

AutoPulse

Community initiative by **GaragePlug**

EXCLUSIVE MAGAZINE FOR THE **AUTOMOTIVE SERVICE INDUSTRY PROFESSIONALS**

INTERNATIONAL EDITION

AUTOPULSE INTERNATIONAL EDITION
FEATURING **GLOBAL AUTO SERVICE**
LEADERS FROM MEXICO TO INDONESIA

MURUGAN DNA

AFTERSALES HEAD, TATA INTERNATIONAL

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EXCLUSIVE CONVERSATION

WITH THE AFTERSALES HEAD OF TATA INTERNATIONAL

LEADERS UNDER PRESSURE | LEADING A LARGE COMPANY
WITH MULTIPLE BUSINESS VERTICALS | GROWTH STRATEGIES

#AUTOSERVICE2.0

AUG 2025

ABOUT THE AUTOPULSE INITIATIVE BY GARAGEPLUG

The automotive aftermarket service industry has a reputation problem. Consumers often view it with suspicion, and valuable knowledge seems concentrated within a select few.

We at **GaragePlug**, an AI software platform-based digital transformation company passionate about the auto service industry's potential, recognized this. We saw that true improvement could only come through collective growth and rising standards.



This realization fueled the creation of AutoPulse Magazine and the non-profit community initiative behind it. We, at GaragePlug, believe that one company's success isn't enough. **The industry needs a platform to bridge the knowledge gap and empower everyone.**

AutoPulse offers a unique space for industry leaders to share their thought leadership without ego or fear of competition. We believe that by fostering collaboration and open exchange, the entire industry can thrive.

This is where GaragePlug's experience with digital transformation comes in. We understand the challenges faced by automotive service businesses firsthand. Through AutoPulse, we aim to share not just industry secrets, but also the power of technology in achieving those high standards.

AutoPulse is more than a magazine; it's a call to action. We invite you, the reader, to not only gain knowledge but also contribute your expertise. Let's build a future where innovation and technology are synonymous with the aftermarket service industry. Together, we can transform the industry's reputation and unlock its true potential.

Join us on this journey. Read AutoPulse, contribute your knowledge, and let's watch the industry rise, together.

HAPPY READING!

-TEAM AUTOPULSE + TEAM GARAGEPLUG



Ashish S

Community Evangelist



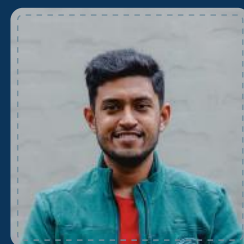
Gunjan A

Design Head



Nandita C

Community Relationship Head



Jayesh R

Editor-in-chief

“THE AUTOPULSE COMMUNITY - REFLECTION”

Networking Events

Jeddah Dinner Event



Riyadh Dinner Event



Dubai Breakfast Event



AutoPulse Vol.4 Launch Event



Loved by the community!

Majed A. • 2nd
Spare Parts Retail Manager @ Allomiah A...
I would like to express my gratitude for being part of this inspiring and insightful gathering. I feel pleased that I met such professional after sales and IT managers with this level of expertise in automotive aftermarket and related IT utilization.
In my humble opinion, Garage Plug can make a positive impact on the local market specially with this synergistic approach of presenting a common ground for collaboration between industry companies.
Wish you all the best and thank you for having me.

Siraj Ahmed Khan • 2nd
Retail Business expert in Lube and FMCG...
Dear Madam Shubhra & Mr. Ashish,
It was a pleasure meeting all the industry professionals at last night's gathering organized by GaragePlug team. I wanted to take a moment to share my feedback.
Throughout my 20-year career, I have been involved in the development of six different POS systems for the quick lube industry. In every instance, there was always something missing features we requested or needed that weren't fully addressed. However, GaragePlug has truly impressed me. It is the perfect application for workshop businesses. I hope for has system.

Russell Younghusband • 1st
Global Automotive Director at Getac | Driving technological change in ...
Thanks again to the GaragePlug team for the invite and what was a worthwhile event. Industry Community programs such as AutoPulse require a lot of time and a continued commitment to provide interesting and thought provoking content, as well as a forum for peers from the industry to get together and debate common challenges and ...more

Raed Al-Qadasi • 1st
Procurement Manager at Golden Petrol Co.
So glad to meet you all 🌸 it was a nice event
Like 4 Reply

Wajid ul Hasan Wahid • 1st
General Manager | UAE, Pakistan, Egypt | ...
Great to see some familiar faces together again
Well done Garageplug team Shubhra Srivastava Ashish Shrivastava
Like 3 Reply

Neha Azeem • 2nd
Director of Operations at Zee International
It was a great pleasure to attend the network community initiative by GaragePlug. Thank you for inviting me.
A fantastic initiative, bringing together great people for meaningful connections.

Majid Hussain • 1st
Business Head | Automotive aftermarket E...
A big thank you to the GaragePlug team for the invite and what was a worthwhile event. Industry Community programs such as AutoPulse require a lot of time and a continued commitment to provide interesting and thought provoking content, as well as a forum for peers from the industry to get together and debate common challenges and ...more

Bassim Khan • 1st
Business Development | Category Manag...
My heartfelt gratitude for the incredible community you have built for the auto sector. Your contributions are truly inspiring and I firmly believe they will pave the way for significant advancements in our industry.

It was a genuine pleasure meeting so many inspiring leaders during our gathering. The insights shared were enlightening and have left a lasting impression on me.

Additionally, thank you so much for the thoughtful gift of the book. It means a lot to me, and I look forward to diving into it.

Salman Bugshan • 2nd
Antal
2d • 0
A very insight full experience and glad to have been part of the event

Khalid Bugshan • 2nd
Leading Motocare's Transformation with Budgeting and Change Managem...
3w • 0
Another highlight of 2024 was being side by side with my brother **Salman Bugshan** and taking part in the networking event.

Mutaz Suleiman • 2nd
Building Billion Dollar Companies™ EIR at NFO | Driving Digital Change & Inn...
View my services
Yesterday, I had the pleasure of attending the AutoPulse, a community initiative by GaragePlug networking event by GaragePlug alongside my friend Hisham T. Al Eidi and the fantastic automotive community in Riyadh. It was a great ...more

THE DIARY OF A CEO
STEVEN BARTLETT
THE 33 LAWS OF BUSINESS & LIFE
GaragePlug

AUTOPULSE RESEARCH - AI IN AUTOMOTIVE

AI'S ENTRY INTO THE AUTO SERVICE INDUSTRY: A GLOBAL ENTERPRISE PERSPECTIVE

Artificial Intelligence has crossed the threshold from experimentation to execution in the auto service industry. What was once a promise of futuristic diagnostics and “smart garages” is now a tangible competitive advantage for the world’s largest OEMs, dealer groups, and aftermarket service brands.

