

AutoPulse

Community initiative by GaragePlug

THE RIGHT TO
REPAIR IS THE
FUTURE OF THE
AUTO
AFTERMARKET
SERVICE INDUSTRY



LES MC MASTER

DIRECTOR, MOVE WORKSHOPS

"DO WHAT THE CUSTOMER SAYS" — IT'S
STRAIGHTFORWARD WITHOUT ANY JARGON.



KENNETH ARNOLD

VP FUEL & CAR SERVICES, ADNOC



SANDEEP GHAI

CEO, OPAL MARKETING



RAO JUNAID AHMED

GENERAL MANAGER, FUCHS KSA

EXCLUSIVE CONVERSATION WITH THE CEO OF OPAL MARKETING

RISE OF MULTI-BRAND WORKSHOPS AND
BUSINESS PRINCIPLES FOR SUCCESS:
CANDID CHAT WITH MR SANDEEP GHAI

2024 FEBRUARY

ABOUT THIS MAGAZINE

By now, you would already know that AutoPulse is a pure non-profit community initiative taken by GaragePlug to collectively uplift the Automotive Aftermarket Service industry. Our industry has a weak reputation overall in the consumer's mind and we also observe that the knowledge to win in this scenario lies only with a select few people/ industry leaders.

The only way to win is when our automotive service industry collectively grows and raises the standards. Just one company/ brand raising the standards is not enough to change the weak reputation we have.

This is the sole reason why this magazine and this non-profit community initiative exist. We are trying to build a platform for the aftermarket service industry to bridge the knowledge gap.

We give podiums to deserving industry leaders and make their thought leadership accessible to everyone in the industry. We bring industry leaders who are willing to share their business success secrets without any ego and hesitation that their competitors will learn and outperform them.

We need to raise the standards of our industry and this is the only feasible way we can see to achieve this goal. We sincerely hope you as readers will not only read this magazine but also get inspired to contribute your knowledge as well without ego for the greater benefit of our industry as a whole.

Soon AutoPulse will grow but along with it, our industry will grow as well. Innovation and technology will be synonymous with the aftermarket service industry one day and this is our promise.

-Ashish Shrivastav

COO GaragePlug,

Heading the AutoPulse community initiative

HAPPY READING!

-TEAM AUTOPULSE



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Featuring top auto aftermarket service industry leaders

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TOTAL ENERGIES LUBRICANTS AND POINT S SIGN INTERNATIONAL SERVICE AGREEMENT



(L) Fabien Bouquet, CEO at Point S international and (R) Jean Parizot, Vice President Automotive at TotalEnergies Lubrificants

In a significant move, TotalEnergies Lubrificants, a global manufacturer of lubricants, and Point S, an independent tyre dealer and car maintenance network, have signed an international service agreement.

The agreement is designed to enhance the international growth of both companies.

Under this agreement, TotalEnergies Lubrificants will provide its portfolio of high-performance automotive products, including its range of Quartz engine oils, to Point S's global network of independent tyre dealers and auto repair centres.

Point S's independent network currently consists of 6,185 points of sale across 51 countries on five continents, while TotalEnergies Lubrificants has a presence in 160 countries, with 42 production sites in operation.

Source: Company press release

AutoPulse team's thoughts on this service agreement -

Collaborations are a great way to grow and boost business. From small businesses to large global brands, collaboration is the way forward as companies have peaked and plateaued in growth.

This collaboration, with one focusing on **product innovation** and the other on **service enhancement**, has the potential to be a game-changer. We anticipate more such partnerships to elevate service standards.

We feel that more global brands should start collaborating.

SASCO TO LAUNCH SAUDI ARABIA'S LARGEST FUEL STATION WORTH \$9.3M IN Q1



Saudi Automotive Services Co. is gearing up to unveil the largest fuel station in the Kingdom, valued at SR35 million (\$9.3 million), during the first quarter of 2024.

The facility, known as Al-Jazeera 1, is designed to cater to both vehicles and travellers, forming part of a network of service stations across the country.

Situated along King Fahd Road, serving as a crucial link between Riyadh and Al-Qassim province, Al-Jazeera 1 occupies a sprawling 280,000 sq. m. area on the central island along the highway connecting Al-Qassim and Riyadh.

With SASCO currently overseeing 541 stations in the Kingdom, the addition of 50 new stations in 2024 is on the horizon, aligning with SASCO's ambitious target of reaching 600 facilities by the end of the same year.

Source: Arabnews

AutoPulse team's thoughts on SASCO -

With an unclear future with EVs potentially replacing fuel retailers, every major fuel retailer will strategically try to cut down on fuel business and focus on business diversification.

But it came as a surprise to see SASCO planning on aggressively expanding retail outlets. Let's observe the impact over time.

Our guess is that SASCO is planning something big or they're trying to enter real-estate business line.

PETROMIN EXPRESS WINS 2023 FROST & SULLIVAN AWARD FOR AUTOMOTIVE QUICK SERVICES IN KSA



Petromin Express clinches the prestigious 2023 Frost & Sullivan Saudi Arabian Automotive Quick Services Competitive Strategy Leadership Award, reaffirming its commitment to customer experience and innovative services.

Frost & Sullivan's in-depth research into the automotive quick services sector determined the winners. This accolade is bestowed annually upon companies excelling in regional and global markets, showcasing excellence in competitive intelligence, strategic execution, and enhancing market share, brand positioning, and customer contentment.

“Petromin’s mission is ingrained in providing bespoke automotive products and services that resonate with the individual needs of our patrons,” states Vitali Bielski, Mobility Growth Advisor at Frost & Sullivan.

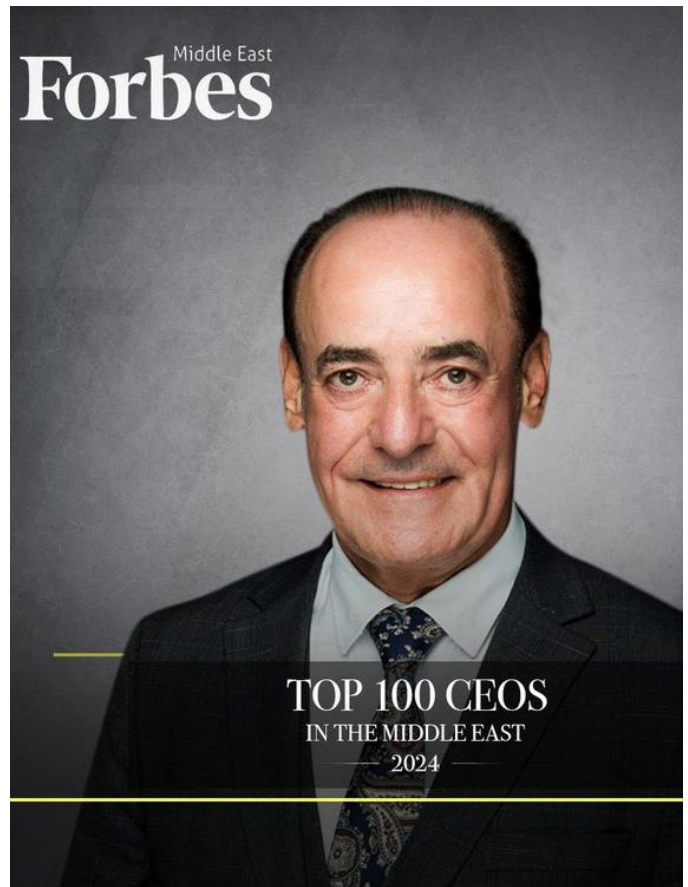
Tariq Javed, CEO of National Car Maintenance Company, expresses determination to exceed high standards and vows to uphold Petromin Express as a symbol of trust, quality, and unmatched customer satisfaction. **Source: Company press release**

AutoPulse team's thoughts on this award -

We personally have a good relationship with Mr Tariq Javed and he is a perfectionist with a great sense of customer service and experience.

Petromin Express winning the 2023 Frost & Sullivan Leadership Award is an exciting milestone in the new quick auto services category.

We have seen the vigour in Mr Tariq and we're very confident that he and his team will take Petromin Express to even greater heights.



Tansel has more than 40 years of industry experience and has led Al Masood Automobiles since 2017 and is driven to disrupt the automotive industry and to create a legacy. Under Irfan's leadership, Al Masood Automobiles has been conferred numerous accolades. **Source: Forbes Middle East**

AutoPulse team's thoughts on this recognition -

Getting recognized as a top CEO can be good and bad. It can make people expect a lot, which might be stressful both for Tansel and the company to consistently deliver exceptional results. Winning this title for the third year adds credibility to his leadership and Al Masood Automobiles. It will no doubt boost the company's reputation, bringing in more investors, customers, and talented people. It also helps Tansel make important partnerships.



AL MASAOOD CEO IRFAN TANSEL NAMED FORBES' TOP 100 CEOS IN MIDDLE EAST

Al Masood Automobiles' Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Irfan Tansel was recently recognised as one of Forbes' Top CEOs in the Middle East for the third consecutive year.

GARGASH AUTO'S NEW SHARJAH BRANCH AT RAHMANIA MALL



Gargash Auto, a renowned name in multi-brand car repairs, announces the opening of its Express Car Repairs Service Centre at Rahmania Mall, Sharjah.

Located in Level C Basement, this unique workshop allows mall visitors to conveniently drop off their vehicles for quick services while enjoying mall activities. The new branch focuses on swift services such as brake checks, wheel alignment, and tire changes.

Amir Pervaiz, General Manager, expresses excitement about extending Gargash Auto's luxury car repair expertise to Sharjah.

Source: Gulf News

AutoPulse team's thoughts on this Gargash Auto news -

Gargash Auto opening the Express Car Repairs at Rahmania Mall, Sharjah, is a smart move. It's good because it makes things easier for customers,

Overall, it helps Gargash Auto grow and offer more services, making them more known in the market.

KAVAK LAUNCHES CAR SERVICE CENTER IN DUBAI

Kavak, the Mexican online platform specializing in used cars, has announced the inauguration of its Autocare Service Center in Dubai. Spanning an impressive 150,000 square feet, this state-of-the-art facility will provide a comprehensive suite of services conducted by skilled technicians. Services include mechanical and electrical work for various car brands, aesthetic body and paint services, routine maintenance, and specialized care and repair.

Notably, all services performed at the center will be covered by a warranty, ensuring that any issues encountered will be addressed without additional charges. Kavak, established in 2016, entered the Middle Eastern market in 2022 through a merger with Oman-based Carzaty.

Source: AIM Group



AutoPulse team's thoughts on Kavak-

This is great news. We have always wondered why used car business don't start their own service network. This opens up a new business model where used car businesses can replicate the OEM dealership model.

Sell used cars and provide a warranty to be covered in the same branded service centres. We wonder what are the challenges in this model.

Upcoming developments:

Gargash also plans to expand operations in Abu Dhabi and Northern Emirates by 2024 and across GCC region Qatar, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia by 2024-25. The company also plans to launch new mobile workshop services by second quarter of 2024 to assist with car repairs and break-down assistance services.

PETROMIN EXPRESS LAUNCHES PIRELLI PERFORMANCE CENTER IN RIYADH



Petromin Express has recently marked a significant development by introducing its inaugural Pirelli Performance Center in Riyadh. Drawing on Petromin's extensive 20-year experience and Pirelli's tire expertise, the collaboration aims to provide an enhanced tire care and customer service experience in Saudi Arabia. The launch of this joint venture in Riyadh signifies the beginning of a broader network of Petromin Express - Pirelli Service Centers across the nation.

AutoPulse team's thoughts on this partnership-

Again, as we mentioned before, collaboration is a great way of expanding business frontiers.

Pirelli's performance centres are known for luxury and sports car tires and launching this center in KSA with Petromin is a great brand positioning move for both companies.

Looks like a high-margin business and we feel other aftermarket service brands should also start capturing this high-margin quick services market for luxury vehicles.

Look for international product companies, collaborate with them and launch them under a sub-brand positioned for luxury in your local market.

PORSCHE-BACKED SENSIGO USES AI TOOLS FOR EFFORTLESS VEHICLE REPAIRS

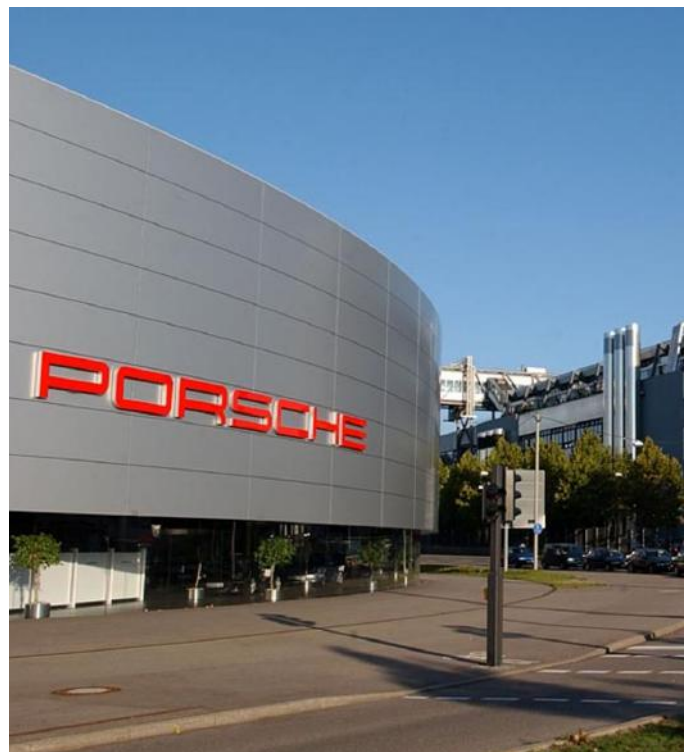


Image source - Porsche official website

German automaker Porsche and investor UP. Partners have launched Sensigo, a California-based startup using artificial intelligence to enable vehicle service technicians to diagnose, resolve and eventually predict repair issues.

Sensigo AI-powered service platform and tools can improve the repair process for customers and techs, while boosting service centre profitability, reducing repair costs and minimizing warranty risk.

The company is the second of six mobility startups that Porsche is launching over the next three years with UP. Partners, a Santa Monica firm that invests in and builds mobility companies, through its affiliates UP.Ventures and UP.Labs.

Source: Newsroom, media portal by Porche



AutoPulse team's thoughts on Sensigo-

Porsche and UP. Partners unveiling Sensigo, an AI-driven startup for vehicle diagnostics, is a promising venture. It offers positive prospects like streamlined repairs and cost reductions, though challenges in tech adoption might arise.

