to running a single service outlet. To bridge this gap and gain better control, technology emerges as the key solution.

Now, let's envision a scenario where technology transforms the landscape:

1. Unified Network Management:
Picture a tool that unifies the entire network, enabling seamless management of multiple outlets as if they were a single entity, regardless of geographical dispersion.

2. Data Autonomy:
Imagine no longer being dependent on franchisees for business data, with the ability to access comprehensive data effortlessly.

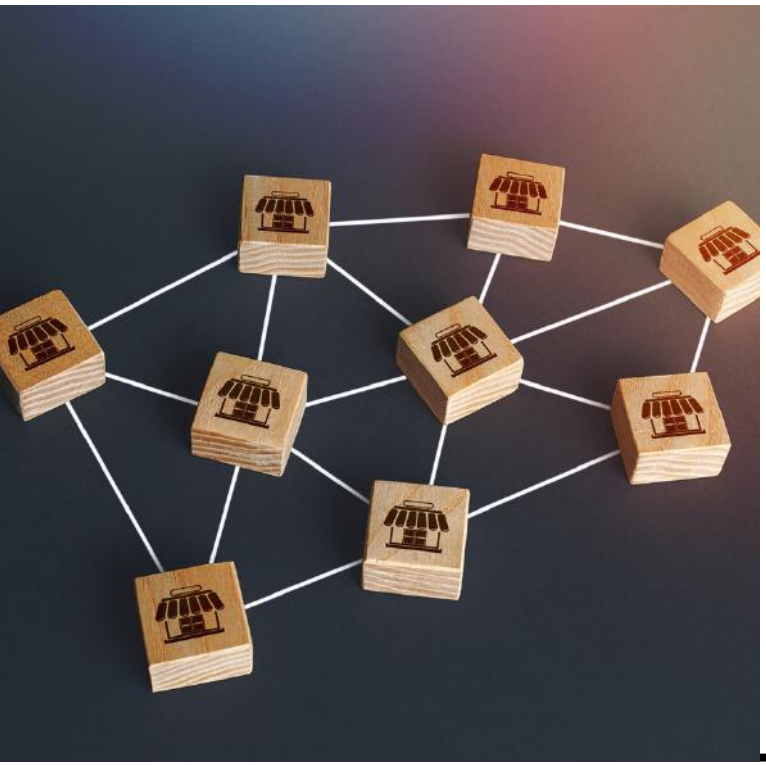
3. Enhanced Control:
Gain managerial control over the entire network, allowing nothing to escape your oversight.

4. Standardization:
Provide franchisees with tools that ensure they consistently deliver the brand experience originally designed, enhancing customer satisfaction.

5. Loyalty Recognition:
Identify loyal and high-performing franchisees, offering them incentives, while also supporting underperforming ones to improve.

6. Centralized Payments:
Imagine all network-wide transactions occurring on a single platform under your control, enabling tracking and eliminating discrepancies.

7. Promotions and Tracking:
Run network-wide promotions and track their success without the need for manual communication with each franchisee.



THE IMPACT OF DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

Crucially, these technological advancements can be introduced as added benefits for franchisees, fostering collaboration rather than friction.

The power of modern technology is undeniable in the realm of franchise management. Embracing such innovations can pave the way for unparalleled growth and sustainability. To underscore the potential impact, let's delve into real-world data and examples.

1. Data-Driven Insights:
Modern technology empowers franchisors with actionable insights derived from real-time data.

For instance, customer feedback collected electronically can provide invaluable information about the customer experience across various locations. Identifying areas for improvement becomes more precise and responsive.

2. Geographical Expansion:
With technology-aided systems, managing an extensive franchise network across different regions or even countries becomes not only feasible but also efficient.

Coordination, communication, and oversight are streamlined.

3. Competitive Edge:
Franchisors who leverage technology to enhance their network's efficiency gain a competitive advantage. They can respond more swiftly to market changes, adapt strategies, and maintain a consistent brand presence that resonates with customers.

4. Remote Monitoring:
Technology allows for remote monitoring of franchise outlets, reducing the need for extensive travel. Franchisors can efficiently allocate resources and prioritize support where it's needed most.

5. Enhanced Training:
Digital platforms can facilitate comprehensive and standardized training for franchisees, ensuring that they have the tools and knowledge to maintain the desired brand experience.

THE IMPACT OF DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

the challenges of managing a growing franchise network can indeed be transformed into opportunities for sustained success through the integration of modern technology. By envisioning a future where franchisors have greater control, access to reliable data, and the means to foster uniformity, we see the immense potential for the franchising industry to thrive in an increasingly tech-driven world.