From predictive maintenance in Toyota’s connected vehicles, to robotic tire changes at Discount Tire, to AI fleet assistants at Bridgestone Webfleet, enterprise adoption is reshaping the way vehicles are repaired, maintained, and even washed. The numbers tell the story: the automotive predictive maintenance market alone was valued at \$22B in 2023 and is projected to surpass \$100B by 2032 at an 18% CAGR. Meanwhile, nearly 60% of fleet managers globally plan to implement AI within five years .

The message is clear: AI is not a side project – it is redefining enterprise service operations globally.

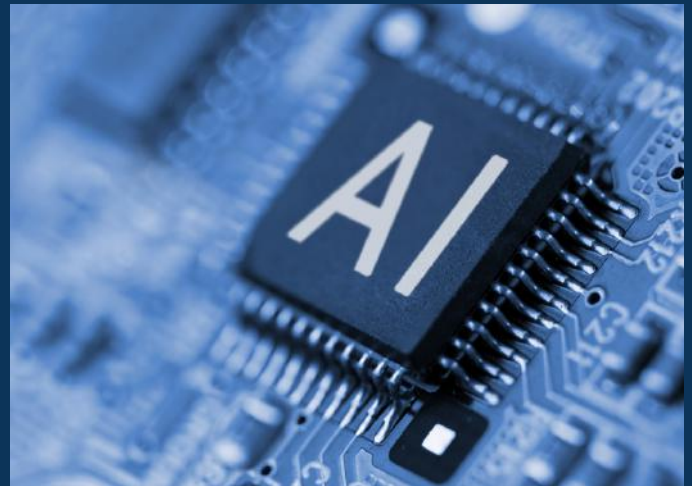
WHERE AI IS ALREADY DELIVERING IMPACT

1. Repair & Diagnostics

Modern vehicles are computers on wheels, and AI has become the technician’s most powerful tool.

- **Predictive diagnostics:** AI platforms analyze thousands of sensor readings and repair histories in seconds, suggesting the most likely faults. Shops report faster first-time fixes and fewer comebacks.
- **OEM integration:** Toyota’s AI models alert customers of failing batteries or worn brakes before dashboard warnings appear . Tesla’s cars often pre-diagnose issues remotely, automatically ordering parts so service centers are ready when the vehicle arrives.
- **Customer transparency:** AI generates visual inspection reports that explain problems in plain language, increasing repair approvals and trust.

The result: reduced downtime, higher technician efficiency, and measurable CSI score improvements.



2. Quick Service & Oil Changes

High-volume quick-service chains are using AI to optimise throughput and customer engagement.

- **AI phone agents:** In U.S. dealership studies, AI assistants successfully handled 91% of incoming service calls and independently booked appointments 86% of the time.
- **Workload optimisation:** Platforms like PitCrew AI use cameras and algorithms to predict peak bay usage and cut customer wait times by over 30%.
- **Proactive scheduling:** OEMs and quick-lube chains now send AI-driven reminders (“Your oil life is at 15%-book your slot tomorrow”). This has reduced no-shows by ~25% in pilot programs.

For enterprises like Valvoline, Jiffy Lube, and Midas, AI ensures more cars per bay, per day—without sacrificing service quality.



AUTOPULSE RESEARCH - AI IN AUTOMOTIVE

3. Tire Service

Few areas show AI's physical impact more clearly than tire replacement.

- Robotic tire change: RoboTire systems at Discount Tire complete a full tire swap in ~25 minutes, nearly twice as fast as a human tech.
- Automated inspection: GM dealers are installing UVeye scanners that check tread depth, pressure, and alignment in seconds.
- Predictive tire health: Bridgestone's AI algorithms analyse connected tire data to forecast wear and prevent blowouts.

With tire service representing a core revenue driver, these tools directly improve safety, sales, and service speed.



4. Detailing & Car Wash

Even car cleaning has become smarter:

- Adaptive wash tunnels: AI adjusts water pressure, soap mix, and brush settings to each vehicle's size and dirt level, ensuring a customised clean.
- Robotic detailing: AI-guided robotic arms map car contours for touchless washing and spot-check for missed dirt.
- Personalised CX: License plate recognition triggers subscription plans and personalised greetings, turning a commodity service into a brand experience.

The outcome: higher throughput, lower water use (up to 50% savings), and stronger loyalty.

5. Fleet Maintenance

For fleets, downtime equals lost revenue. AI is proving indispensable here.

- Predictive maintenance: Bridgestone's Webfleet analyses 550+ vehicle signals to alert managers before breakdowns.
- Fleet assistants: AI chat interfaces let managers ask, "Which vans need brake pads this month?" and get instant answers.
- ROI: Predictive programs deliver 30–40% maintenance cost savings and cut unplanned breakdowns by half.

Globally, 91% of fleet managers plan to boost investment in AI fleet tech, citing efficiency and safety as primary drivers



REGIONAL TRENDS

- North America: Leads adoption with robotic tire service, AI phone scheduling, and predictive maintenance pilots. Holds 43% of the global predictive maintenance market.
- Europe: OEM-driven, with BMW, Bosch, and Mercedes deploying AI inspections and predictive service across dealer networks. Nearly half of UK fleets are already moving on to AI.
- Asia-Pacific: Toyota and Japanese dealers are embedding AI into service ops, while Chinese brands like NIO use AI for proactive mobile servicing. Consumer receptivity is driving rapid uptake.
- Emerging Markets: Africa, the Middle East, and Latin America are in early stages, but enterprise fleets and premium dealerships are adopting proven models from the U.S. and Europe.

AUTOPULSE RESEARCH - AI IN AUTOMOTIVE

MARKET IMPACT

- **Financial Scale:** Automotive predictive maintenance market projected at \$100B by 2032 .
- **Operational Gains:** AI-enabled inventory optimization reduces spare parts overhead by 15–30% .
- **Customer Experience:** Toyota's AI assistants cut call times by 40 seconds while maintaining 92% resolution .
- **Throughput:** Robotic systems and AI scheduling are enabling shops to handle 20–30% more vehicles per day.

LEADING PLAYERS

- Bosch – AI embedded in diagnostic platforms across its global Car Service network.
- Bridgestone / Webfleet – Fleet AI assistant, predictive tire analytics, and enterprise shop optimisation.
- Tesla – Remote diagnostics and AI-driven parts logistics, reducing service delays.
- Toyota & GM – AI predictive maintenance models and inspection systems rolled out at scale.
- Aftermarket Chains – Firestone, Midas, and Valvoline are deploying AI scheduling, inspections, and marketing.
- Tech Entrants – UVEye (AI inspections), RoboTire (robotic tire change), ShopGenie (AI service advisors), AutoTechIQ (predictive marketing).