We often see resistance to tech adoption. Let's see what more they do about this.

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION TECH COMPANY GARAGEPLUG LAUNCHES THEIR AI SUITE



Globally renowned digital transformation tech firm, GaragePlug, has officially launched its AI suite, GPSense, following a successful beta release at Automechanika Dubai.

The suite, now refined, marks a significant leap into GaragePlug's future as it integrates AI comprehensively across its platform over the next two years. Currently featuring AI for service advisors, predictive maintenance alerts, AI-guided video inspections, oil advisory, and inventory optimization, GaragePlug aims to democratize AI accessibility in the automotive service industry, extending its benefits even to technicians.

With AI as the cornerstone, GaragePlug's core platform promises substantial advantages, enabling businesses to achieve significant ROI and competitive growth. Notably, the company earned Automechanika Dubai's esteemed "Digital Transformation Project of the Year" award.

PREDII LAUNCHES AI 'CO-PILOT' FOR AUTOMOTIVE SERVICE AND REPAIR BUSINESSES

Predii Inc., a leader in aftermarket AI innovation, has unveiled the Predii 360, touted as the industry's first automotive AI "co-pilot." This groundbreaking solution seamlessly integrates Generative AI with over a decade of Predii's automotive-specific AI expertise. Predii 360 intelligently addresses queries related to automotive service and repair, offering actionable insights to enhance the efficiency of service advisors, technicians, and other industry professionals.

The system is designed to integrate optimally with custom service and repair data, hosted in a secure environment to protect intellectual property.

Predii Founder and CEO Tilak Kasturi envisions a future where AI collaborators become the norm in expert-knowledge-dependent industries. The Predii 360 leverages various components from the company's technology portfolio, promising a revolutionary impact on the aftermarket's part look-up process.

“The future of the automotive industry is very quickly moving toward one-point-entry AI solutions that allow users to move beyond siloed information and interact with systems in a human-like manner,” said Predii Founder and CEO Tilak Kasturi.
Source: Aftermarket News

AutoPulse team's thoughts on Predii Co-Pilot-

Predii Inc. bringing out Predii 360, the first AI "co-pilot" for cars, is a big change. It's good because it makes fixing cars easier and quicker for service people. But, some might find it a bit tricky to get used to. Overall, this new idea shows that Predii is a leader in making car service better.

FOLDING BIKES REDEFINING COMMUTING CULTURE IN UAE FOR 2024

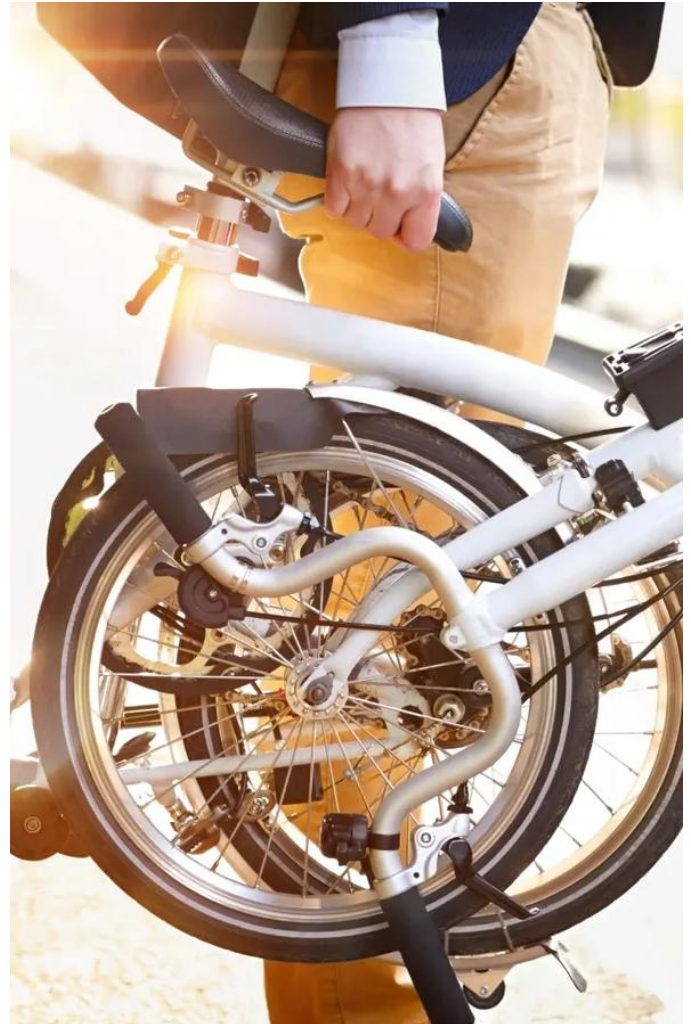


Image credit: Getty Images

In the bustling streets of the UAE, urban commuters are finding a space-saving, time-efficient, and healthy alternative to electric scooters – folding bikes.

Recognized for their compact design, folding bikes are gaining popularity among Metro and bus users who appreciate the convenience of carrying them on public transport.

Mohammad Adam Khan, founder of AK Bikes in Dubai, emphasizes the appeal of folding bikes for travellers and daily commuters.

These folding bikes offer a practical and sustainable solution for commuters in the UAE, making daily journeys more efficient and enjoyable.

Source: Gulf News

AutoPulse team's thoughts on folding bikes-

Folding bikes becoming popular in the UAE is a smart move for getting around. Right now, Dubai has lots of E-scooters that cater to a younger audience for commuting around. With folding bikes, a larger range of older audiences will be captivated.

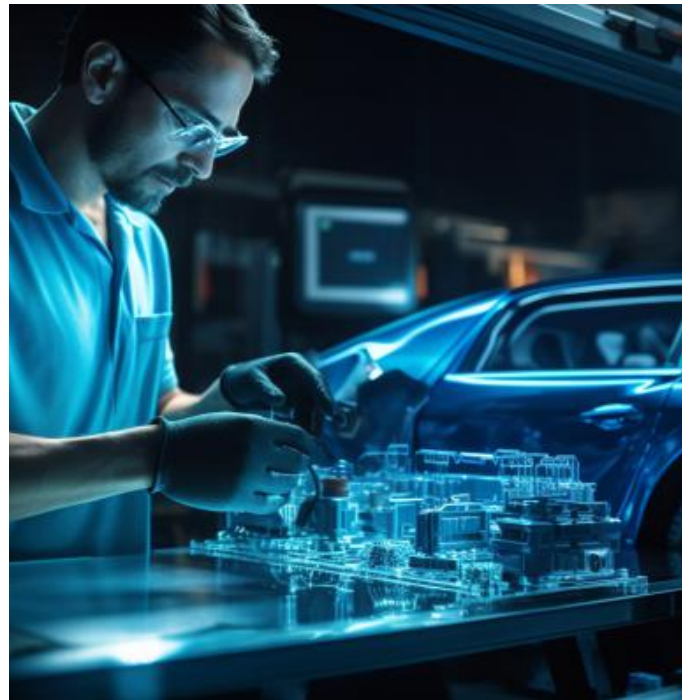
It's good because it's convenient and better for the environment. But, there might be some challenges with other bike options. Overall, it's a good trend showing more people like using eco-friendly ways to travel.

Maybe Automotive service business could consider servicing these folding bikes as a complimentary service to their general car services.



WILL 3D PRINTING CAR PARTS TRANSFORM AUTO REPAIRS?

Imagine an auto parts shop with rows of 3D printers crafting any needed car parts. The 3D Printing in Auto Repair Task Force foresees enthusiasts designing bespoke parts for cost savings, faster production, and personal style.



This approach reduces inventories and costs, promoting sustainability and benefiting OEMs, collision shops, car owners, and insurance companies seeking faster, economical vehicle repairs.

Industry leaders like Porsche, Ford, and Volkswagen already use 3D printing for custom seats, high-performance Mustang parts, and manufacturing tools. Embrace the imminent transformation in the auto repair landscape!

Source: 3dprints.tech

AutoPulse team's thoughts on 3D printing car parts

Using 3D printing for fixing cars is a big change. It means making custom parts and saving money, which can make the car market more exciting. People might really like it once they see how it helps. But, at the start, it might be hard because 3D printing can be expensive and tricky. People might not be sure about it, and car companies might take some time to use it a lot. We need to show them that it's good for a long time.

STREAMLINING OPERATIONS AND INNOVATIONS: A CANDID CONVERSATION WITH THE GENERAL MANAGER OF FUCHS ONE STOP



Mr Rao Junaid Ahmed
General manager, Fuchs KSA

Junaid is a sales leader who is known for consistently exceeding sales target by double digit percentages. Having varied experiences from Petromin Corporation to Petronas, Junaid has a deep understanding of Automotive Service business operations optimization.

With a track record of driving sales growth, implementing strategic plans, and managing large teams, he excels in new business development, P&L management, and customer relationship building.

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

AutoPulse team's thoughts on this episode -

AutoPulse team had multiple calls with Junaid to chat with him and understand his thought leadership.

He has more than **doubled the profits** of the organizations he has worked with. He shared with us the growth numbers which for confidentiality reasons, we cannot disclose. But, we were thoroughly impressed with Junaid's exceptional sales target achievements.

He has again planned to hit double-digit growth and he seems to know how to exactly achieve those numbers.

Not just his fast growing career, Junaid is also a successful family man with a beautiful daughter and an adorable son.

Junaid's story:

So, my story **started at Petromin Express**, where I began as a Forecast and Procedure Analyst and later moved into sales, discovering a unique knack. The world of business management and retail caught my eye, especially when I noticed a big gap in the market during Petromin's growth.

ASK THE EXPERT

As I shifted through different roles, I got into the analytical and strategic side, bringing my sales experience and a different perspective. This journey paved the way for my career growth, starting from an analyst role to pursuing a Master's in Business. Merging what I learned academically with real-world sales experience, I absorbed a ton.

When the chance came to join Al-Hamrani Fuchs, **I brought all my insights from the market leaders I worked with before, smoothly stepping into the GM role.** It's been a journey of constant growth and putting ideas into action, playing a part in the success we've achieved today.

AutoPulse Team: Junaid, let's dive deeper into Fuchs One Stop. Can you give us a clear picture of what makes your business stand out? What defines Fuchs One Stop as a leader in the Quick Service model, and what specific services do you offer beyond the usual oil change?

Junaid: Certainly. Fuchs One Stop has positioned itself as a trailblazer in the automotive service industry, setting the pace with our Quick Service model. Our commitment goes beyond the ordinary, providing a comprehensive range of services—from essential oil changes to detailed light maintenance, under-chassis work, tire services, and battery maintenance.

The key to our success lies in the strategic partnership between Al Hamrani and Fuchs Germany which gave rise to **Fuchs One Stop**. This collaboration enhances the overall offerings and fortifies our market presence. This partnership, combined with our robust COCO (Company-Owned, Company-Operated) business model, has been the driving force behind our impressive growth, leading to the establishment of 56 outlets across KSA. 2023 alone has seen us increase by 5 outlets.

Our success story expands further as **Fuchs One Stop reported a double-digit growth in top line which resulted in a significant rise in profits during my first year at Alhamrani Fuchs KSA.** Looking ahead, my strategic vision for the upcoming year involves a targeted double-digit growth in profit percentage more than last year - with a sharp focus on elements such as strategic planning, operational efficiency, and adaptability to dynamic market conditions. My approach is to ensure that Fuchs One Stop not only pioneers Quick Service but also sets a benchmark for excellence in the automotive service landscape.



Streamlining Operations for Efficiency

AutoPulse Team: How has your expertise shaped the quality improvements at Fuchs One Stop, considering your past experiences? And, more broadly, how do streamlined operations contribute to the overall success of a service-oriented business?

Junaid: Certainly, effective inventory management is crucial in retail. Think of it like carefully organizing our stock – **it's not just about having a smooth supply chain; it's about making sure the right products are available when customers need them.** Imagine a customer walking into our store looking for a specific item. If it's there, not only does it increase the chance of a sale, but it also makes the overall shopping experience better. This customer-focused inventory approach, rooted in doing things well, paves the way for long-term success I feel.

Now, understanding how products move around in our store is like understanding the heartbeat of our business. It helps us put products where they are easy to find and promote those that people really want. **By placing products strategically based on how they move,** we not only sell more but also make shopping simpler for our customers. **Re-ordering**, in simpler terms, is about making sure we always have enough of what people want. It's like predicting what customers will buy, getting ahead of trends, and restocking products at the right time. This approach ensures our shelves are consistently filled with products that customers like.

COCO models face a big problem in terms of dead stock.

Keeping a lean inventory – having just enough without going overboard – is not just a choice; it's a smart move. COCO models, with their complexities, need a careful balance between supply and demand. By avoiding too much inventory and minimizing products that don't sell well, we not only save money but also use resources wisely. This lean inventory approach fits well in the ever-changing retail world.

When it comes to customer experience (CX), offering different services is key. **A business like ours can't thrive with just one service; it needs a range to meet different customer needs.** By having multiple services, we not only attract more customers but also become a one-stop shop for them. This variety positions us as a complete service provider, making us more competitive in the market. **In the bigger picture, the connection between smooth operations and business success is clear.** It's not just about improving things inside the store; it's about connecting with our customers and the broader market. This connection builds customer loyalty, makes us more competitive, and prepares our business for long-term success. Navigating the world of service-oriented businesses, operational efficiency isn't just a plan; it's a way of thinking that moves us forward, ensuring we keep growing and doing well.



ASK THE EXPERT

AutoPulse Team: Within an industry traditionally grounded in manual processes, how do you see the integration of advanced technologies reshaping operational workflows, spanning from customer intake to service completion? Could you elaborate on the specific technologies that have proven effective?

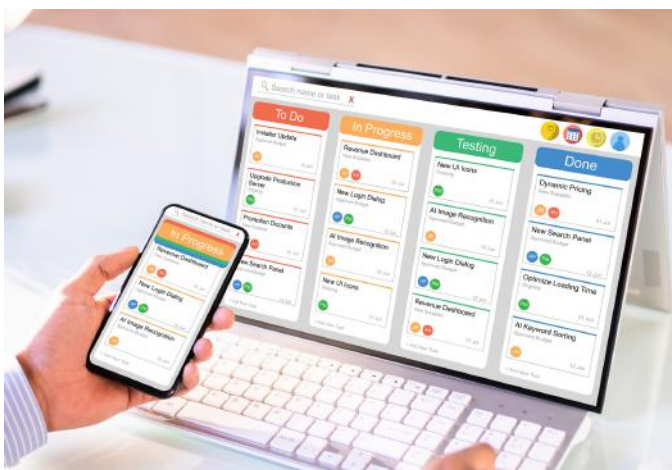
Junaid: In an industry where manual processes have been the norm, advanced technologies are reshaping how we operate. This transformation touches every aspect, from the initial interaction with customers to fulfilling their service needs, I can see great potential in using modern technologies.