Embracing these technological advancements is not just an option; it's a necessity for those who aspire to lead the way in franchise management. The road to unlimited growth begins with the realization that technology is the driving force behind a brighter future for franchisors and franchisees alike.

TOP 05 DISRUPTIVE TRENDS IN THE AUTOMOTIVE AFTERMARKET

MS SAIMA SHARIF
AUTOMOTIVE MARKETING EXPERT
PETROMIN CORPORATION

With a decade of marketing experience encompassing both B2B and B2C domains, coupled with a profound understanding of technology, Saima orchestrates transformative marketing campaigns that propel brands to unprecedented heights in today's digital landscape.

She is an esteemed authority in the field, renowned for their strategic brilliance and unparalleled industry insights.

INTRODUCTION -

The automotive industry is shifting gears. The rise of electric vehicles, the development of autonomous cars and increased demand for price transparency by tech-savvy modern-day consumers have forced the automotive industry to not only redefine their business models but also rethink the entire concept of transportation.

Automotive players must steer in the right direction to gain a competitive edge.

Starting today, automakers can get a jump on the competition by mastering and benefitting from the disruptive digital forces ahead.

TREND 01: TRANSFORMATION OF AUTOMOTIVE AFTERMARKET DUE TO EVS

Electric vehicles are expensive compared to gasoline-powered vehicles due to the higher battery cost. The limitations of battery technology are holding back the movement of electrification. However, there are companies that are actively working on developing new battery technology that can overcome this challenge. There will eventually be a time when EVs will be cheaper than internal combustion vehicles, and once we reach that point, EVs will be on the fast track to market dominance.

The goal of the automotive aftermarket should not just be to survive but to thrive in it. To stay ahead of the curve, they will have to make significant changes. Knowing what to expect, which parts will stay, which parts will be phased out, and having broader knowledge about new parts that will enter the market can help them achieve a competitive edge. Businesses can also work in advance to create innovative solutions to solve parts stock issues as OEMs are likely to face stock shortages with the EV boom. Businesses with a proactive approach can likely dominate the market with new and improved parts.

Internal combustion engines will, however, stay in the market for another 10 to 20 years, and few automakers will continue to address their vehicle requirements, but it won't last forever, and these businesses will have to figure out how to stay relevant in an EV-dominated market.

Gasoline Powered Vehicle And EVs Sharing Same Parts:

- Brakes
- Batteries
- Cabin Filter
- Suspension components (shocks, struts, etc.)
- Vehicle Body parts

The designs, however, might be different for some of these parts in EVs.
Parts That Will be Phased Out

There are about 20 moving parts in electric vehicles, which is a significant reduction from the 2,000 moving parts in gasoline-powered engines. Many parts will eventually be phased out, such as:

- Clutches
- Multi-gear transmission
- Fuel system parts (Fuel tanks, pumps, filters, etc.)
- Engine parts such as oil filters, air filters, spark plugs, etc
- Radiator

What's new?
EVs will bring along a new set of car parts such as:

- Single-speed gearboxes
- Motor controllers
- Electric motors
- Regenerative braking systems
- Electrically powered water pumps, air conditioners, steering pumps, etc.

Where's the opportunity for Automotive Aftermarket?

- Battery cells
- Battery pack
- Motor
- Controller
- Other related electronic components

TREND 02: BUILD A FUTURE WORKFORCE WITH SOFTWARE CAPABILITIES

Since we are facing massive product disruption in the automotive section due to the rise of autonomous vehicles and mobility services, companies must upgrade their existing workforces to perform new digital tasks. To thrive, automotive companies either need to pursue a highly scarce supply of high-tech workers or retain current staff.

The traditional skill sets, which were heavily engineering-driven are changing, and software skills will be required. Employers, on the other hand, can't simply wait for the workforce of tomorrow to arrive. To stay ahead of the curve, it is critical to reskill and prepare their current workforce. To do so, HR and C-suite must work together and define the roles that will be needed/filled in the next 5 to 10 years. Few roles may be eliminated, and others may be transformed, necessitating reskilling to drive growth and strategy.

Internal combustion engines will, however, stay in the market for another 10 to 20 years, and few automakers will continue to address their vehicle requirements, but it won't last forever, and these businesses will have to figure out how to stay relevant in an EV-dominated market.

TREND 03: MOVING AWAY FROM A REACTIVE TO A PROACTIVE APPROACH TOWARD CUSTOMER SERVICE

The bar is already high therefore, businesses must explore new ways to clearly position themselves versus the competing networks. Customer experience leaders incorporate customer service into their corporate DNA, ensuring that their commitment to customers is clearly communicated at all levels of the organization. Companies should invest in enabling a truly digital customer journey and at the same time, must professionalize their vehicle care centers to gain a competitive edge.