CONCLUSION

AI is no longer a futuristic vision for auto service-it is an operational reality delivering measurable results. Enterprise brands across repair, quick service, tire, detailing, and fleet maintenance are already seeing cost savings, faster service, and improved loyalty.

The future trajectory is clear: vehicles will increasingly schedule their own service, service bays will be optimised by AI in real time, and robotics will handle more physical tasks. Enterprise players who embrace this shift now will define the service standards of tomorrow.

AI is not just entering the auto service industry. It is rewriting its rules



WHAT'S IN THIS MAGAZINE?

Featuring top auto aftermarket service industry leaders

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GENERAL INDUSTRY NEWS

- Global auto-aftermarket valued at US \$469 billion in 2024, on track to hit \$589 billion by 2030-led by Asia-Pacific growth. [Matrix Capital Markets Group+Grand View Research](#)
- Connected, autonomous, shared, and electrified vehicles reshape service demand-China alone has 245 million out-of-warranty cars needing aftermarket support. [S&P Global](#)
- Ireland's motor regulator launches probe into anti-competitive service barriers, challenging OEM control over diagnostics and independent shops. [The Times](#)
- Automotive repair and maintenance services market projected to nearly double-from US \$1.03 trillion in 2025 to US \$2.07 trillion by 2035 amid vehicle complexity and global fleet expansion. [futuremarketinsights.com](#)

- EV parts e-commerce rises sharply-aftermarket stores scramble to expand fulfilment infrastructure. [Auto Care](#)
- Gen Z drivers favour service-digitisation: EV apps and fast-charge access top demands. [Auto Service World](#)
- Auto Service Group rebrands-boosting EV-focused identity in response to cleaner vehicle demand. [Auto Service World+1](#)
- Home charging growth drives rise in mobile EV service call-outs for diagnostics and maintenance. [Axios](#)
- Predii's AI now supports electrified fleet service-shortening diagnostic time across hybrid vehicles. [Auto Service World](#)
- Auto Care publishes emerging EV tech trends for service sector in its latest edition. [Auto Service World](#)

EV NEWS

- Tire aftermarket poised to grow as EV ownership climbs toward 10–12% of global fleet by 2030. [ReutersAuto Care](#)
- EV World highlights growth in 12-volt system repairs even as powertrain shifts. [Auto Service World](#)
- Level 2.5 & 3 ADAS deployment increasing service complexity across EV and hybrid fleets. [Automotive DiveS&P Global](#)
- EV repair demand surges, pushing shop owners to invest in high-voltage training and diagnostics. (Context based on service trends, e.g., from Auto Care insight.) [Auto Care](#)

INNOVATION & TECHNOLOGY NEWS

- AI-powered undercarriage scanner spots 76 issues in under 30 seconds-service inspections go high-speed.
- Global smart antenna market set to hit \$5.2B by 2030. Connected cars demand smarter hardware.
- **GaragePlug named official technology partner of Tech Mahindra** - set to transform the auto service industry in Europe and the U.S.; its solution also chosen as one of the few global products exhibited at Tech Mahindra's prestigious 'Mahindra Experience Centre.

ASTRA OTOPARTS' JOURNEY TOWARD THE FUTURE OF INDONESIAN AUTOMOTIVE SERVICE



HELIANA ADIWINATA

GM - Corporate
Planning and Business
Development & Strategy
| PT Astra Otoparts Tbk

Heliana Adiwinata is a seasoned leader in Indonesia's automotive industry, currently serving as Corporate Officer and Head of Business Development & Strategy at PT Astra Otoparts Tbk. With a background in metallurgy and an MBA in finance, her career spans from hands-on technical roles in motorcycle manufacturing to shaping long-term growth strategies at one of the country's largest automotive groups. Known for driving innovation, sustainability, and strategic partnerships, Heliana brings a rare blend of technical depth and business vision.

AutoPulse Team: Heliana, thank you for joining us. As GM and head of strategy for Astra Otoparts, you oversee one of Indonesia's biggest and most dynamic automotive service networks. Could you tell us about your own journey and how Astra Otoparts entered the auto service industry?

Heliana: Thank you for inviting me. Our story goes back decades, beginning with Astra Otoparts' expertise in the manufacturing and distribution of automotive components. Over the years, we've built a reputation for consistent product quality and dependability. But as the market evolved, we recognized significant new opportunities-notably, the growing segment of car and two-wheeler owners who no longer had ATPM service warranties.

After carefully analyzing these changing customer needs and the broader aftermarket opportunity, we made a strategic decision to expand. We started with a single outlet in 2000. Today, we've expanded steadily, now operating more than 600 outlets across Indonesia, under a range of service brands such as Shop&Drive, Super Shop&Drive, Shop&Bike, Aspira Motoquick, Motoquick, and Astra Otoservice. We now proudly serve both four-wheeler and two-wheeler owners, including many who are our OEM customers.

AutoPulse Team: That scale is impressive. Can you detail how many outlets you operate and the spread across Indonesia?

Heliana: Certainly. As of June 2025, our network comprises 400 Shop&Drive and Super Shop&Drive outlets, 33 Astra Otoservice locations, 74 Shop&Bike outlets, and 111 Motoquick and Aspira Motoquick points-adding up to a total of 618 service locations. Our footprint stretches across Java, the country's economic heart, as well as regions outside Java representing Indonesia's fastest-growing automotive markets. This wide geographical spread allows us to reach a diverse

customer base and truly understand the needs of motorists all over the country.

AutoPulse Team: What types of services do you offer at these locations? And how do you make sure that customers get a standard experience, no matter which brand or branch they visit?

Heliana: Our services are focused on periodic maintenance and "quick service" for fast-moving general parts. We offer:

1. Battery replacements, oil changes, and shock absorber replacements.
2. Tire changing, spooling, and wheel balancing
3. Other routine light maintenance
4. Battery and oil changing home delivery, which has grown in popularity with urban customers
5. Uniformity is very important to us. Every location follows the same standard operating procedures. We invest heavily in staff training and oversight, making sure that procedures are always followed and quality is never compromised, regardless of whether the shop is in a major city or a small town.

AutoPulse Team: How does Astra Otoparts manage such a large operation efficiently? Are there digital systems you rely on?

Heliana: Yes, digital integration is fundamental. We have developed our own customised tools, using Maris and SAP as the ERP backbone. This software handles everything from inventory and billing to operational workflow and management dashboards. For a business of our size, these systems ensure discipline, provide monitoring features for management, and help us quickly address any issues that arise.