Right now, I feel the adoption of technologies and digital transformation are slightly less in Al-Hamrani Fuchs, but we now see a great advantage and we're heading there at a good pace.

Here's one example of digital technology that was a great starting point for us-

Our approach to credit customers, spanning service providers, drivers, and fleet owners, showcases a thoughtful adjustment in the ratio. This isn't just about refining procedures; it's a strategic move set to significantly boost our overall performance.

A noteworthy initiative at Al-Hamrani Fuchs in this technological shift is our custom-built software for fleet customers.



We have built this in-house software that will completely digitalize and make our interaction with such credit customers so much easier. We've designed it in such a way as to remove all the barriers that we face when manually dealing with credit customers.

The point is, in its early stages, this in-house innovation isn't just a tech upgrade; it's a strategic step to address the unique needs of our fleet customers. As it progresses, this initiative holds the potential to redefine how we engage and serve this critical customer segment, positioning us as pioneers in tailored customer solutions.



(Junaid with his daughter)

Basically, using advanced technologies is more than just going digital. It means we're changing how we do things strategically. Our overall plan shows our strong dedication to doing things really well, using technology to be more efficient, innovative, and make customers really happy in this constantly changing digital age. We clearly see the benefit to this and soon you can expect a lot more digital changes at Al-Hamrani Fuchs.

Optimizing operations for CX

AutoPulse Team: Junaid, recognizing the pivotal role of customer experience, how can aftermarket service providers streamline operations to adopt a more customer-centric approach? Also, how might digital solutions further enhance these customer interactions?

Junaid: Absolutely, customer experience is at the core of our operations. Building on what I mentioned earlier, the impact of streamlined operations on customer satisfaction is significant. As the aftermarket service segment grows, especially here in KSA, maintaining and enhancing customer relationships is more challenging than ever.

In this dynamic landscape, where customers are exposed to multiple options through social media, retention becomes a strategic necessity. Here, a robust CRM system becomes crucial. Feedback loops, swift resolution of complaints, and leveraging valuable data are essential components. We are actively engaged in this through timely feedback mechanisms and addressing concerns promptly.

Acknowledging the changing dynamics in customer behavior, we've introduced targeted promotions. This includes incentives for loyal customers as well as tailored promotions for those who may have lapsed.



Network coverage is another critical aspect. In the earlier days, when Petromin Express was the sole player, customer retention was relatively straightforward. However, with the influx of options, strategic network coverage becomes crucial. Transitioning to the digital realm, we recognize the need for seamless customer interactions. The vision is to have a digital system that automates and simplifies processes, making tracking and engagement more efficient. **While we are on the path to implementing such a system, the goal is to have a comprehensive platform that not only facilitates interactions but also enhances the overall customer journey.**



(Junaid with his son)

AutoPulse Team: Junaid, in a landscape where automation is increasingly prevalent, how can aftermarket service providers efficiently implement process automation to reduce turnaround times and enhance overall efficiency?

Junaid: In our continuous effort to improve the way we work, we noticed a significant challenge in a slow and not very efficient process, especially when customers needed to double-check service history.

It got even trickier when our fleet customers tried to retrieve their services history for a specific vehicle and it wasn't accessible to them, although we had the data with us.

To tackle this, we decided to create a strong solution and plan. Our IT team, with our guidance, developed an in-house solution designed specifically for our needs. This solution aimed not just to make the checking process smoother but also to make it faster and more efficient. It's important to note that during this process, we also found that some other ready-made tech companies had solutions that could help with this issue in a different way. Once we had our solution, the next big step was to put it into action effectively. Making sure everyone could use it easily became a priority. We invested in training programs for our sales & operations team, covering not just the technical side but also helping them understand the whole process better. To support this, we created guides for everyone involved. Importantly, we shared this information openly with our fleet customers, aiming for a clear and collaborative approach.

However, as successful as our custom-built software was in filling the gap, it brought about a new challenge – dealing with multiple systems for different functions.

Drawing from my experience, I suggest a strategic move towards one system that can handle everything. This approach, looking at the bigger picture, envisions the benefits of bringing all these systems together into one solution. Beyond just making our day-to-day operations smoother, this strategic move promises a more flexible and adaptable setup ready for whatever changes come our way.

To sum it up, our journey from spotting a gap to creating and putting into action our solution is a significant shift in our commitment to doing things excellently. **As someone guiding this process, I highlight the need for staying flexible and open to changes,** whether it's through our own innovations or by bringing in solutions from outside. This way, we're always moving towards our long-standing goal of doing things excellently.

AutoPulse Team: Data is often considered the new oil. How can aftermarket service providers leverage data-driven insights to make informed decisions, and what role does digital transformation play in this aspect?

Junaid: Certainly, in today's aftermarket services scene, data seems to be the new oil. Using insights from data is a real game-changer for those offering post-purchase services.



The role of digital upgrades becomes even more crucial in handling this information-rich field. At the heart of this big change is using effective data analytics. It's like having a compass to understand how well things are going, helping in making smart decisions, streamlining how things work, and improving overall service quality.

One of the big areas where data is super useful is when talking with suppliers. Having detailed insights into part costs and how well they sell helps those providing services negotiate smartly. It helps keep costs in check and strengthens their position in the market. This way of negotiating is key to getting good terms and making things run more smoothly.

Getting the pricing of services just right is another area where data analytics plays a huge role. **Understanding what parts sell well empowers** those providing services to rethink and improve how much they charge. This smart approach, guided by real-time data, makes sure they match what the market needs, boosting their budget, and making things more profitable.

Customer data is like a treasure for those offering post-purchase services. Creating promotions based on detailed insights into what customers like or dislike becomes a smart move.

It's like giving a personal touch to marketing, not just keeping customers but also making sure they stick around.

In a business world loaded with KPIs, data is like the foundation for measuring how well things are going. Taking a wide look at data analytics, covering a range of KPIs, helps those providing services get a full view of how well they are doing. This all-around understanding makes sure their decisions align with what they want for their business.

For those dealing with different brands, data analytics is a big help in seeing how well their brands are doing. Looking at how much they sell helps guide decisions on where to place brands, how to market them, and overall brand management.

Spotting opportunities where there's a lot of demand is a tricky task, but data analytics makes it easier.

By understanding trends and patterns in how many things are sold, those providing services can use their resources smartly. This ensures services are offered at their best, contributing to the big goal of growing their business.



ASK THE EXPERT

While going through data manually has been the norm, there's a **growing need for automated reporting systems**. Having pre-made reports created through automated systems gives those providing services real-time data. This speeds up how decisions are made. This shift towards using automated tools makes sure providers stay quick and responsive in a market that's always changing. Using digital tools for making decisions based on data is a must for those offering post-purchase services. Investing in tools that use advanced analytics helps them stay nimble and competitive in a world that's always changing. The power of data, though currently used manually, shows a lot of potential for big changes when digital tools are added. This change to using digital tools isn't just needed; it's a smart move for those providing post-purchase services if they want to stay on top in a very competitive sector.



AutoPulse Team: Looking ahead, Junaid, with your vast experience shaping Fuchs KSA, we're eager to hear your insights on the future of auto services. In this changing industry, how does Fuchs KSA plan to stay successful and innovative?

Junaid: Looking ahead, the future of aftermarket auto services is changing, and we are getting ready for what's coming. One big change is the rise of electric vehicles (EVs), with estimates suggesting that 30% of cars will be electric by 2030.

Al-Hamrani Fuchs is considering installing EV chargers, recognizing that both traditional combustion engines and EVs will be part of the automotive landscape.

Fuchs as a brand also has a rich product line and a well sorted R&D division to handle EVs and other developments in the industry. I recommend other service brands to also invest in a good R&D team to tackle market changes.

In marketing, old methods like handing out flyers are not as effective. Al-Hamrani Fuchs is adapting by recognizing the usefulness of social media and influencers to connect with the audience. Future marketing might involve new tactics like app-based promotions and short, impactful ads within applications. This shows an understanding of how consumers prefer to engage with brands in the digital world.

As digital changes continue, the importance of data is huge. Al-Hamrani Fuchs knows that manual data analysis using tools like Excel has limits, so we are exploring more advanced systems for better data analysis.



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Al-Hamrani Fuchs knows that manual data analysis using tools like Excel has limits, so we are exploring more advanced systems for better data analysis. This move is crucial for understanding customer feedback, improving operations, and making smart decisions.

Looking ahead, there's a vision to automate service appointments and create easy-to-use applications, moving towards a paperless system where detailed service history is available online. This forward-thinking approach shows our dedication to using technology and putting customers first.

Al-Hamrani Fuchs's readiness for EVs, use of new marketing strategies, and commitment to digitalization show that we are prepared for the changing world of aftermarket auto services. The envisioned future involves combining technology, customer focus, and strategic planning, positioning Fuchs KSA for ongoing success in the dynamic automotive industry.

AutoPulse team: And with that, we conclude this enlightening conversation between the AutoPulse team and Junaid from Fuchs KSA.

Junaid, your insights have been truly invaluable, providing a glimpse into the forward-thinking strategies shaping the future of aftermarket auto services.

Junaid: A sincere thank you for having me. It's been both a pleasure and an honour to share our vision and initiatives at Al-Hamrani Fuchs with the esteemed AutoPulse team. Our commitment goes beyond just adapting; we aim to lead in this ever-changing industry. You all can stay tuned for exciting updates from us as we continue to innovate and set new benchmarks. We will continue to be a trendsetter.

Junaid is a resourceful person and he's always willing to help. He is reachable on his WhatsApp - +966 56 510 8119



INTRODUCING DIGITAL CHANGES TO LARGER ORGANIZATIONS: A CANDID CHAT WITH THE VP FUEL AND CAR SERVICES, ADNOC DISTRIBUTION



Mr Kenneth Arnold Vice President Fuel and Car Services, ADNOC Distribution

Kenneth Arnold, an esteemed automotive industry leader, presently holds the position of Vice President of Fuel and Car Services at ADNOC Distribution. With a stellar background, including a pivotal role as General Manager at Petromin Corporation, Kenneth is renowned for his strategic acumen, team leadership, and unwavering dedication to customer-centric excellence.

Note-

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

AutoPulse team's thoughts on this episode -

Kenneth is truly a visionary and he's leading a lot of initiatives and growth strategies for ADNOC.

One thing we noticed was that Kenneth looks up to the US standards and wants to bring the same standards to the MENA.

We also noticed Kenneth has been to many places in MENA and he seems to have a very good understanding of different customer expectations in different geos.

Kenneth is truly at the forefront of Fueling and car servicing standards and he's too humble to come in front of the limelight. AutoPulse wants to change that.

About Kenneth and his experiences:

My journey in the automotive industry began in 2008 when I joined Tire Kingdom's protege program. After gaining valuable experience, I ventured into the Middle East, in Zdegree, the UAE's first B2C tire platform.

ASK THE EXPERT

My career then led me to Kuwait, where I transformed Al Babbain's service centres. Eventually, I took on the role of General Manager at Petromin Autocare before being recruited by ADNOC.

Throughout my career, the emphasis has always been on building exceptional teams. These teams, in turn, have played a crucial role in my professional development, ultimately preparing me for my current role. I am deeply passionate about automotive retail and take pride in collaborating with frontline teams to provide world-class customer service.



Interesting Note from the AutoPulse team:

Kenneth is too humble to brag, but he was the youngest area director of sales in the entire GCC and we reckon the title goes to Kenneth even today.

AutoPulse team: Fascinating. Could you highlight some of your key contributions to ADNOC Distribution?

Kenneth: It's important to note that success in a company of this size is a collective effort. Our teams worked together to enhance the car wash experience, improve B2B fueling, and diversify our product selection for a more personalized customer experience. Recently, we upgraded 20 car washes, introducing IoT-capable machines that allow us to adjust settings remotely from our home office.

Kenneth was too humble and hesitant to share his achievements. With further pushing, off record we learned the following -

During his tenure at ADNOC Distribution, he made significant contributions to the organization's success. He implemented a customer-centric approach by introducing customized car wash programmes for various customer types.

Embracing digitalization, he transformed applications for enhanced efficiency. The business underwent a major overhaul, expanding to 50 modernized locations from an initially unorganized state, turning it into a professional and efficient operation.

He introduced innovative wash programs to cater to diverse customer profiles, upgraded aesthetics, and invested in high-quality car wash chemicals and machinery.

Leveraging data, he optimized customer experience, reducing time delays while maintaining top-notch wash quality. He's committed to innovation.



Impact of Digital Advancements on Consumer Expectations

AutoPulse team: Moving on to the impact of digital advancements on consumer expectations, how do you see technology transforming consumer demands in the automotive aftermarket?

Kenneth: Digital advancements, particularly online booking systems and real-time updates have elevated consumer expectations for transparency, convenience, and speed.

Consumers now anticipate quick access to information, real-time updates on service progress, and seamless online interactions with service providers.



AutoPulse team: How is technology changing what people want from car services, and why is personalized service so important?

Kenneth: As technology changes how people want things, having personalized services in the car industry is really important. When services are tailored to each person's preferences, it makes customers happy.

One way to do this is by giving service recommendations based on a person's car history and what they like.

This makes customers more satisfied with the service they get.

People, because of their experiences with online shopping and hotels, now want the same ease and personal touch when it comes to fixing their cars. They expect things like easy online talks, suggestions that fit their needs, and clear communication. So, it's crucial for car services to adjust and provide this kind of personalized experience to keep customers happy.

AutoPulse Team: Yes, definitely makes sense. How important is it for aftermarket service providers to adapt and incorporate digital innovations to stay competitive and meet customer expectations?

Kenneth: Incorporating digital innovations is absolutely crucial for aftermarket service providers. As consumer preferences evolve with technology, it's not just about staying competitive; it's about meeting the growing expectations of customers. Personalized aftermarket services have become essential as technology continues to shape consumer demands.

Customized service recommendations, driven by a deep understanding of vehicle history and individual preferences, play a pivotal role in enhancing overall customer satisfaction.



Customers now expect a tailored approach that goes beyond the traditional one-size-fits-all service model.

Digital tools are the backbone of this transformation, significantly improving efficiency, customer satisfaction, and ultimately providing a competitive edge in the market. Leveraging data effectively is not just a trend but a necessity in the contemporary business landscape.