The habit of seeing the relationship through the eyes of the customer and making it as pleasant as possible will follow retailers into whatever the future holds for the automotive retail industry. Customer greeting, having a consistent brand presence, competitive knowledge on vehicle parts and services, personalized interactions and active use of SMS alerts and social media for feedback and capturing the voice of the customer, customized auto service, and product presentation with detailed need-based analysis are all key elements of improved customer experience.

TREND 04: LEVERAGING BIG DATA

Big Data has the potential to improve supply chain operations ranging from inventory forecasting to pricing in the automotive aftermarket.

The automotive aftermarket is propelled forward by data. Unfortunately, most of the automotive aftermarket does not make use of the data they gather. They have failed to recognize the importance of new growth.

They can provide services or parts to their existing customers, but how do they attract new ones? How do you reach an untapped market with enormous potential? What are the best ways to cross-sell and upsell?
In a nutshell, companies need accurate data on not only sales volume, but also pricing discounts, shipping, and other costs that affect margins.

Automotive companies can better predict customer behaviour, incorporate customer services, and manage investments by incorporating big data into their CRM solutions. Big Data can be used to forecast customer needs, pricing strategies, and promotional efforts.

TREND 05: ADOPTION OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES

Digital disruptors have forced the automotive industry to rewrite the traditional rules of customer engagement by injecting an increased demand for price transparency. Amid the pandemic, there was a significant ramp-up of digital initiatives:

- Crafting delightful digital experiences with e-commerce
- Chatbots- Allowing companies to stay connected to their customers 24/7 by offering personalization without disruption of the experience.
- Online cost calculator for both auto services and parts
- Booking a car repair or service online – Tech-savvy customers prefer one of the two alternatives: mobile servicing or the online appointment booking option.

When it comes to booking, the independent aftermarket is increasingly connected via online portals providing customers not just a look at various services but also allowing them to choose from multiple quotes and fix a price prior to the service center visit.

Mobile servicing attracted a lot of traction during the pandemic since it offered contact-free car maintenance, but its future is yet to be decided because it requires a network and operational readiness. During the pandemic, mobile servicing gained a lot of traction because it allowed for contact-free car maintenance, but its future is still up in the air because it requires a network and operational readiness.

Technicians need thorough training for servicing specialized tools used in various auto care tasks like car washes, tire changes, and battery replacements, as some tools are hard to transport.

UPCOMING EVENTS

OCTOBER

Oct 1 - Oct 4
International Auto Parts Exhibition
-Dubai, UAE

Oct 2 - Oct 4
Automechanika
-Dubai, UAE

Oct 5 - Oct 14
Geneva Motor Show
-Doha, Qatar

Oct 9 - Oct 11
EV Auto Show
-Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

Oct 15 - Oct 17
Autotech Egypt
-Cairo, Egypt

Oct 17 - Oct 19
EV Auto Show
-Abu Dhabi, UAE

NOVEMBER

Nov 1 - Nov 5
International Automobile Show
-Sharjah, UAE

Nov 4
AutoMadness
-Dubai, UAE

Nov 9 - Nov 11
IMTF International Motor Trade Forum
-Dubai, UAE

Nov 9 - Nov 15
Africa Automotive Show
-Nasr City, Egypt

Nov 13 - Nov 15
Gulf Car Wash Expo
-Dubai, UAE

Nov 13 - Nov 15
Auto Tec Exhibition
-Cairo, Egypt

Nov 16 - Nov 18
Malaysia International Automotive & Parts Expo
-Malaysia

Nov 17 - Nov 19
Dubai Motor Show
-Dubai, UAE

Nov 29 - Dec 2
Automechanika
-Shanghai, China

DECEMBER

Dec 1 - Dec 5
Kuwait International Automobile Exhibition
-Kuwait

Dec 8- Dec 9
Global EV Show
-Dubai, UAE

ENDING NOTE FROM THE AUTO PULSE TEAM

As we reach the final page of this issue, we extend our heartfelt thanks for joining us on this transformative journey. Your unwavering support fuels our non-profit initiative to empower the automotive service sector.

Now, we invite you to be more than readers; become champions of change. Support our mission and actively engage with us.

Together, we'll steer our industry to new heights. Your involvement is the spark that ignites progress.

WHILE WE HAVE TAKEN THIS COMMUNITY INITIATIVE, WE REQUEST YOU TO CONTRIBUTE TO IT.

To contribute, contact:
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IGNITING PASSION, FUELLING INNOVATION:
JOIN THE AUTO PULSE COMMUNITY IN REVOLUTIONIZING THE AUTOMOTIVE AFTERMARKET INDUSTRY TOGETHER

FOR SUBSCRIBERS ONLY