Auto Pulse

Community Initiative by GaragePlus

Highlights

Astra Otoparts operates 618 service locations nationwide, uniting Shop&Drive, Shop&Bike, Aspira, and Astra Otoservice under one network. With uniform standards and strong digital tools, they deliver consistent, customer-first service across Indonesia.

AutoPulse Team: What are the most difficult challenges when operating a franchise-based network of this scale? How have you tackled them?

Heliana: Maintaining uniformity and efficiency throughout our network is a constant challenge- we also has franchise model (80 out of 400 ShopandDrive outlet) . It requires diligent training, rigorous monitoring, and continual communication between the head office and all locations. We always focus on ensuring our standard procedures are implemented perfectly, regardless of local differences.

Another challenge is growing competition. With more players entering the automotive service sector, we pay close attention to market trends and make improvements to keep our customer journey strong and encourage repeat business.

Looking forward, expansion and experience improvement are both priorities. We are working to further streamline the online-to-offline (O2O) customer experience, ensuring that every customer can access fast, high-quality, and convenient service.

AutoPulse Team: If you look ahead-imagining Astra Otoparts Version 2.0-what do you see as the company’s future and the “aftermarket of Indonesia”?

Heliana: Our vision for Astra Otoparts 2.0 is to become the only name that Indonesian motorists think of when they need service or maintenance- regardless of the type, age, or brand of their vehicle. We want to lead both for internal combustion engine (ICE) vehicles as well as emerging x-EV platforms.

We will support this vision with a robust digital ecosystem, connecting smart retail outlets, nationwide service centers, and online platforms.

Our goal is to offer “any vehicle, any time, anywhere” service-across all segments. We will continue strengthening our operations, modernizing digital tools, and always growing our ecosystem to support new vehicle technologies.

AutoPulse Team: Can you share some specifics-what practical steps or strategies are you employing to move toward this next-gen vision?

Heliana: We’re modernizing and digitizing our operations and customer experience at every step. For us, that means:

1. Making processes seamless across channels, booking, and payments
2. Expanding our ecosystem and growing capacity to service x-EV vehicles
3. Building even stronger customer loyalty through good service and clear communication
4. Investing in the continued support and success of our entire franchise network
5. Making improvements based on both market analytics and direct customer feedback
6. We strive to be realistic-keeping strong foundations while remaining future-focused.



AutoPulse Team: How do you define a next-gen workshop? What must every future-ready outlet offer?

Heliana: In our view, critical features for tomorrow's service points are:

1. **Seamless online booking:** So customers can more easily plan and access the service.
2. **Real-time availability and service tracking:** Customers always know what's happening with their vehicle.
3. **Clear diagnostics, transparent pricing, traceability:** No surprises, complete honesty, and a record of every step.
4. **Responsible waste management:** Not just for regulatory reasons, but because "green" practices are becoming more important to customers.

These elements do more than streamline operations-they create trust.

AutoPulse Team: How can more traditional workshops catch up and become leaders in Indonesia's transforming automotive sector?

Heliana: By deeply understanding and responding to customer needs. We don't just try to meet expectations; we push ourselves to anticipate and deliver solutions that go beyond. Market analysis, constant improvement, and digitalisation are essential.

Simplifying every transaction, ensuring transparency, and putting the customer first-all these help build loyalty that will sustain leaders in the years ahead.



AutoPulse Team: Are you confident that Astra Otoparts is ready for the rapid changes-electrification, digitisation, and new customer habits-coming to this industry?

Heliana: Absolutely. As a pioneer in Indonesian auto service, we have always prioritised innovation and long-term growth. We've diversified, adapted quickly, and developed talent internally so that we're never just responding to trends, but actively shaping them. Our national scale and continuous improvement enable us to be agile and resilient, ready for whatever comes next.

AutoPulse Team: What are the most important industry trends you see right now, especially those often overlooked?

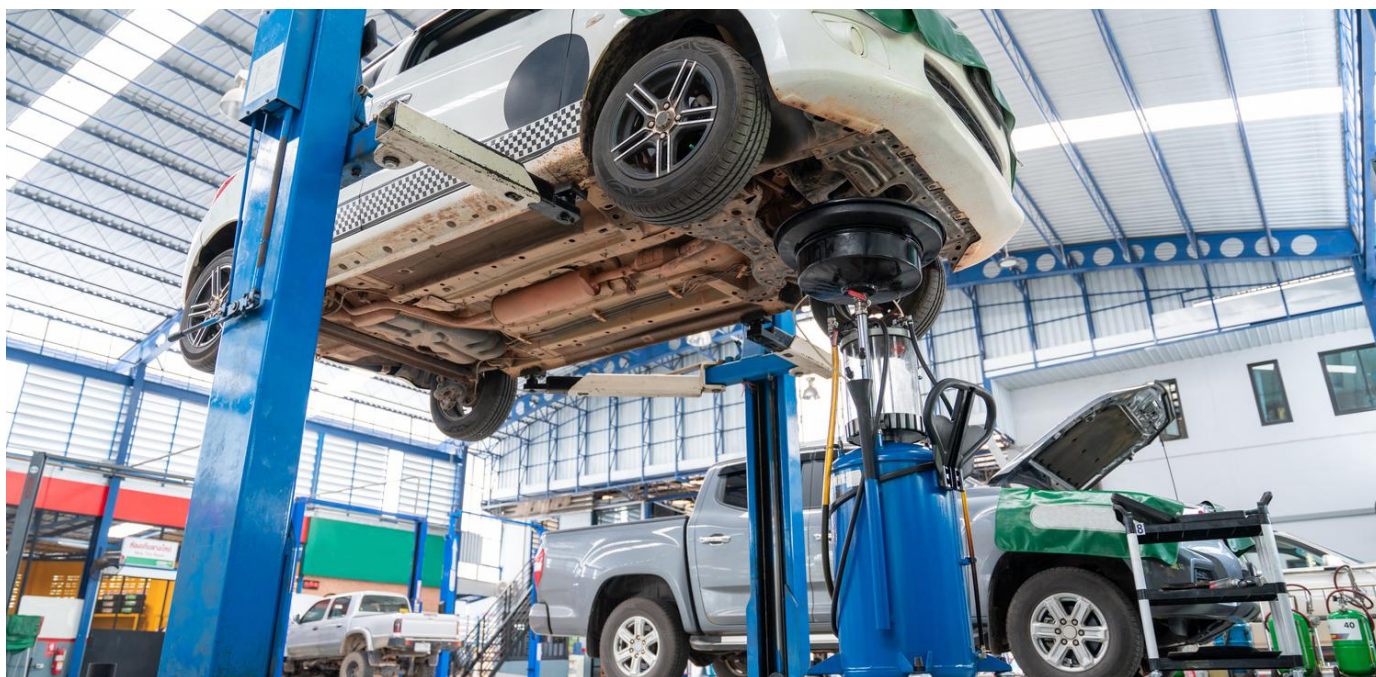
Heliana: The biggest changes are:

1. How customers now view mobility and embrace digital-first habits.
2. Changes in government regulations around tax, price standards, and especially environmental requirements.
3. The race to keep up with technology companies must never get comfortable or complacent.
4. Recognising and planning for these is central to our ongoing success.