In today's environment, where personalization and data-driven decision-making are the norm, the automotive service industry needs to keep pace. Drawing inspiration from successful applications in other sectors, where businesses have embraced digitalization to empower customers, the automotive aftermarket needs to catch up.

Buying a vehicle has become a more enjoyable and informed experience for customers, thanks to online resources and platforms like YouTube providing detailed reviews. However, the same level of convenience and empowerment is often lacking when it comes to servicing vehicles.

Digital innovations offer the potential to bridge this gap. They empower consumers by providing them with information and tools to make informed decisions about their vehicle servicing needs



They empower consumers by providing them with information and tools to make informed decisions about their vehicle servicing needs. **It's not just about staying competitive; it's about ensuring that customers are empowered and satisfied throughout their entire journey with the automotive service provider.**

In conclusion, embracing digital innovations is a strategic imperative for aftermarket service providers. It's about adapting to changing consumer expectations, leveraging technology to enhance efficiency, and ultimately delivering a service experience that aligns with the evolving digital landscape.



Role of Technology in Reshaping Customer Experiences

AutoPulse Team: Sounds great Kenneth. How can seamless customer journeys be achieved through the integration of digital solutions in aftermarket services?

Kenneth: Achieving seamless customer journeys in aftermarket services through the integration of digital solutions is pivotal in enhancing the overall customer experience. Seamless customer journeys hinge on the integration of various digital solutions. **In the context of ADNOC, this includes cutting-edge features such as online appointment scheduling, automated updates, and digital payment options.**

These elements ensure a hassle-free experience for customers from the initiation of a service request to its successful completion.

ADNOC has emerged as a market leader in delivering a seamless digital journey for fueling services. **One distinctive feature is the ADNOC application's "Fill and Go" card, where a camera checks the license plate for identification.**

While attendants manually fill, the camera automates the pump, offering a mobile-first seamless experience exclusive to ADNOC customers.

Currently, ADNOC's seamless digital journey involves a unique process where technology, attendants, and automation work in harmony. The integration of license plate recognition technology, fueling software, customer notification software, loyalty applications, and a robust payment system form the backbone of this experience.

Looking ahead, ADNOC envisions expanding its seamless digital journey. Plans include introducing a subscription service for car wash – an innovative "Wash and Go" concept. This forward-thinking approach aligns with the evolving expectations of customers, offering not just fueling but a comprehensive set of services that cater to their needs seamlessly.

To enable such ecosystem concepts, ADNOC relies on robust technology nodes. These include license plate recognition tech, fueling software, customer notification software, loyalty applications, and a secure payment system.

The IT department plays a crucial role in ensuring these tools seamlessly communicate with each other, creating a cohesive and efficient customer experience.

While these innovations bring significant benefits, challenges arise from the existence of legacy software in the industry. Overcoming these challenges involves strategic implementation and data-driven decisions. ADNOC's IT department takes the lead in orchestrating how these various tools and systems interact, ensuring a harmonious and effective digital journey for customers.

Utilizing data is key in showcasing the potential for improvement. ADNOC harnesses data analytics to highlight areas where the customer journey can be enhanced. This includes personalized recommendations, predictive maintenance, and other features that can be fine-tuned to offer an even more seamless experience.

In essence, ADNOC's success in providing a seamless digital journey in fueling services demonstrates the power of strategic integration, innovation, and a customer-centric approach.



ASK THE EXPERT

AutoPulse Team: We have had so many technological advances in the aftermarket industry. In your opinion how has technology made getting car services more personal, convenient, and smooth?

Kenneth: Imagine the simplicity of using a mobile app for scheduling your car service appointments. This isn't just about convenience; it's about having a personalized car assistant right at your fingertips. With this app, scheduling appointments becomes a breeze, eliminating the need for time-consuming phone calls or in-person visits to the shop.

The magic doesn't stop there – this handy app keeps you updated in real-time on your car's status, transforming the entire service experience into a transparent and efficient journey.



Moving on to personalized services, consider the innovative use of technology to send reminders tailored to your car's unique needs. Picture receiving timely reminders based on your vehicle's history and usage patterns.

As we stride into the future, this intersection of technology and personalization promises to make automotive services not just smoother but also more engaging and enjoyable for everyone involved.

This isn't just about reminding you to service your car; it's like having a knowledgeable friend who understands your car's requirements almost as well as you do.

When it's time to settle the bill, technology has streamlined the process with online payment options. No more fumbling for cash – you can easily pay your bill online, adding a layer of convenience to the entire transaction. Furthermore, some forward-thinking service providers offer contactless services, including vehicle pick-up and drop-off, providing customers with the option to get their cars serviced without stepping outside their homes.

Now, let's look to the future, where the automotive aftermarket is set to offer even more personalized and exciting possibilities. Imagine receiving messages about your car even before it needs service, coupled with exclusive deals tailored just for you. This forward-thinking approach not only provides a heads-up about your car's well-being but also adds a delightful touch of personalized service.

In essence, integrating technology in the automotive aftermarket is a game-changer. It goes beyond mere repairs and transforms the entire service experience into something that is not only convenient but uniquely tailored to each customer - making automotive services more engaging and enjoyable for everyone involved.

Challenges and Future Trends in Digital Integration

AutoPulse Team: How can other thought leaders like you overcome challenges when adopting digital solutions in the automotive aftermarket?

Kenneth: Taking on digital solutions in the automotive aftermarket comes with challenges. **First, the hurdle is about spending money** – it's an investment in the future. But if you see it as a wise, long-term move for smoother processes and customer satisfaction, it starts making sense.

Getting the team comfortable with new tech is a bit like learning a new skill. Training programs are crucial, making everyone more confident. It changes the idea from something unknown to a journey of learning, making it easier for everyone.

Ensuring data stays safe in the digital age is crucial. Partnering with trusted tech companies ensures customer info is secure, building trust in these digital solutions. Introducing digital changes doesn't have to be a big deal.

AutoPulse Team: Can you give us your real-life example of how you convinced your team and management to introduce these many technologies?

To introduce tech-filled modern car wash concept to ADNOC, here's what all I did -

I assembled a group of emotionally supportive and visionary individuals, gradually onboarding each team member. Personal relationship building matters which helped me build this team that appreciated and sided with my concept. I also had a good relationship with one person above my level who also got onboarded to my car wash concept.

Drawing inspiration from global best practices, I meticulously crafted case studies and presentations. Our approach involved a deep dive into the regional customer journey and comprehensive customer and market studies.

The resulting plan was intricately engineered for revenue at every touchpoint. However, challenges arose in proving our vision and convincing others, particularly the previous transformation team who hesitated based on past experiences.

I drew parallels with Nokia's misstep, emphasizing the importance of smarter approaches over simply stronger ones to overcome scepticism and rally support for our innovative car wash initiative.

When everything was aligned, I presented to management and with everyone already onboarded to my concept, my plans were approved.



Autopulse Team: Finally, as we peer into the future of the automotive aftermarket, could you perhaps elaborate on the technological advancements you believe will redefine and elevate customer experiences?

Kenneth: Certainly! The road ahead in the automotive industry holds many exciting possibilities, and three key technological trends stand out prominently in my opinion. **First and foremost is the increased integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) for predictive maintenance**, which we are all familiar with by now. We're entering an era where AI algorithms can analyze a huge array of data, enabling us to anticipate potential issues before they escalate.

This proactive approach not only improves vehicle reliability but fundamentally transforms the customer experience by preventing unexpected breakdowns and ensuring a smoother, more dependable driving experience.

Another transformative trend is the application of Augmented Reality (AR) for remote diagnostics. Imagine a scenario where technicians can virtually inspect and diagnose a vehicle's components in real time, even from a distance. This not only streamlines the diagnostic process but also brings a level of convenience and efficiency that was previously unimaginable.

Customers can now experience a more interactive and transparent service, with technicians providing guidance and solutions remotely.

Additionally, the integration of IoT for real-time vehicle monitoring is set to redefine how we approach vehicle maintenance. With IoT sensors embedded in vehicles, we can gather and transmit crucial performance data directly to service centres.

This real-time monitoring enables proactive maintenance is a game changer, allowing us to identify and address potential issues before they impact the vehicle's performance. It's a shift towards a more predictive and preventive maintenance model, ensuring optimal vehicle health and minimizing unexpected service interruptions.

Lastly, the continued growth in electric vehicle services and technologies is a significant marker of the industry's future.

This evolution demands specialized expertise and services to cater to the unique requirements of electric vehicles. As the market share of electric vehicles expands, aftermarket services will need to adapt and innovate, offering tailored solutions and expertise to support this transformative shift in the automotive landscape.



ASK THE EXPERT

AutoPulse Team: Kenneth, a heartfelt thank you for joining us today! Your expertise has been an invaluable addition to our discussion, and it's been a pleasure learning from your wealth of knowledge.

Kenneth: My pleasure entirely! I truly enjoyed this insightful conversation. It's always a delight to engage in discussions about such interesting and relevant topics.

The exploration of innovation, the identification of bottlenecks, and the art of problem-solving are not just facets of effective leadership but essential elements that drive success.

At ADNOC, we take great pride in our commitment to innovation. Identifying bottlenecks and proactively addressing challenges are essential in our approach to leadership. We firmly believe that innovation is the key to staying ahead in the industry, and it's amazing to see the organization's unwavering dedication to these principles.

Our journey at ADNOC is a testament to the importance of embracing change, fostering innovation, and continually seeking ways to enhance customer satisfaction. The path of innovation and customer service excellence is one we navigate with passion and purpose.



RIGHT TO REPAIR MOVEMENT: THE KEY TO LONG-TERM BUSINESS SUCCESS IN THE AFTERMARKET SERVICE INDUSTRY.



Mr Les Mc Master Director, move workshops

Les Mc Master, a visionary in the automotive industry, has spent over three decades shaping the landscape. As the Director of Move Workshops, he pioneered the Right to Repair Campaign, leading to the Motor Industry Guidelines' historic publication in 2021.

His entrepreneurial spirit shines through as the owner of M-Centre, a thriving Mercedes Benz workshop. With a legacy as the past National Chairman of the Motor Industries Workshop Association, Les continues to leave an indelible mark on the industry, driving positive change and championing the independent aftermarket sector.

Note-

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

AutoPulse team's thoughts on this episode -

With all our interactions with Les, he truly cares about the Automotive Aftermarket industry and its growth.

He is fondly called the father of the right-to-repair movement in South Africa.

He had a very good foresight of how OEMs would dominate the market if every region did not incorporate the right-to-repair movement.

In this episode, we cleared all the doubts we had regarding this movement and taking South Africa as an example, we have a clear picture of the dynamics between OEMs and the Aftermarket service industry with R2R.

An intro into Les McMaster

My journey in the Motor Industry has been an interesting expedition, starting as a Learner Technician right after completing my tenure at Technical High School. A detour took me to the Defence force for a mandatory 9-month tour of duty,

but I swiftly resumed my career by pursuing Mechanical Engineering at the Technical College on a part-time basis.

The culmination of my Learnership led to the voluntary Trade test success and employment at a Mercedes Benz Dealership as a Technician.

Post my educational endeavours, I was approached by my alma mater to share my knowledge, leading to five years of teaching motor mechanics at the Technical High School. A pivotal opportunity arose when I was offered a position at the Motor Industry Federation Training Centre, where I served as the head of training, focusing on nurturing the skills of Automotive Machinists and Diesel Pump Technicians.

My career took a managerial turn as I assumed the role of General Service Manager at a Mercedes-Benz dealership, overseeing the day-to-day operations of three dealerships within the group. However, I realized that to elevate my standing in life, starting my own Specialist Service and Repair workshop was the logical step forward. Drawing from my dealership experience, I created a niche market, specializing in the meticulous care of Mercedes-Benz vehicles. Today, after 37 years, my workshop remains a thriving venture, servicing an impressive 5-8 cars daily – a testament to the success of a journey rooted in the automotive realm.

Move Workshops : Growth and rise

In 2018, I came up with a business plan for a buying group in the Independent aftermarket. It aimed to help workshops get better prices for parts and services by buying in bulk. With the support of investors, Move Workshops started with **5 workshops and has now grown to 360 members**, with a monthly turnover of **\$9 million**.

In 2021, after dealing with the challenges of the pandemic, we introduced a **franchise model called Move Garage**. We negotiated to share dealership premises with investors and are currently finalizing the franchise model for existing members and potential new ones.

I personally manage the Move Garage concept and plan to expand it soon.

Move Workshops now offers more than just bulk pricing on parts. We've added features like Move Easy Pay, where customers can get quick finance approval for repairs by scanning a QR code. We also introduced the One Statement concept, simplifying the purchasing process for workshops.

Members can now buy from 300 suppliers using their Move account and receive one consolidated statement for all transactions.



We've partnered with UBER for Business to provide transportation for our members' customers. This eliminates the need for additional drivers, vehicles, and insurance costs. Additionally, we developed Move Easy Work, a garage management system that streamlines workflow and invoicing for our members.



(Les with his family)

Right to Repair (R2R)

AutoPulse team: Les, what is the actual impact of right-to-repair legislation on the current market and in different parts of the world?

Les: Absolutely, the right-to-repair legislation has significantly shaped the landscape for aftermarket workshops, and this holds true not just in South Africa but globally. With countries like South Africa, Australia, the entire European Union, North and South America, and notable regions like Brazil adopting such legislation, independent aftermarket workshops now enjoy unprecedented access to crucial resources. This includes technical information, tools, and equipment directly from Original Equipment (OE) suppliers, available at the same pricing level as offered to dealership networks. Moreover, the legislation has opened opportunities for extensive training, ensuring that independent workshops can stay ahead of the latest advancements in technology and maintain high standards of service.

AutoPulse Team: Considering the positive impact of the right-to-repair legislation on aftermarket workshops globally, do you believe that it will be easy to bring this to countries in MENA and Asia?

Les: Absolutely, considering the introduction of a right-to-repair concept in the Middle East is crucial due to potential challenges on the horizon.

Currently, dealerships have the exclusive authority to appoint workshops for warranties, leaving other off-market workshops without access to these privileges. The R2R movement becomes increasingly vital as it empowers workshops that lack such access or haven't been appointed, preventing their gradual decline. **Without R2R and adopting OEM technologies, aftermarket workshops may find themselves restricted to basic tasks such as servicing and brakes, lacking the expertise, tools, and diagnostics required for more intricate repairs.**



Moreover, the **trend among Original Equipment Suppliers (OES) to code various vehicle components adds another layer of complexity**, making it essential for workshops to adapt. Critical components like windcreens and transmission systems are now being coded, further underscoring the urgency for workshops, including the Autopulse Team, to take the lead in establishing a right-to-repair movement. The OES's approach to coding components implies that without the right to repair, workshops may face significant challenges in handling modern vehicles, limiting their scope of services.

“Recognizing the significance of this issue, workshops must be proactive in initiating a right-to-repair movement. This includes actively participating in existing global initiatives like the Right to Repair Global Coalition in Frankfurt. I strongly recommend that a delegation from countries where the Right to Repair is not implemented, attend these meetings, fostering collaboration and contributing to the coalition's objectives before September.

AutoPulse team: Les, could you perhaps provide more insights into the synchronization between the OE system and the aftermarket for warranty processes? Additionally, we'd like to understand the specific systems utilized at Move Workshops to facilitate this synchronization.

Les: In the aftermarket industry, the right-to-repair legislation allows independent workshops like mine to service vehicles under warranty. Consider this scenario: you buy a brand-new vehicle, and you have your trusted mechanic, Jay, who's been handling your cars for the last five years. Typically, during the warranty period, you'd have to visit a dealership or an appointed workshop. **However, with the right repair legislation, independent workshops gain the ability to service a vehicle from its very first service after being built.**

Now, when it comes to **warranties, the responsibility still lies with the Original Equipment (OE) manufacturers and the dealer network.** They handle warranty repairs.

When servicing a vehicle under warranty, aftermarket brands must adhere to specific guidelines. This includes using prescribed filters, which can also be aftermarket, ensuring the correct oils are used, and following the procedure as laid out by the dealership. If a repair is needed unrelated to the warranty, the dealer must perform it as they normally would. The only exception is if the independent workshop used a substandard part, like a poor-quality oil filter, leading to an issue; then, we would be responsible for that specific repair. This approach ensures quality and fairness in servicing vehicles under warranty at independent workshops.



AutoPulse team: Les, is there a specific certification or process that allows all aftermarket workshops to service new vehicles under warranty? Or is it limited to certain certified workshops?

How does the right-to-repair legislation ensure that any eligible workshop can handle warranty services for vehicles, and is there a way for consumers to verify this?

Les: We're already performing warranty services on vehicles. Take, for instance, a Land Rover Discovery we serviced a year ago. A year later, the turbochargers failed, and the client approached the dealership for warranty repairs. The dealer inquired about the service details from our aftermarket workshop, questioning the filters, oil, and procedure used. We promptly provided the necessary invoices and details, including the brake replacements during the service.

The OE dealer had no choice but to honour the warranty, replacing both turbochargers at no cost. It's a straightforward process.

AutoPulse team: So, even with the right to repair and warranty cases, the crucial aspect is the quality of aftermarket workshops. Instances like the one you mentioned, where capable technicians do the job correctly, may not be true every time, right? There could be many such issues or disputes. Dealers might claim that the...

...garage didn't do the job properly and refuse to cover the cost, leaving the customer in a challenging situation. How does this entire process work, and what safeguards are in place?

I'm concerned about dealerships easily blaming the aftermarket, leaving customers stranded. After all, they might argue that the vehicle's issues originated from an unauthorized workshop. How is this addressed?

Les: We anticipated such situations when drafting our right-to-repair legislation, drawing inspiration from other countries.

In case of an issue with a warranty repair and the vehicle wasn't serviced by the dealer network, the responsibility lies with the OE to demonstrate that the parts or the work done were substandard before rejecting the claim.

Take the example of the Land Rover with the turbochargers, where the repair cost 165,000ZAR. If the servicing workshop had used substandard oil or filters, they would have been accountable for the repair.

However, since the correct oil, matching the grade and specifications, along with proper filters, were utilized, and the procedure was carried out correctly, there were no grounds for denial. That's how straightforward it is.



ASK THE EXPERT

AutoPulse team: Les, in the automotive industry, dealers invest heavily in their dealerships and service centres, right? With sales margins tightening, many dealers rely on extending warranty periods to boost service revenue.

From my experience at Toyota in India, most dealers agree that service, not sales, brings in the real money. But with fluctuating sales, discounts, and competition, **how do dealers survive?** Are there enough dealers to meet demand, and what's the post-purchase customer retention like?

Les: Since the introduction of the Right to Repair Act in South Africa, **we've seen two major shifts in the automotive industry.**

Firstly, the legislation now allows dealerships like ours to service vehicles of any make in our workshops. **This means if we have a Mercedes-Benz dealership, we can now service not just Mercedes-Benz vehicles, but also Hondas, Toyotas, and others.**

It's opened up new opportunities for us and many other dealerships. I recently visited a Mercedes-Benz dealership in Germany where they were servicing vehicles of various brands, thanks to similar legislation.

Secondly, some dealerships have taken advantage of the Act by establishing their own aftermarket workshops. This gives customers the option to either service their vehicles with us or at our aftermarket workshop, which often offers more competitive pricing. This approach has helped us retain customers and has led to the growth of aftermarket workshops across South Africa.

Overall, the Right to Repair Act has been a positive development for both dealerships and aftermarket workshops, providing more options and fostering healthy competition in the industry.

AutoPulse team: So, here's what's really got me curious, I want to dive deeper into this aspect of the Right to Repair. You mentioned dealerships being able to get training from Original Equipment (OE) manufacturers. For instance, a Mercedes-Benz dealership could receive training for Toyota and Honda vehicles. Now, my understanding is that the legislation mandates equal access to training, repair manuals, electrical diagrams, and diagnostic tools for all dealerships, regardless of the brand they represent.

So, essentially, everyone gets access to the same resources, right? No more exclusive access for Toyota dealers only; it's a level playing field, right?



ASK THE EXPERT

Right now, we have this useful tool called a pass-through tool. It's like a J2534 pass-through tool that works with any laptop. All you need is the right software. For instance, let's talk about Mercedes-Benz since one of my workshops specializes in them. You buy the Mercedes-Benz software from a dealer, load it onto your laptop, and then connect it with the J2534 pass-through tool.

After that, you purchase access to the Mercedes-Benz website for either 12 or 24 hours. They charge a fee, which is fine. For example, it could be for 4 hours of access. They give you a password, you log in, and you can download all the information you need for that vehicle in your workshop.

So, if you've got a brand new vehicle like a GLC under warranty coming to your workshop and it needs some diagnostics, you buy a 12-hour subscription, download everything onto your laptop, and then plug it into the vehicle. From there, you can do any necessary work directly from the Mercedes-Benz website. Right now, in South Africa, Volkswagen, Toyota, Honda, and Mercedes-Benz are allowing access to their websites for aftermarket workshops. They even set up separate portals for us, which is pretty neat.

AutoPulse team: What are the current challenges faced under the Right to Repair, and what technology or software solutions can address them? Could you provide examples from your workshops on how you're using technology to simplify processes and overcome challenges?

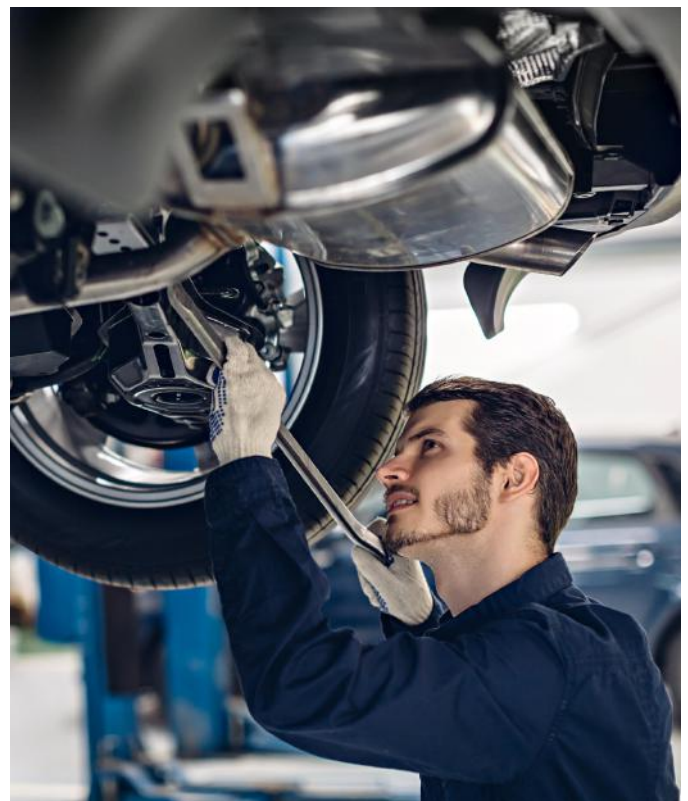
Les: One major hurdle is the integration of telematics by Original Equipment Suppliers (OES). They've embedded telematic devices in vehicles, allowing for notifications about upcoming service needs. It's clever, really. The catch is when only their dealerships are suggested for servicing, leaving out independent workshops.

The goal here is to ensure that independent workshops are also listed as viable options for vehicle servicing.

Looking forward, in the aftermarket realm like Move workshops, we're foreseeing a shift towards app-based systems. Customers will download an app that revolutionizes the way they interact with our services. They can book appointments, track service progress, and receive notifications—all from their smartphones.

This app will streamline the entire process, including payments, and even arrange Uber rides for vehicle pick-up and drop-off. But here's where it gets even more interesting. We're exploring integrating an Uber-like feature into the app for vehicle pick-up and drop-off. Customers can simply arrange for an Uber through the app, making the entire process hassle-free.

This technological advancement not only enhances the customer experience but also optimizes operations at independent workshops like Move.



It's all about leveraging technology to not only meet customer expectations but exceed them while navigating the evolving landscape of the automotive industry.

AutoPulse team: So are you advocating for digital transformation to enhance consumer experience, particularly by introducing more apps and technology to streamline processes and improve convenience?

Les: Yes, definitely am. When customers can track their vehicle's service progress from their phones, it's a big deal. Younger folks, like Gen Z and Gen X, are all about convenience and tech. Just look around your office—everyone's on their phones, right? It's the way things are going.

For aftermarket workshops, embracing technology is a must to stay relevant. Standing alone is tough, so I see more workshops joining concepts where they can share resources and tech. This team effort, like what we see in Europe, means workshops can offer top-notch services.

Customers want to trust their service providers. They want to know if workshops have invested in training, diagnostics, and good parts. That's where aftermarket workshops shine. They offer a personal touch that dealerships often miss. It's about walking in, chatting with the owner, and feeling valued as a customer.

When you walk into an aftermarket workshop, it should feel like visiting a friend's garage—a place where you can talk directly to the owner, get personalized attention, and feel like you matter.

It's this mix of expertise, care, and connection that makes aftermarket workshops special and the automotive service experience truly outstanding.

AutoPulse team: So Les, vehicle repairs are becoming increasingly complex. With the Right to Repair in play and OES sharing data, the challenge is clear. Affordability is what sets aftermarket service workshops apart from OEs. But as repairs get more intricate, there's a risk that prices at aftermarket workshops might rise, which goes against their very essence. **So, how do we keep our services affordable?**

Les: You must understand, aftermarket workshops operate differently. We're not in fancy buildings like dealerships; we work from small, clean spaces with just a handful of staff. That's why our prices are more competitive—we don't have the overheads of grand showrooms and fleets of technicians.

What sets us apart is the personal touch. When you walk into an aftermarket workshop, you speak directly to the person working on your car. There's a sense of trust and transparency that's hard to find elsewhere. Plus, we use aftermarket parts, which are often cheaper than those sold by dealerships. Sure, our labour costs are similar, but everything else makes the transaction smoother and more affordable for customers.

I can't see aftermarket workshops fading away. The only threat would be if dealerships locked us out completely.

But now, with the Right to Repair, that's changing. In regions without R2R, you might face challenges without this legislation. Dealerships might keep crucial data to themselves, making it hard for workshops to access information needed for repairs.

I've seen it happen in South Africa. Coated parts, coded components—it's a barrier for independent workshops. Without the right access, we're left scrambling for solutions.

That's why Right to Repair is crucial—it levels the playing field, ensuring everyone has access to the data needed to keep vehicles running smoothly. Without it, customers may find themselves at the mercy of dealerships, unable to choose where they get their cars serviced. That's a scenario we're working hard to avoid.

Aftermarket branding in a market with R2R

AutoPulse team: As we near the end of our discussion, Les, I'd like to pose a very crucial question. In light of the Right to Repair movement, both dealerships and OEMs, as well as aftermarket workshops, have found distinct identities. However, what sets Move Workshops apart from other aftermarket options?

Could you shed light on the branding strategies that distinguish Move Workshops in the marketplace?

Les: Move Workshops isn't just about buying parts; we offer much more. Take Move Easy Pay, for instance. It's a game-changer for our workshops and members.

Imagine you've got an Audi A8 in your workshop, but you need a part from a dealer. Without an account, you're stuck waiting for funds to clear. With Move, though, it's different. We've got 200 suppliers, and with just your Move membership number, you can get what you need immediately. No waiting, no hassle.

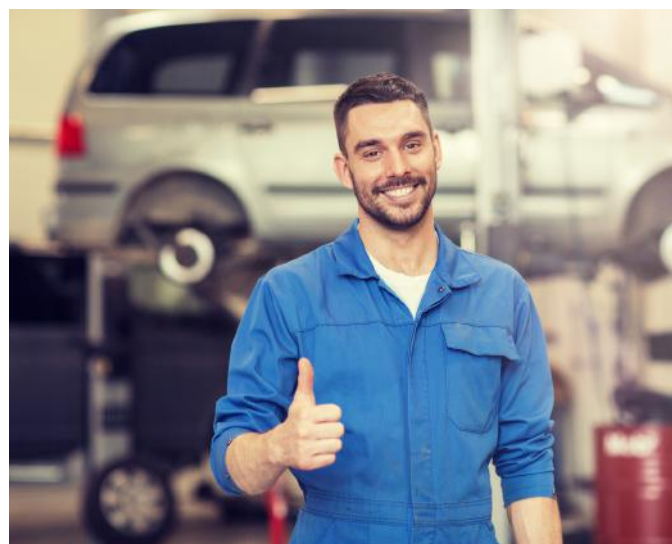
But that's not all. We've got Move Easy Pay, too. Picture this: a customer has a hefty bill, but doesn't have the cash upfront. No problem. They scan a QR code, answer a few questions, and within an hour, they're approved for financing. They choose their repayment plan, and we get to work, with no delays. And then there's our deal with Uber for Business.

Instead of worrying about drivers and insurance, we simply order an Uber for our customers. It's seamless, convenient, and keeps our workshops running smoothly. And we also have Move EasyWork, our management system. It handles everything from parts to invoices, ensuring a seamless experience for both our customers and our workshops.