AutoPulse Team: What do you see as the real impact of electric vehicles on your business?

Heliana: The electric vehicle (EV) shift is a new challenge but also a big opportunity. Mechanic and technician skills must evolve: we need expertise now in areas such as battery diagnostics, high-voltage safety, and software-based troubleshooting. While EVs require less frequent maintenance overall, specialised services like battery health checks and software updates are critical.

For us, the answer is upskilling teams and investing in new tools, knowledge, and service offers. We see this shift not as a disruption, but as a chance to show leadership again.



AutoPulse Team: What's the key to building truly strong and reliable partnerships in the automotive industry?

Heliana: The foundation is always quality and operational excellence. For us, it's about becoming a world-class partner, supported by great engineering. We keep this promise for both our internal and external partners, making sure that every product and every customer-facing solution meets the highest standards.

AutoPulse Team: How do you create accountability, teamwork, and engagement, especially in high-pressure or fast-changing environments?

Heliana: Team engagement comes from leadership by example, setting clear roles and targets, and reinforcing the connection between individual achievement and team success. Regular feedback and recognition help keep spirits high. We seek feedback continuously and make visible improvements; everyone knows their input matters.

AutoPulse Team: On a personal note, how do you maintain work-life balance and support your well-being in such a demanding industry?

Heliana: It's not easy, but I make it a priority . I

work out twice a week after office hours. Exercise is important for sleep quality and energy, and it helps me stay focused. I also stay intentional about making the most of my workday; being productive during office hours lets me have more quality time with my family, which recharges me for the next day's challenges.

AutoPulse Team: Finally, what's your long-term vision for Astra Otoparts and its role in Indonesia's auto service market?

Heliana: I want Astra Otoparts to be recognised as the most trusted, innovative, and reliable aftermarket service provider nationwide. Our journey is about constant improvement, embracing technology, responding to customer needs, and supporting a sustainable industry.

AutoPulse Team: Heliana, thank you for sharing your vision and deep commitment to both operational excellence and customer care. Your insights are a great guide for anyone thinking about the future of automotive service in Indonesia.

Heliana: Thank you for having me. I hope our journey inspires others to invest in quality, innovation, and strong teams. That's how we'll continue—together—to shape the future of mobility for Indonesia

BUILDING GARAGASH AUTO 2.0 WITH ABRAR HUSSAIN



ABRAR HUSSAIN

Operations Manager |
Gargash Auto

Abrar Hussain is a highly respected name in the UAE's automotive industry, bringing over 40 years of experience across multiple leading dealerships and service networks. Currently serving as Operations Manager at Gargash Autobody, he has built deep expertise in the auto repair and bodywork sector, while establishing strong and trusted relationships with the region's most well-known insurance companies. Recognised for his credibility, leadership, and customer-first approach, Abrar has consistently contributed to raising industry standards and remains a well-recognised figure in the auto line

AutoPulse Team: Abrar, many thanks for joining us today. Let's get started by asking-how did you first enter the auto service industry? Could you walk us through your career beginnings?

Abrar Hussain: Thank you for inviting me! My journey really started with a deep personal interest in automobiles and mechanical systems. I have always been fascinated by how cars work and how mechanical systems come together. That early passion guided me into my career.

I began at the ground level as a Service Advisor and Estimator. Those roles gave me crucial exposure to both technical details and customer interactions. It was a period of learning-understanding vehicle issues first-hand, but also learning how to communicate with customers and help them make informed decisions about their cars.

Gradually, as I gained more technical knowledge and operational expertise, I moved into management roles. Along the way, I started to notice clear gaps in the market-things like customer service falling short of expectations, or workshop efficiency not being where it could be. That's when the idea of entrepreneurship developed naturally. I saw a real need for a trusted, transparent brand focused on smooth experiences, and that's what has kept me going ever since.

AutoPulse Team: You've certainly worked your way through the ranks! Can you tell us a bit about your current auto service business? What is Gargash Auto today?

Abrar Hussain: We currently operate four service outlets-two are in Al Quoz, one is in Al Qusais, and the fourth is in Sharjah. Across all these locations, we offer a truly comprehensive suite of services: mechanical repairs, diagnostic services, preventive maintenance, AC and electrical work, accident repairs, and detailing. It's a one-stop shop for all major auto service needs.

What's very important to us is delivering uniform quality no matter where the customer goes. We've standardised our services through centralised SOPs so everyone follows the same process-ensuring the same level of workmanship, transparency, and customer interaction, whether you're in Al Quoz or Sharjah.

AutoPulse Team: What are the main challenges you face in running such an operation? How are you tackling some of those key pain points?

Abrar Hussain: There are a few. One of the biggest is the skilled manpower shortage. Attracting and retaining talent-especially those with up-to-date technical skills-is a concern the entire industry faces. We address this through robust in-house training and ongoing skill development programs, because investing in people is the way forward.

Another challenge is optimising the workflow-sometimes there can be bottlenecks that slow down operations. To address this, we're looking at adopting a digital workflow management tool that will allow us to track jobs in real-time, allocate resources more dynamically, and improve overall turnaround time.

AutoPulse Team: And what are the big focus areas for the future at Gargash Auto?

Abrar Hussain: Our focus is structured over three horizons:

1. Short-term, we want to keep improving TAT (turnaround time) and push customer satisfaction ratings even higher.
2. Medium-term, the goal is to expand into two more regions, using a franchise or service partner model. That way, we can share the brand and SOP-driven approach with more communities.
3. Long-term, our focus is on integrating advanced diagnostics, building EV service capability, and moving toward AI-driven service scheduling.

We're always looking to stay ahead of industry shifts and customer expectations.

AutoPulse Team: Much of your outlook is about modernization. What does “Gargash Auto 2.0” actually mean to you?

Abrar Hussain: “Gargash Auto 2.0” is our vision for the workshop of the future—one that’s fully digital, customer-centric, and committed to sustainability.

In practical terms, we’re moving towards touchless check-ins, app-based service bookings, and live status tracking for every job. We’ll leverage AI-enabled diagnostics and predictive maintenance tools, so we can catch problems before they interrupt the customer’s life.