These are the kinds of solutions that set Move Workshops apart. We're not just about fixing cars; we're about making the entire process easier and more efficient for everyone involved.

AutoPulse team: As we wrap up, could you share some final insights and predictions for the aftermarket business? What advice do you have for those navigating this landscape, and what trends do you foresee shaping the industry in the coming years?

Les: Independent workshops are like warthogs—they face tough times during droughts but thrive when the rains come. Despite challenges, they persist, driven by technicians leaving dealerships. While many start-ups fail, the resilient 30% endure, offering customers affordable, personalized service. With proper support, independent workshops are set to thrive indefinitely.



Help us shape the future of R2R in your country.

With this episode, we now clearly understand the importance of the Right-to-Repair legislation and we clearly see the impact it will have.

Clearly, in most markets including the Middle East and most of Asia, dealerships are leading and have an upper edge with data access, making vehicles complex to repair, encoding even the basic vehicle parts and extending warranty.

We need to do something about this.

If you're an influential person in the aftermarket industry, we request you reach out to us. We're trying to build a group of influential aftermarket authorities who can bring R2R legislation with full effect in your market.

Scan this QR or use the link below.



THE RISE OF MULTI-BRAND WORKSHOPS :

A CANDID CONVERSATION WITH THE CEO OF OPAL MARKETING



Mr Sandeep Ghai

CEO of Opal Marketing

Mr Sandeep Ghai is the visionary CEO of Opal Marketing, a shareholder-driven company in Oman. Under his leadership, Opal transformed from a multi-brand entity to a powerhouse with 60 Precision Tune centres.

Sandeep's strategic decision to expand and control the network for exceptional customer experience led to Opal's dominance in Tools & Equipment, and the disruptive Tyres, Batteries and Allied product division.

Opal, known for innovation, prioritizes customer satisfaction over profits, echoing Sandeep's belief that money follows exceptional service at an accelerated pace.

Note-

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

AUTOPULSE TEAM'S THOUGHT ON THIS EPISODE -

We were honoured to have Mr Sandeep as our guest for the 2nd episode of AutoPulse CEO's Talk.

We were absolutely blown away when we heard that during COVID lockdown times, when other Automotive service businesses were shutting down and cutting down on employees, **Opal gave bonuses and full salaries to all their workforce under his leadership.**

He had such foresight of the Oman market that during the same **lockdown period, under his leadership, Opal expanded their retail service outlet at the rate of 1 new outlet per month** when other businesses were shutting down and when the lockdowns ended, Opal dominated the Oman market. We also learnt his different approach to running an aftermarket service brand and we were thoroughly impressed to see his business principles and his deep understanding of his customers. Sandeep's leadership style came out as a complete surprise to us and sets him apart - hoping it'll inspire our readers as well.

About Sandeep and his experiences:

Sandeep: Hi, thanks for having me. It's a great pleasure. It's been quite a journey for me. My roots trace back to India, specifically Punjab, where I had my initial schooling. Interestingly, my background started with a diploma in mechanical engineering, which eventually led me to pursue a full-fledged mechanical engineering degree and then executive PGDBM. I wanted to join the merchant navy—my first real passion that was unfortunately cut short due to family issues.

This redirection pushed me into the automotive industry, a move that, at first, wasn't aligned with my initial interests. Yet, as fate would have it, I developed a profound love for the automotive field. From that day forward, I dedicated myself to learning and growing within this industry, accumulating 24 years of hardcore automotive experience.

My professional journey saw me take on various roles, **starting as a service advisor** to becoming instrumental in expanding network at Bhagat Group, followed by a two-year stint as a territory manager in Mitsubishi India, focusing on both service and parts. However, the demand of constant travel, coupled with the birth of my daughter, prompted me to explore overseas opportunities.



This led to an impactful eight-year tenure at Saud Bahwan Group, where I worked in the Lexus division. Being part of the customer experience transformation at Saud Bahwan was insightful and made me have immense respect for this group. After Eight years of rich experience with Saud Bahwan group, I pushed myself to join an organization, where I can explore my full potential. And that is how I ended up joining Opal.

I joined Opal as a General Manager during a challenging phase. At the time, Opal was navigating through tough patches, and **the emerging trend of multi-brand workshops presented a unique opportunity.**

My vision is to contribute to the growth of an organization by turning it into a significant player in the industry. The board at Opal showed immense trust in my capabilities, and with their support and by the grace of God, we transformed Opal into what it is today. **In 2021, I was honoured to be promoted as the CEO of Opal,** and this month marks the 10th anniversary of my journey with the company. It's not just a job; it's a feeling of ownership, and the strong relationships within the organization has made my work truly worthwhile.



A deep dive into Opal marketing's growth strategy

Sandeep: Opal Marketing isn't just a company; it embodies strategic evolution and unwavering commitment. As an Omani shareholding company, it's uniquely owned by Omani shareholders, including a significant investment from Tanmia, the government pension funds investment arm. Reporting directly to the board of directors and the executive committee, the governance structure ensures a proper decision-making process.

Opal Marketing embarked on its venture as an automotive multi-brand service company, reaching a significant milestone in 1995 by becoming the master franchisor of Precision Tune Auto Care for the Oman market. In 1996, we proudly launched the first service outlet, unveiling Oman's first premier and reputable multi-brand service chain

Upon my joining, I emphasized to the board the importance of delivering exceptional customer experience (CX) and proposed expanding our own COCO network as the best strategic move.

The board approved this vision, setting the stage for Opal Marketing's remarkable growth. The initial phase involved addressing challenges within our service centres to elevate them to the highest standards.

Around 2016, with the board's approval, we strategically expanded our footprint. The comprehensive approach included not only enhancing our service centres but also venturing into diverse segments such as Tools and Equipment, Tyres, Batteries, and Allied products.

Diversification became a key strategy, during the set-up of our service centre network we understood the equipments business pretty well and in 2015, Opal Marketing secured its first distributorship for Sunshine lifts and wheel alignment. **As we acquired more brands, the Tools and Equipment division has become equally robust, representing 28 global brands (non-Chinese) and 12 Chinese brands under our proprietary equipment brand, "Cube."**

We've strategically positioned ourselves as providers of comprehensive equipments solutions – from setup to maintenance – managing every aspect efficiently.

With everything managed by Opal, from setup requirements to ongoing operations, we believe we are on track to becoming the number one choice in Oman for equipments as well.

Recently we started the Tires, Batteries and Allied (TBA) products division as well and in the last three months, the introduction of top global brands of tyres, batteries and allied products further solidified our dedication to offering a diverse and top-notch portfolio to our customers.

Presently, Opal also boasts a significant presence in Oman through the Precision Tune segment, we have expanded to 60 centres, with 56 being company-owned and four operating under franchise agreements.

Opal's commitment to excellence is evident in its meticulous approach to service.



Candid conversation between the COO of GaragePlug Mr. Ashish, representing AutoPulse and Mr Sandeep Ghai

Ashish: I've noticed your strategic approach, and it seems like taking it slow is a smart move to build your brand over time, avoiding the risks associated with sudden changes. What are your thoughts on that?

Sandeep: Absolutely, Ashish. In Oman, the market has remained steady at 1.67 million vehicles for the past four years, creating a zero-sum game where grabbing market share is essential for growth. **Currently holding 8.5% to 9% in the Oman Automotive service sector, we've made a substantial impact.**

Competitors feel uneasy, stating we've had a big impact on them. While I can't confirm everything, definitely our market share has increased.

In a market flooded with grey import vehicles, constituting about 40% of the current market, our multi-brand service, especially for high-end vehicles is becoming the preferred choice. It's quite dynamic, Ashish. Car sales stand at around 70,000, and Chinese brands are gaining traction with 15 brands already present and more expected. It's an evolving scenario, and we're strategically navigating it.

Ashish: So, the Chinese cars are gaining traction in Oman, huh? Seems like they're doing well, with their good looks, rich features, and affordability.

Sandeep: Indeed, Ashish. It has been noticed that post COVID, Chinese brand acceptability has increased substantially in GCC. And we see the same trend in Oman also. Additionally, the limited availability of other brands like Toyota and Nissan poses a practical challenge for businesses. If I need ten cars for my operations and the usual brands aren't accessible, I'd have to consider what's available, even if it means going for Chinese cars. It's about meeting the immediate needs of the industry.



Ashish: Interesting! Since the COVID name came into the conversation, how did you navigate it?

In 2020, during the COVID period, I called for a board meeting and suggested to the members that it was our time to invest. **While dealerships were letting people go, we were recruiting and, strategically opening a service centre every month during the pandemic. People called us crazy, fools, and whatnot.** In 2021, we expanded even further, opening nine centres. I was confident that once the COVID situation settled, there would be a significant market gap in terms of cars needing service and the available capacity. Dealerships had laid off technicians left and right, and there was a shortage. Customers would need service, and we'd be there for them.

Ashish: What a surprising strategy Sandeep. I believe very few would have thought of such a strategy. **It's quite extraordinary leadership, as convincing management to invest during such uncertain times is a bold move.** Back then, during the onset of COVID, everyone was uncertain and in the dark.

Envisioning the future and understanding that dealers were letting go of valuable personnel while the market was bound to rebound – that's quite foresighted.

Not many would have had the courage to think that way for the long term, especially when no one knew how or when the situation would improve, right?

Sandeep: Absolutely, Ashish. My intention is never to fire people but to reduce costs. Controlling expenses was crucial. However, a common mistake made by many dealerships was letting go of revenue-generating roles such as technicians, electricians, and painters.

They failed to grasp the fundamental fact that a technician or a denter and painter can open a job card, contributing directly to revenue, while a manager cannot work on a car.

It was a widespread mistake across the industry in the GCC, where managers, easily replaceable, were retained while the technical pool, not so easily available, was let go.

Ashish: They sent back those technicians because most of them were probably from abroad, right? It must have been tough for them to come back.

Sandeep: Not just that. If I have an organization with, let's say, 500 technicians, for understanding purposes, each year, 3-4% leave, about 15-20 technicians, and a similar number of new technicians join, mostly at entry levels. It's a cycle. The skill pool never fully drains out.

During the pandemic, what happened was that all the experts level staff were let go by dealerships but we took a radical approach by initiating a massive recruitment drive.

As we were expanding, recruiting was essential for running the centres.

The COVID pandemic presented us with an opportunity to strengthen our brand as well. Understanding the industry and customer priorities, which center around cost reduction, extensive network coverage, and a single point of contact, we took proactive steps.

We extended beyond traditional dealership boundaries, reaching remote areas and reached out to industry leaders and management team catering to specific sectors like rent-a-cars to offer help in their cost reduction.

Ashish: Perhaps due to COVID, the infrastructure costs for rental services decreased, benefiting you. By expanding your reach, offering discounts, and assisting customers during that time, they've likely become long-term clients. It's quite a unique success story, and we'd like to seek your permission to create a separate case study on this. It's a radical approach that we haven't seen many adopt during that period, and it seems you're reaping the rewards now. Am I right? With the substantial increase in outlets, you're still profitable, and the customer numbers are growing.

Sandeep: Indeed, Ashish. We were among the few companies globally that distributed bonuses in 2020, not just as a financial bonus but as a token of thanks to our employees for standing with the company during the challenging COVID times.



The pandemic created uncertainties worldwide, with salary reductions and non-payments in every industry. I consider myself blessed with a supportive board. **I proposed to the board not to touch salaries, understanding the personal commitments everyone had.**

I assured them that we would strive to achieve 2019 figures despite the challenges of the COVID-19 year. I spoke to our employees, ensuring they offset their incentives and overtime in support of the organization, and in return, we pledged not to cut their salaries.

Ashish: So, it becomes a continuous source of income for them as they sacrifice their incentives in support of the company. It's a win-win situation for both.

Sandeep: Definitely. During the entire COVID period, the entire company worked all six days including holidays, supporting the company. **We paid them full salaries, never cutting a single rial or letting go of any employee. By the end of the year, we were nearly at 2019 numbers.** We expressed gratitude with the year-end bonus as a token of thanks to the employees for their support.

Ashish: That's very impressive. Even though you asked them to work without incentive bonuses, you compensated them at the end of the year because the company was profitable.

It's quite unique, and I believe this should be highlighted as a separate article. It seems like a rare approach, and I haven't heard of any other company doing something similar.

Sandeep: Again, I'm fortunate to have a wonderful board that deeply trusts me and supports these decisions.

Ashish: But I believe it works both ways. The trust you generated in them and the belief that if you say it, you'll do it. They trusted you because you've delivered results before, and they know you understand the situation better than anyone.

During COVID, when everyone was shaken and uncertain, you had the courage to create a win-win situation by supporting them. It's remarkable that even in such a challenging time, you believed it would work, and it did.

Surviving and becoming profitable amid the pandemic is truly extraordinary. I can see that you might have minimal or no attrition, especially when many others were letting go of blue-collar workers.

Sandeep: During that challenging time, we were strategically expanding and building capacities, entering into new segments for the service industry. **With people not buying new cars and opting for grey import vehicles, dealerships were letting people go, creating a vacuum in the market.** We increased our capacities in anticipation of a future where there would be a capacity constraint once things normalized. This turned out to be true, and we were blessed with major customer acquisitions.

Our core principles revolve around three main USPs: Quality, Time-bound, and cost-effective service. We ensure that we deliver high-quality service within the promised time and at an affordable cost. **The 2nd crucial principle is to simply "Do what the customer says."**

Our focus is on meeting the fundamental needs of the customer who comes for car service—ensuring they don't have to see our faces for the next six months.

We keep it simple and avoid unnecessary jargon.

Ashish: So, when a customer comes in, you don't aggressively upsell.

Sandeep: We do engage in upselling and cross-selling, but we don't push it onto the customer. We consider it our duty to inform the customer about what's good for the car, and it's up to them to decide.

Ashish: So, there's no specific upsell target for the service advisors?

Sandeep: No, we don't believe in setting upsell targets. Our core philosophy is not to run behind money in service; instead, we focus on customer satisfaction. We believe that if we prioritize customer satisfaction, the financial aspect will naturally fall into place. It's ingrained in our culture.

Ashish: So, you essentially act as consultants to the customer, advising them on what can improve the vehicle's performance. If they are willing to go for it, great; if not, you don't push to sell anything. Is that the approach?

Sandeep: Exactly, Ashish. We see ourselves as consultants, guiding customers on what's beneficial or detrimental to their cars, and we respect their decisions.

"Do what the customer says" – it's straightforward without any jargon. Many businesses build showrooms and amenities to make customers happy, but that's a wow factor, not the core of why they approach us.