We’re also preparing for tomorrow’s vehicles—dedicated EV bays with fast-charging stations and specialized EV tools are part of our rollout. Under Gargash Auto 2.0, we’re building a connected workshop network, where all our operations can be monitored and controlled centrally. The aim is consistency, but also agility in how we react to customer needs or market changes.

AutoPulse Team: Can you share the step-by-step roadmap you have for making Gargash Auto 2.0 a reality?

Abrar Hussain: Absolutely. Our roadmap proceeds in phases:

1. Digitise all customer interactions and internal workflows. That’s about removing paper from the process, speeding up communication, and reducing the scope for error.
2. Build a knowledge-sharing and learning platform for technicians. With the speed of change in automotive tech, training must be ongoing. This platform will help every technician stay current.
3. Partner with OEMs for EV readiness. That includes getting our people formally trained and certified to work on the latest EVs using OEM protocols and tools.
4. Roll out mobile units for doorstep diagnostics and minor services. This brings added convenience, letting us support customers wherever they are.
5. Integrate real-time customer feedback into operational improvements. The feedback loops close the gap between what customers actually experience and where we want our service to be.

We’re updating people, processes, and technology all at once, with the goal of making “Gargash Auto 2.0” the benchmark for the next decade.



AutoPulse Team: Let's go back to the here and now for a moment. What elements of day-to-day workshop operations do you feel need urgent attention or improvement?

Abrar Hussain: Our Great question. There are three main areas we're actively working on.

1. Parts procurement delays. We're working on a system that integrates vendors directly into our workflows, so sourcing and tracking parts becomes a real-time, transparent process.
2. Customer transparency. We've introduced service video updates and are moving toward a pre-approval digital system. This empowers customers-they see exactly what's being repaired and why, then approve before we proceed.
3. Technician skill variance. We're following a certification-based, internal training protocol to ensure every technician meets the brand's standards.

And beyond that, we're exploring unorthodox solutions:

1. Rolling out subscription-based service packages for individuals and fleets,
2. Allowing our highest-performing technicians profit-sharing or even equity participation in the business,
3. Piloting the idea of "community garages"-shared service spaces for qualified freelance mechanics, all operated under Gargash Auto's quality oversight.

AutoPulse Team: What, in your view, does the service centre of the future look like? How does it compare to what we see today?

Abrar Hussain: I see the future as being clean, tech-enabled, and built entirely around customer convenience:

1. Less paperwork, more digital. This simplifies everything for both customers and staff.
2. Minimal manual processes, more automation. This reduces errors and speeds up service delivery.
3. Digital customer interfaces. Customers interact via an app or web dashboard.
4. Connected diagnostic systems. Workshops communicate seamlessly with the increasingly sophisticated computers in vehicles.
5. EV-readiness from the start. Every workshop will be built to handle electric vehicles as standard, not as an afterthought.
6. Transparent pricing and real-time status updates. Customers are never left wondering about cost or progress.

It's about building trust, speeding up turnaround, and continually enhancing the overall experience-so the workshop visit becomes almost as easy as hailing a ride.

AutoPulse Team: Are there industry trends you feel most people are overlooking right now?

Abrar Hussain: Yes, definitely. I think the most critical trend being missed is the rise of remote diagnostics and OTA (over-the-air) updates. Very soon, connected vehicles will allow many issues to be checked or even fixed remotely. That redefines how a service centre operates, with less focus on physical repairs, more on digital monitoring and proactive maintenance.

Many workshops aren't ready for this change. They're not preparing for how connected vehicles will affect their relevance or revenue streams. That's a conversation we need to bring to the forefront.



AutoPulse Team: You mentioned EVs several times. What practical effects do you see EVs having on your business model and Gargash Auto 2.0?

Abrar Hussain: EVs present a very real shift for the industry. The service needs are completely different-there's far less traditional engine work and much more focus on electronics, high-voltage safety, and especially battery diagnostics. This transforms both the kind of problems we solve and the skills our teams need.

We're onboarding EV-certified technicians and forging collaborative partnerships with OEMs to be ready for servicing the latest models. In fact, we're actively rolling out the process of becoming a Tesla-approved workshop, with a launch targeted for October or November 2025. All the associated training on EV safety and new diagnostics is happening for our teams as we speak.

AutoPulse Team: That's a big step! Let's talk people and partnerships. What are the most important ingredients of a strong relationship-whether with partners or your internal team?

Abrar Hussain: Trust and transparency, first and last. With partners, it's essential to have a shared vision, clear expectations, timely communication, and incentives for mutual growth. When these are in place, partnerships aren't just transactions-they're strategic.

Inside the team, it's about daily clarity of roles, setting clear priorities, and keeping morale high. Appreciation goes a long way, as does leading from the front and being responsive. When things get hectic, it's important to make sure everyone feels supported and valued.



AutoPulse Team: Running an operation of this scale is demanding. How do you ensure work-life balance for yourself-and for your employees?

Abrar Hussain: Delegating responsibility and empowering team leads is a crucial task that can't bottleneck at the top. Personally, I block out "off-screen" hours every day so I can recharge, and I schedule time for family and personal growth with the same seriousness as business meetings.

For the wider team, we encourage open conversations, provide mental health days when needed, and organise monthly wellness and fitness sessions. It's about recognising that workplace well-being leads directly to better performance and loyalty.



(Abrar with his family and friends)

AutoPulse Team: If we turn back to the customer side, what does customer experience mean for you? How does it influence the way you shape Gargash Auto 2.0?

Abrar Hussain: Customer loyalty, in my view, is a direct outcome of trust and ease of doing business. If our customers feel informed and confident in every interaction, they're far more likely to return and recommend us.

Great customer experience means referrals, strong online reviews, and consistent repeat business. We want the workshop experience to be as smooth as ordering a cab ride-simple, reliable, and stress-free.

AutoPulse Team: For workshop owners and aspiring leaders looking to transform, what are your top tips for future-proofing their businesses?

Abrar Hussain: The core principles are:

1. Embrace new technology wherever it can help.
2. Invest in ongoing training for your people in both technical and customer-facing roles.
3. Focus on using data analytics-know what your customers want before they say it.
4. And above all, keep customer communication open and honest at every step.

Be agile. Regulations and technologies are changing quickly-you have to be ready to pivot at a moment's notice, especially as EVs, connected cars, and stricter compliance requirements become the norm.

AutoPulse Team: A moment on personal readiness: are you and your team truly prepared for what's coming next?

Abrar Hussain: Yes-we're already evaluating all the EV tools, charging solutions, and upskilling programs our teams will need. Becoming a Tesla-authorized workshop isn't just a box to check; it's part of a mindset shift for the whole company.

Everyone is getting the training needed before the first customer ever walks in for a Tesla service. We're committed to meeting and exceeding these new standards.