Ashish: That principle seems universally applicable to service brands, not just car service. It's a simple and direct approach that every industry would benefit from. If you follow that, results will follow.

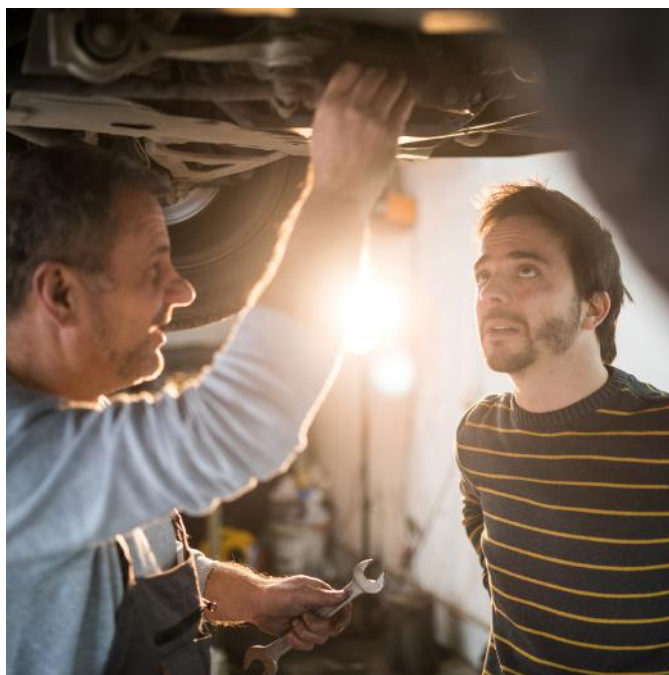
Sandeep: The **third core principle is honesty and transparency**. If we damage a customer's car, we first admit the truth and then find a solution. Unfortunately, this isn't common in the automotive industry.

Our customer care department and center managers are clear – tell the truth to the customer first, and then work on a solution. The **fourth principle** is to never penalize a customer, no matter what is the mistake. Even if they're at fault, we find ways to support and help them. It pays dividends when the company's turnovers allow us to assist customers.

Ashish: So, if a customer is not penalized, does that mean you offer something complimentary?

Sandeep: If a customer cannot or does not pay, even if it's their fault, we try to reach an agreement. We avoid a confrontational approach, recognizing the lifetime value of the customer.

We express understanding in unfortunate situations, aim to reduce their costs, negotiate, make them happy, and let them go, even if we're not at fault.



Ashish: Yeah, that's often the case in dealerships. Customers are left fighting, and by avoiding that situation, you're retaining them and preventing negative experiences

Sandeep: Exactly. Word of mouth spreads quickly. While attending to thousands of customers per month, issues are inevitable.

In the service industry, the customer problem amplification is 5 times. So kill the problem at its root before the customer exits your premise.

Our approach is to quickly address and resolve problems at their origin. We've established a system with a WhatsApp group involving central managers, customer care, and operational heads.

When a potential customer complaint is identified, this dedicated team takes over, engaging with the customer and providing a solution on the spot. In the service industry, problems can amplify significantly once the customer leaves, so we ensure immediate resolution to maintain customer satisfaction.

Our robust customer care department at Opal handles issues with a commitment to 100% customer satisfaction, even when the customer may be at fault.

Ashish: So, you mean to say, you have a mechanism in place to address and resolve customer issues promptly, even before they leave your premises?

Sandeep: Exactly, Ashish. The moment a customer leaves our premises, we know the problem will now become 5x. We aim to address and resolve issues with 100% customer satisfaction, regardless of fault, to prevent escalation and negative repercussions.

Ashish: So, if a customer in the workshop seems dissatisfied or angry, the centre manager or someone immediately puts it in the internal WhatsApp group. Your customer care team picks it up and aims to resolve the issue before the customer leaves the premises. It's a shift from the typical process in the industry where issues are often addressed only after the customer has left, amplifying the problem.

Sandeep: In many Middle Eastern dealerships, the approach is audit-driven, and decisions often require approvals that lead to delays in resolving customer issues. **Our objective is to empower our team,** especially the operational managers at each location, to address and resolve customer concerns promptly.

We understand that the longer a complaint remains open, the more dissatisfied the customer becomes, and the damage has already occurred.

Ashish: So, you've created a proactive system with an empowered customer care team and operational managers to address issues swiftly. It's these fundamental steps that set you apart. And, interestingly, you've achieved a unique milestone by being the first in the GCC where an automotive manufacturer has approved a multi-brand service centre chain as their Service network.

This exclusive partnership for service with Nissan, Infinity, Renault, and potential Chinese brands highlights a pioneering approach.



Sandeep: Yes precisely. We're proud to be the exclusive service partners for these automotive brands in the Oman, demonstrating their trust in our capabilities and approach to customer service. They see us as the face of service, allowing them to focus on manufacturing while we handle the service aspect. It's a unique collaboration in the automotive industry.

Ashish: Coming from a service background with Toyota, I've always questioned the need for manufacturers to build extensive dealer or service networks. As you know from your experience with Lexus, **OEMs don't profit much from service; the revenue comes from car & parts sales.** Investing in service network capability and building a wide-reaching network is a necessity for customer satisfaction. If the capability is already present in the market, manufacturers can directly tie up, and that seems to be the current trend. It's a win-win; manufacturers can focus on selling cars, and service providers like us can handle the customer satisfaction part.

Sandeep: Absolutely, Ashish. Just yesterday, I had a meeting with a company (I won't disclose the name) that recently launched and is interested in leveraging our support for servicing, body shops, and more.

They prefer not to invest in building their service network.

Similarly, discussions with another party, bringing three Chinese brands, reinforce the trend. We're already collaborating with existing automotive dealers in Oman, presenting ourselves as part of their tie-up network. I envision our company progressing with this model, sparing others from the need to invest heavily in their service networks.

Ashish: The concept of manufacturers directly tying up with service networks, as you have in Oman, seems to be the future model for the automotive industry.

This could be a groundbreaking example that we can share, especially in markets like India, where new brands still need to invest significantly in building their service infrastructure.

Sandeep: Yes, as the CEO, this is where I want my company to move forward. I don't want global brands to invest in their own service network, rather just tie up with us.

Having model centres and handling warranties directly with manufacturers is a practical approach and this is the future I envision.

As for other countries adopting this model, I haven't personally come across it, but it would indeed be interesting to explore and possibly set new benchmarks for the industry.



Ashish: So essentially, you're providing a shortcut for new brands entering Oman, especially for Chinese brands. Setting up a service network is time-consuming and requires significant investment. They can expedite their market entry and focus on growing sales without the burden of establishing a service network from scratch. This significantly reduces their go-to-market time, it seems to me. Would you agree?

Sandeep: Yes for sure. While this model is beneficial, it's not easily replicable due to the unique challenges in the industry.

Many dealerships attempt to open multi-brand service centres but face difficulties. **Success in this business requires agility, quick decision-making, an exceptional supply chain, highly motivated staff, and a customer-centric approach.**

If any of these elements are missed, success becomes elusive.

Ashish: It's fascinating how shifting from franchises to COCO really played out for you. You mentioned agility, quick decision-making, a solid supply chain, a super-motivated team, and a focus on customers – all key stuff. Do you reckon trying to pull off the same in a franchise setup would be a bit too much?

Sandeep: Absolutely, Ashish. Dealing with tons of car models and tens of thousands of parts, with customers not willing to wait – it's a whole deal. We've got this planning squad and a spare parts team, making sure we're all set with centralized purchases and smooth moves. Besides the 60 outlets, we've got about four warehouses hustling. Handling tools and equipment? That's a whole other grind with folks going at it around the clock. And hey, multitasking is the name of the game here. No solo acts like in dealerships. Every team member wears different hats, from opening job cards to tackling customer gripes. It's a real challenge, especially when you're turning into a chain.





And of course, a bang-on centralized IT system is the backbone. Not to brag, but ours might just be up there as one of the best globally for a multi-brand setup.

Ashish: Sandeep, I must say your journey is nothing short of incredible. Transitioning from the high-end luxury space of Lexus to redefining the traditional mindset in the automotive industry is truly remarkable.

The shift to a multi-brand approach is not an easy undertaking, and you have done it so successfully. You have taken customer experience to the next level, which is not something I say lightly.

Sandeep: Thank you, Ashish. I really appreciate your kind words. It's been challenging but rewarding.

Implementing a multi-brand strategy required a shift in mindset at every level, and I'm proud of what we've accomplished, which is through sacrifice and hard work.

The automotive industry is undergoing significant changes, and adapting to these changes has been crucial to stay on top of it. It was a pleasure talking to you and your team.

Sandeep: The moment an unsatisfied customer leaves the premises, the problem becomes 5X bigger. For that customer, it is no longer just about solving the problem; it becomes a matter of their ego.

Mr. Sandeep's 5 core business principle for service business success

1. Quality, Time-bound, and cost-effective service.
2. Do what the customer says.
3. Be honest and transparent.
4. Never penalize a customer no matter what.
5. Kill the problem before a customer leaves the premises.

CREATIVE STORYTELLING FOR WORKSHOPS TO COMMUNICATE THE IMPORTANCE OF PERIODIC MAINTENANCE TO CUSTOMERS



Mr Vikrantt Mohan

National President, All India Automobile Workshops Association.
Founder & CEO, Automobile Service Providers Academy

A visionary leader with 42 years of expertise in the automobile service industry, Vikrantt certainly is one to look up to.

As the National President of the All India Automobile Workshops Association and Founder of the Automobile Service Providers Academy, it is clear that he has an incredible amount of experience and knowledge. A true social entrepreneur, he has revolutionized automotive service with leadership and innovation.

Introduction:

In the fast-paced world of automobile services, where efficiency is key, ensuring the longevity and optimal performance of your customers' vehicles becomes the cornerstone of success.

Regular maintenance emerges as the key to not only preserving the life of automobiles but also fostering lasting relationships with vehicle owners. In this article, we will explore the importance of offering and promoting periodic upkeep to convince customers to choose your quick service centre for the long run.

So here are some extremely unique ideas for your service centers, to buy into your customers' beliefs!



AutoPulse Pro tip:-

Treat customers like family in your workshop. While our tips assist, creating genuine connections drives loyalty. Prioritize trust, personalized solutions, and satisfaction for enduring relationships.

Hint:- As a workshop owner, you can tailor make your story for each customer. **ALWAYS** make them understand how periodic maintenance is like a regular doctor's appointment :)

AYURVEDIC APPROACH TO AUTOMOBILE CARE

Workshops can draw inspiration from India's ancient healing tradition, Ayurveda, to redefine vehicle maintenance. By positioning periodic check-ups as a holistic health plan, similar to Ayurveda's preventive approach to overall well-being, these centres advocate for the long-term health of automobiles. Prioritizing regular maintenance routines serves as a preventive healthcare strategy, addressing potential issues early on and ensuring a prolonged and healthy lifespan for customers' vehicles.

This Ayurvedic-inspired approach transforms routine maintenance into a proactive and comprehensive strategy, emphasizing the importance of balance and longevity in automotive care.

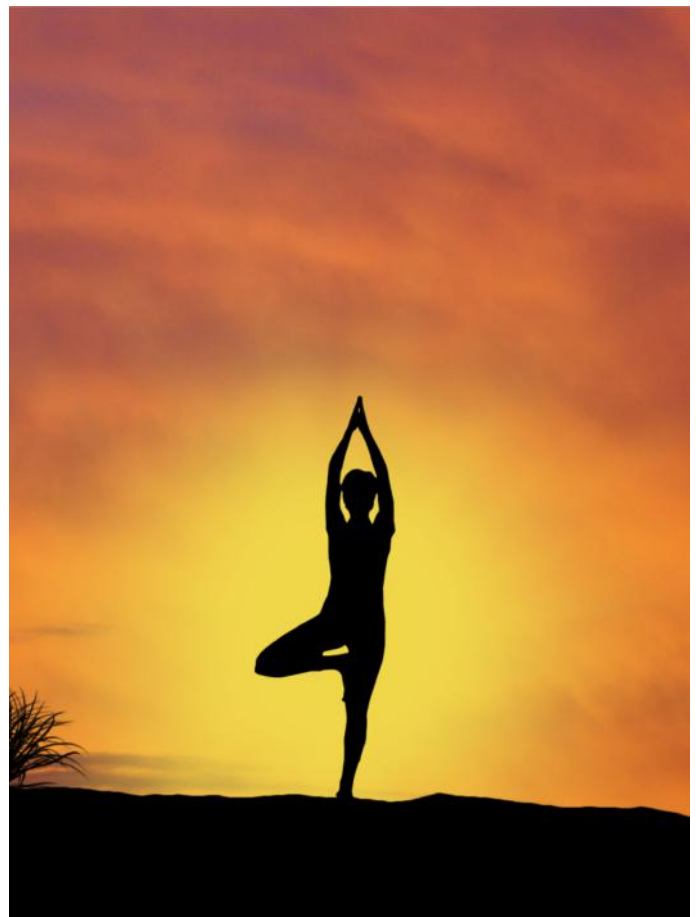


YOGIC BALANCE IN ENGINE PERFORMANCE

Let's encourage vehicle owners to embrace a holistic approach to engine care, viewing it as the heart of their automobile. Just as yoga seeks balance and well-being for the body, our engines thrive on regular maintenance.

Picture this: every oil change, air filter replacement, and engine check-up becomes a mindful act, contributing to the smooth and harmonious functioning of the engine. Like the gentle flow of yoga poses, these services ensure our engines stay in perfect balance, delivering peak performance and longevity for our vehicles.

By promoting this mindful approach to engine health, quick service centres can empower drivers to cultivate a deeper connection with their automobiles, fostering a sense of care and harmony that resonates with the principles of yoga.



DHARMA OF DILIGENT CARE

Building customer loyalty in your workshop goes beyond just fixing cars; it's about creating a bond based on care and responsibility. Remind your customers that servicing their vehicles isn't just a chore—it's a moral duty, their **dharma**. Encourage them to view maintenance as a reflection of their values as attentive vehicle owners.



By portraying regular servicing as a commitment to sustainability and ethical ownership, you not only keep customers coming back but also cultivate a culture of mindful vehicle maintenance. It **also** shows the customer that you care about their vehicle individually, which alone makes them fall for you. It's all about fostering trust and connection, one service appointment at a time.

FESTIVAL OF UPKEEP

Just as festivals bring joy and renewal, vehicle upkeep is a celebration of care. Each maintenance is like a celebration; similar to a birthday, or a joyous occasion. Encourage customers to join the maintenance fest by highlighting the importance of regular services like fluid changes, brake checks, and tire rotations.

Each task adds to the festive vibe of keeping cars in prime shape and in perfect condition. Just like how your customers celebrate festivals, make them believe in the importance of celebrating your vehicle every so often, and what better way to celebrate then servicing them to make them appear brand new??

Key takeaways:

Start infusing a global touch into your workshops! By embracing diverse traditions, you will ensure that the customer experience goes beyond mere car repairs; you're sharing stories, connecting with various cultures, and turning each service into a delightful experience. This approach keeps us at the forefront of our customer's minds when they require their next service.



What is AutoPulse Thoughts?

AutoPulse Thoughts is a series where we'll release a hard-hitting statement about the automotive service industry, and invite industry experts to share their "Thoughts"/ expert opinion on that statement.

Statement -

The service industry has a reputation for being a pain to deal with.



Mr Majid Al Jbour

Network Development Manager

@United Motors Company

Majid's THOUGHT on this statement-

“The automotive after-service industry has indeed earned a reputation for being a frustrating and inconvenient experience for many car owners. There are several reasons for this perception, including a lack of transparency, high costs, poor communication, long wait times, and inconsistent quality.

To enhance the industry's reputation, businesses can prioritize feedback, online engagement, and customer service. They can also streamline their entire business with lead management and communication tools, closely monitor online reviews and convert physical documents to digital items”



Mr Ajay Tandon

Business Head -Strategy and
Business Development

@Opal Marketing & industry

Ajay's THOUGHT on this statement-

"To boost the automotive service industry's image, clear communication on repairs and costs is vital Dealerships should prioritize awareness of pre-maintenance services with transparent, consultative approach.

Instead of a sales pitch, offering detailed information on each service prevents breakdowns, and reduces maintenance costs. This strategy benefits dealerships with added revenue, while customers enjoy better performance



Ms Saima Sharif

Automotive Marketing Expert

@Petromin Corporation

Saima's THOUGHT on this statement-

“It's true, the automotive service industry has traditionally been viewed in this manner. However, a significant shift is underway, driven by a commitment to modernize and enhance customer experiences. There are two key components to this: the seamless alignment of CX and DX. Modern consumers no longer just want repairs; they demand a seamless, digital-first journey. Automotive service providers are now leveraging technology to empower customers, transcending the industry's outdated image. The perfect blend of technology, operational excellence, and customer-centricity is reshaping the traditional perception of a visit to automotive service centers.”



Mr Ravi Rajput

Head-Aftermarket

@AVTEC

Ravi's THOUGHT on this statement-

“It's more of a psychological thing, buying parts and service is akin to buying medicine and visiting hospitals, both necessary for the well being of human and their machines but it's a stress purchase afterall, nobody is happy spending money on repairs and maintenance.

The best way is to educate customers on the economics of cost of maintenance vs cost of breakdown and make the aftersales experience for customers as pleasant as possible.



Mr Manikandan T.K

Ex-Vice President

@Lanson Toyota

Manikandan's THOUGHT on this statement-

“The auto industry's tech evolution has left local garages behind due to outdated knowledge and tools. Customers now prefer cost-effective multi-brand workshops (MBWs) for personalized service. To thrive, MBWs need tech upgrades to match dealerships.

A successful future hinges on embracing change for a superior customer experience Local garages need to be reinvented in order to be tech-savvy, bridging the gap and staying competitive in the evolving auto landscape”

EMBRACING TRADITION: CAR DETAILING IN THE AGE OF AI



Ankur Sama · 1st

Founder & CEO | Car Detailing Expert, Franchising & E-Commerce |
Certified Detailer, Skills Validated- IDA USA | President India Chapter -
International Detailing Association

Talks about #cardetailing, #automobileindustry, #professionaltraining, and
#franchiseopportunities

Surat, Gujarat, India · [Contact info](#)

2,372 followers · 500+ connections



CarzSpa AutoFresh Pvt Ltd



In the world of car care, one thing remains certain: **AI can't replace the heart of car detailing businesses.**

As someone deeply involved in this industry, I've seen how technology changes things, but it can't replace the human touch that makes car detailing special.

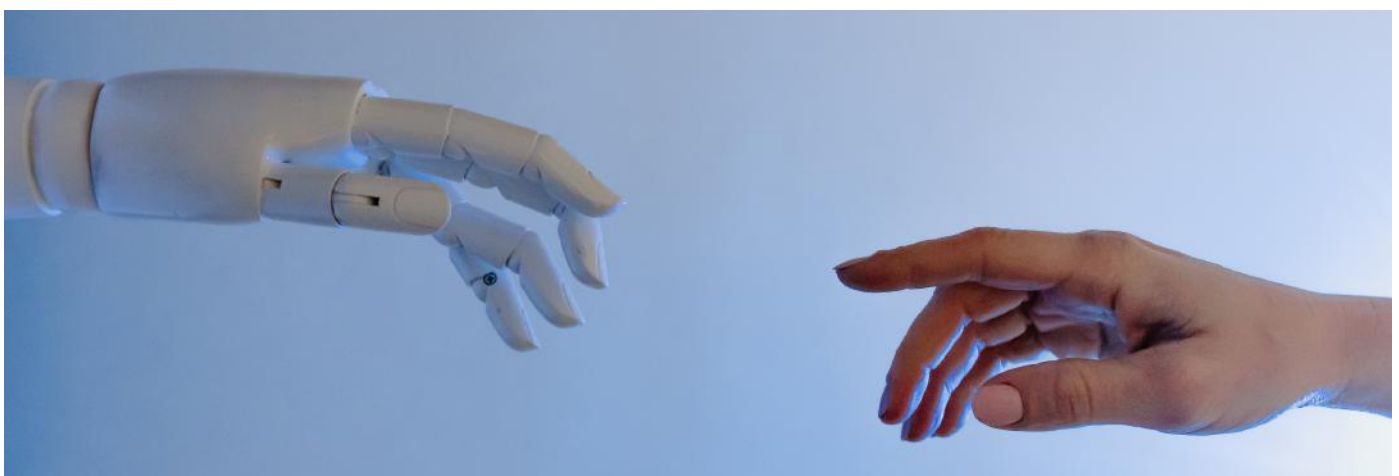
When AI first came around, many of us felt worried. It's natural to feel that way. But over time, we've realized that AI isn't as bad as we thought.

While it has changed how some industries work, there are still big opportunities in areas like car detailing.

For example, AI has made some things easier, like checking quality, keeping records, and giving customers updates. But it's important to remember that AI isn't here to take our jobs. It's here to help us do our jobs better.

In the future, we might use even more machines to make our work easier. But we'll always need people to make sure things are done right. Car detailing is an art, and AI can't replace the talented people who do it.

So, do you think AI will take over your job? Or are you ready to use it to make your job even better? It's up to us to adapt to new technology while keeping the heart and soul of car detailing alive.



Want to be featured next time? Post your unique thought leader article on
Make sure to tag us!!



DATA INTEGRATION: NAVIGATING THE POWER OF SMART DATA IN AUTO SERVICE ENTERPRISES



Shubhra Srivastava · 1st

CEO at GaragePlug (Helping Automotive Service Industry Enhance their Customer Journey)

Bangalore Urban, Karnataka, India · [Contact info](#)

4,489 followers · [500+ connections](#)



GaragePlug



As a thought leader in the auto service industry, I understand the critical role data plays in our operations. While many of us recognize the need for data, the real challenge lies in using this "Intelligent Data" effectively.

Consider this:

- Our industry is flooded with various software solutions and promising insights. However, the abundance of disparate systems often leads to fragmented data and hindered decision-making.
- Integrating these systems poses its own set of challenges, often resulting in compatibility issues and disjointed data analysis.

The solution?

Embrace "Intelligent Data":

- ✓ Seek tools that provide actionable insights in real-time.
- ✓ Opt for holistic solutions that address diverse business needs seamlessly.
- ✓ Prioritize systems that go beyond data collection to deliver actionable intelligence.
- ✓ Explore integration solutions to consolidate data sources into a unified repository of "Intelligent Data."



Want to be featured next time? Post your unique thought leader article on
Make sure to tag us!!



MOVEMENTS IN THE INDUSTRY

SHOUTOUTS TO THE NEW INDUSTRY LEADERS, GOOD LUCK WISHES FROM THE AUTOPULSE COMMUNITY



New CEO of Alghanim Industries

Name - Mahmoud Samara

Mahmoud Samara is Alghanim Industries' dynamic CEO, with global leadership across three continents, guides 15,000 employees in relentless pursuit of excellence. His recent appointment underscores commitment to customer satisfaction, growth, and employee development.



New COO of Tires at GB Auto

Name - Khaled Arafa

Khaled Arafa is a tire industry luminary with 25+ years of global expertise, excelling in sales, business development, and general management with Michelin, Bridgestone, and Goodyear. Renowned for adaptability, leadership, and shaping diverse markets.



New Group Business support Director of Jaidah Group

Name - Yamen Abbas

Yamen Abbas, visionary Business Support Director at Jaidah Group, boasts a rich background in automotive business development. His impactful leadership, spanning construction and project management, reflects a commitment to excellence.



New Senior Vice President Marketing at GB Corp

Name - Rami Mounir

Rami Mounir, a seasoned marketing veteran with 18 years of diverse expertise spanning the Middle East, Africa, and Europe. Renowned for achieving financial, marketing and brand milestones, he crafts innovative strategies that define industry excellence.



New Director of Operations at Mohamed Yousuf Naghi Motors

Name - Omar Husein Boudy

Omar Husein Boudy, a strategic automotive leader, leveraging over a decade of expertise. Spearheading transformative strategies, he's renowned for customer-centric leadership, fostering comprehensive growth, and reshaping wholesale channels.

SHOUTOUTS TO THE NEW INDUSTRY LEADERS, GOOD LUCK WISHES FROM THE AUTOPULSE COMMUNITY



New General Manager at Master Class Automotive

Name - Sajid Amin

Sajid Amin, a veteran with 28 years of Aftersales Management in the Automotive Retail Sector, excelling in premium luxury supercars. His expertise lies in driving excellence and transforming service, repairs, and customer experiences.



New Senior Director, Arabian Automobiles Co (AW Rostamani Group)

Name - Hussam Baghdadi

Hussam Baghdadi, a distinguished leader with 30+ years of automotive expertise, driving strategic growth and operational excellence for Nissan, Infiniti, and Renault in Dubai and the Northern Emirates. Leadership and dealer management are his core skills.



New Mobility Operations Director at NACITA Corp

Name - Sayed Haggag

Sayed Haggag is a seasoned automotive professional with 19 years of expertise. Currently, he spearheads mobility operations at NACITA Corp., showcasing prowess in business strategy, development, and customer service management in Egypt.



New Regional President of Bosch India

Name - Deepanshu Dubey

Deepanshu Dubey is an industry luminary and the newly appointed Regional President at Bosch India, leading the charge in the realm of Electrified Motion. He is a catalyst for transformation with a proven track record of impactful initiatives.



New National Manager at Repair2Care Saudi

Name - Anas Hantash

Anas Hantash, a dynamic Manager with 8+ years of accomplishment in Saudi. Recognized for turning concepts into efficient products and implementing smart solutions, he's a proven leader who is driving success in production and maintenance.

JOB IN KEY AUTOMOTIVE COMPANIES

WORTHY AUTOMOTIVE JOBS TO LOOK OUT FOR:



General Motors Dubai has been actively searching for a **Country Aftersales Manager** to join them



Al-Futtaim Motors (Toyota and Lexus) Dubai has been actively searching for a **General Manager - Finance** to join them



Al-Futtaim Automotive Riyadh has been actively searching for a **Head of B2B Electric Mobility** to join them



First Option Accessories Dubai has been actively searching for a **General Manager Car Rental** to join them



Ashok Group India has been actively searching for a **General Manager Service** to join them



M/s.Thriveni Car Company Pvt Ltd Salem has been actively searching for a **General Manager - Service** to join them

Disclaimer:

While sharing this job information, it's important to note that we're not endorsing the company. This is shared with the intention of providing potential industry opportunities, but please use your discretion before making any decisions.

UPCOMING EVENTS



January - April

Feb 1 - Feb 3

Automechanika India

-New Delhi, India

Feb 1 - Feb 2

**MEMA Aftermarket
Global Summit**

-New Delhi, India

Feb 26 - Feb 27

ReFuel Forum MENA

-Dubai, UAE

March 5 - March 7
**International Auto
Aftermarket Expo**

-Tokyo, Japan

March 20 - March 23
**Auto Maintenance
and Repair Expo**

-Tianjin, China

April 11 - April 13

**Australian Auto
Aftermarket Expo and
Collision Repair Expo**

-Melbourne, Australia

April 16 - April 17

ReFuel Forum APAC & ANZ

-Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

April 16 - April 18

Kenya Auto & Motor Show

-Nairobi, Kenya

April 30 - May 2

Automechanika Riyadh

-Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

May - August

May 8 - May 10

**International Fair PETROL
STATION**

-Warsaw, Poland

May 15 - May 17

Future Mobility Asia 2024

-Bangkok, Thailand

June 3 - June 5

Automechanika

*-Birmingham, United
Kingdom*

June 11 - June 12

**CXAUTO Strategy & Retail
Innovation**

-United States

June 12 - June 13

ReFuel Forum UK

-Alicante, United Kingdom

June 25 - June 26

ReFuel Forum Europe

-Barcelona, Spain

September - December

Sept 2 - Sept 4

ReFuel Forum Africa

-Durban, South Africa

Sept 4 - Sept 6

**China International Tire
Expo**

-Shanghai, China

Oct 28- Oct 30

ReFuelForum USA

*-Bonita Springs, United
States*

Nov 5 - Nov 7

AAPEX

-Las Vegas, United States

Dec 2 - Dec 5

Automechanika

-Shanghai, China

Dec 10 - Dec 12

Automechanika

-Dubai, UAE

ENDING NOTE FROM THE AUTOPULSE 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.



Scan QR code to join
WhatsApp channel

If you want to nominate yourself for the “Ask the Expert” podcast for the next volume or make any knowledge contribution, feel free to **Contact/ WhatsApp: +91 86101 25251**





Scan QR code to share feedback on this volume

**IGNITING PASSION, FUELLING INNOVATION:
JOIN THE AUTOPULSE COMMUNITY IN REVOLUTIONIZING THE AUTOMOTIVE
AFTERMARKET SERVICE INDUSTRY TOGETHER**

FOR SUBSCRIBERS ONLY