AutoPulse Team: Let's do a quick rapid fire:

- **One technology that'll define workshops by 2030?**

Abrar Hussain: AI-powered predictive maintenance. Vehicles and workshops will communicate proactively-machines will tell us what needs attention before something breaks.

- **What's the biggest myth about running a modern workshop?**

Abrar Hussain: That it's only about fixing cars. Our job is just as much about customer experience, data management, and continuous innovation.

- **One thing you wish customers understood about your industry?**

Abrar Hussain: That the relentless drive for improvement-faster turnarounds, better communication, and safe, reliable repairs-comes from a deep-rooted commitment to their safety and satisfaction



TRANSFORMING AUTOMOTIVE AFTERSALES FOR THE NEXT GENERATION

INSIDE GRAND SERVICE STATION, BUHALEEBA HOLDING GROUP



VASANTH MOHAN

Operations Manager |
Grand Service Station,
UAE

Vasanth Mohan is an experienced automotive operations leader with over 15 years spanning service operations, manufacturing process improvement, and aftersales strategy. Currently Operations Manager at Grand Service Station in Dubai, he is also a Certified Dealer Process Evaluator with Nissan, Renault, and Infiniti. Vasanth's career journey has taken him through roles at AW Rostamani and the Renault-Nissan Alliance, where he championed Kaizen and Six Sigma practices. Today, he focuses on building efficient, customer-centric service operations that deliver both quality and scale.

AutoPulse Team: Vasanth, thank you for sitting down with us today. Your division at Grand Service Station is one of the most prominent in the UAE's automotive aftermarket. To start, can you walk us through the scope of your role and what "total accountability" means in a business of this size?

Vasanth: Thank you for the opportunity-I'm glad to share our journey. When I say "total accountability," it's quite literal! I am responsible not just for the day-to-day running of our multi-brand workshop division, but for the long-term strategic direction and P&L performance as well. We currently operate five large-format, full-service stations across the UAE, each more than 15,000 square feet-a scale that collectively serves upwards of 1,500 customers daily.

What this means operationally is that my team and I are involved in everything: revenue generation, workshop execution, manpower planning, service quality, inventory and spare parts management, and above all, making sure that every initiative supports profitability and aligns with our Group's vision. Each site isn't just a service centre; it's an independent business unit with defined performance and growth targets.

I drive daily reviews, monitor KPIs closely, and enforce industry best practices across the board. My role demands a blend of strategic thinking and hands-on management-balancing the needs of the customer with commercial success, and supporting the Group's legacy while preparing for its future.

AutoPulse Team: Managing five high-footfall workshops and overseeing every aspect sounds demanding. Can you break down how you ensure operational excellence, especially with such large teams and busy sites?

Vasanth: It's a huge responsibility, but the key is standardisation and relentless discipline. We run every branch with clear SOPs that comply with ISO and MOAIT standards. Consistency is critical. We can't have customers getting a different experience or result at different branches, so everything-right

down to daily team briefings, checklists, and escalation processes-is formalised. Operationally, I focus on end-to-end transparency. Early on, I led a transformation from paper-based systems to full digital workflows. We moved to centralised dashboards so that at any moment, I or a department head can see live job statuses, technician performance, parts movement, and customer satisfaction metrics. Real-time job tracking has made it possible for us to spot and solve workflow bottlenecks immediately, rather than waiting for weekly or monthly reports.

People are at the heart of our success. I believe heavily in manpower planning and performance alignment. Each team receives goal clarity-from technicians to service advisors, customer care, and back-office staff. Training is continuous, and both skills and attitude are regularly reviewed. Progression, rewards, and even daily recognition are tied directly to hitting and exceeding operational targets.

Inventory and spare parts management are equally stringent. With the volume we run, even minor inefficiency adds up quickly. We have centralised systems that connect procurement, warehousing, and frontline needs so that workshop execution is never held up for want of a part or tool.

Above all, I encourage a culture where every unit-even the newest or smallest-is striving for excellence, not just meeting the status quo.



AutoPulse Team: Let's talk about your digital transformation. How did you approach shifting a traditional, hands-on business like automotive service to a more data-driven, digital environment?

Vasanth: It was both a necessity and a huge opportunity. Automotive aftersales in our region has traditionally lagged behind in digital adoption. We saw the need early-customers are increasingly digital-native, and internal efficiencies can't be sustained without automation.

Our first step was to digitise every workflow: from customer check-in, technician job cards, and inventory control, to billing and feedback. This paperless approach cut processing time, reduced administrative mistakes, and unlocked tremendous data insights.

Centralised dashboards have been a game-changer. Every service manager, and myself as the group head, can get real-time views of job queues, revenue, downtime, parts shortages, and even live customer feedback at every site. Anything unusual or below par is flagged instantly, and we react on the same day. This transparency holds everyone accountable-but also makes it easy to celebrate wins and best practices.

We automated routine communications, too. Customers get timely SMS/WhatsApp/email updates, and each service is scored by real, instant post-delivery feedback, which flows into our management dashboard. No more waiting weeks to know if customers were dissatisfied.

Importantly, we created seamless digital flows for value-added services-customers can now book mobile quick lube, smart repair, or EV services directly via our app or website. Payments are now almost entirely cashless, and all records are tied to customer profiles for personalised future service.

This transformation is ongoing. As the UAE market continues shifting, especially with electrification and new technology vehicles, digital agility will only become more crucial.



AutoPulse Team: How do you ensure high service quality and efficiency on such a scale, and at the same time keep costs in check?

Vasanth: It starts with having the right structure and mindset. Our branch managers, team leads, and every specialist know their individual KPIs-and these roll up to divisional objectives. Daily and weekly huddles are mandatory, where we review previous performance, address issues, and clarify expectations.

On the shop floor, efficiency comes from workflow automation and clear division of labour. Every task has a designated owner, with job cards guiding every step-so there's no confusion or wasted motion. Our processes are designed for "right first time." Every job is double-checked (both by a team lead and a quality controller) before handover. We track metrics like first-time fix rate and job rework ratio; any rework is discussed in review meetings, not as blame, but so we learn and apply preventative action.

Spare parts and inventory are tightly controlled-our centralised system allows us to forecast, reorder automatically, and spot trends in usage that help negotiate better terms with suppliers, further reducing costs.

On the customer side, we make sure every visit is as streamlined as possible: from online booking, automated appointment reminders, digital authorisation, to simple payment flows.

Cost control is not a one-off project-it's baked into our daily rhythm, from energy usage and consumables to workforce planning. Every team member understands how small savings add up. This is key to sustaining profitability, even as we scale or add new, demanding services.

AutoPulse Team: Could you detail some value-added services or business lines you've introduced to keep Grand Service Station ahead of the market?

Vasanth: We're always looking for ways to stand apart, not just by doing more, but by creating genuine value for our customers.

Over the last few years, we have launched several new offers:

1. **EV Servicing:** As electric vehicles gain ground, we're pioneers in setting up EV-dedicated bays, training staff in high-voltage safety, battery checks, and software updates.
2. **Mobile Quick Lube:** Realising the need for speed and convenience, especially for fleet operators and busy families, we rolled out on-demand mobile oil change units that serve customers at their location-cutting downtime to minutes, not hours.
3. **Smart Repair:** We added workshops and specialist teams for small dents, scratches, and cosmetic repairs-making "fix-on-site" a reality for minor damage, and winning customer loyalty.
4. **Leather Seat Refurbishment:** A Few centres in the UAE offered this previously, and we invested in both equipment and trained specialists. This has proven popular as a low-cost way to keep interiors looking new and adds to basket size per visit.
5. **EV Charging Infrastructure:** We're partnering with leading names to install high-speed charging points at our locations, opening a whole new vertical as e-mobility grows.

Beyond these, we're evaluating new options like subscription services, retrofitting ICE cars to electric, and app-based diagnostics as we look to remain leaders, not followers.



AutoPulse Team: How do you ensure alignment and accountability across your network, given the variety of services and the geographical spread?

Vasanth: Alignment at scale requires both a strong framework and an engaged, empowered team.

1. **Annual business planning is a major anchor:** We set network-wide KPIs, but then break these down to site, department, and even individual targets. Every branch manager is deeply involved in this process-not just as a receiver of goals, but as a contributor to planning. This fosters both buy-in and local leadership.
2. **Quarterly cross-functional reviews:** Where service, customer care, parts, procurement, and finance come together-are the core of our monitoring system. We measure progress, share wins, highlight bottlenecks, and openly troubleshoot issues. There are no silos; all teams are expected to collaborate, and the best ideas can come from any role.
3. **Recognition is powerful:** We reward high performers not just with bonuses and annual increments, but with faster promotion and more responsibility. Team and individual achievements are celebrated publicly. This feeds a healthy competitive spirit while reinforcing company values.

At the same time, our standard operating procedures and training programs ensure that each site, no matter where, delivers to the same high bar. Operational discipline + employee engagement = the kind of consistency you can build a lasting reputation on.

AutoPulse Team: Let's dig into your vision for the "next-generation service centre." Can you describe, step-by-step, what a customer experiences, and what it means behind the scenes for the team?

Vasanth: My vision is a fully integrated, digital-first ecosystem, where every point in the customer journey is seamless, transparent, and efficient.

1. **Arrival & Check-In:** Customers are greeted not by a paper form, but at a smart kiosk or through a mobile app interface. They log their request, see the queue status, and are welcomed in minutes, not half an hour.
2. **Real-Time Tracking:** Customers can track their vehicle throughout the servicing process-receiving live updates about the work being done, with estimated finish times and instant messages if anything changes.
3. **Service Advisor Engagement:** Our advisors are equipped with tablets for all inspections, job explanations, and approvals. They can share videos or images of issues, provide instant quotes, and seek digital consent, removing doubt or miscommunication.
4. **Digitally-Driven Execution:** In the workshop, technicians work strictly on system-generated job cards, scheduled so that tools, parts, and bays are always available when needed. Resource planning is digital, further reducing wasted time.
5. **Automated Quality Checks & Delivery:** After the job, digital checklists and quality verification steps ensure nothing is missed, and the customer instantly receives a complete summary of the work done before leaving.
6. **Cashless Transaction & Feedback:** Payment is fully digital-card, wallet, or online. Immediately post-delivery, the customer receives a feedback link; results feed into our dashboards for real-time review, and any issue is resolved within hours.

For the team, this approach means less manual paperwork, clear responsibility at every stage, and a structure where problems are solved, not hidden. For customers, it's end-to-end control, reporting, and peace of mind.

AutoPulse Team: Digital is only half the picture. With EVs and electrification so prominent, how is your division planning to lead in this new era?

Vasanth: We see electrification as the single largest disruptor and opportunity in the automotive service world. The UAE is on a fast track-between government initiatives and consumer enthusiasm, the number of EVs and plug-in hybrids is rising rapidly.

We're preparing on multiple fronts:

1. **Physical:** Retrofitting service bays for EV compatibility (safe charging, insulation, high-voltage protection).
2. **Skills:** Running structured upskilling for all technicians-on battery care, regenerative braking, and high-voltage procedures. We're already partnering with OEMs and third-party trainers.
3. **Partnerships & Infrastructure:** Working with energy companies and charging network specialists to bring high-speed public chargers to our stations, creating a future-ready destination not just for service, but for charging as well.
4. **Retrofitting & Conversion:** This is an emerging business-a chance to convert traditional combustion cars to electric, opening a green aftermarket and supporting the UAE's emissions goals.

On the technology maintenance side, we focus on battery health, advanced diagnostics, and the integration of software and telematics in everyday repairs-these will be as important as brake pads or oil changes were in the past.



AutoPulse Team: Teamwork and retention at this scale can be difficult. How do you recruit, build, and motivate over 500 staff across so many locations?

Vasanth: It all starts with hiring for both technical skill and attitude. We want people who fit our performance culture but who also bring fresh ideas. Once on board, every staff member is inducted into our SOPs, trained on compliance, and made aware of KPIs tied directly to their role.

Structured performance planning ensures everyone knows what's expected. We hold regular town-hall meetings for big-picture updates, celebrate frontline wins, and actively encourage anyone to suggest process improvements.

Motivation is sustained by recognising and rewarding achievement bonuses for hitting KPIs, fast-track promotions for high performers, and growth opportunities across functions for those interested.

We operate a system where responsibility and reward go hand in hand. Annual increments and bonus pools are strictly linked to objective performance data. Everyone has a chance to shine-teams and individuals-including cross-functional "spot awards" for innovation, safety, or customer service excellence.

I believe in making people feel both supported and challenged. That balance makes staff proud to be part of the company, and it shows in their work and customer interactions.

AutoPulse Team: Such a large role can be all-consuming. How do you personally maintain your energy, focus, and well-being?

Vasanth: I'm a firm believer in the 8-8-8 formula: eight hours for work, eight hours for personal well-being, eight hours for family and relationships. Sticking to this rhythm isn't easy, but it's essential for balanced health and high productivity.

Time management and prioritisation help me be fully "present"-whether leading teams, strategising, or spending time with family. I avoid letting work bleed too far into personal time. This structure keeps my thinking sharp and my energy levels high.

As a leader, modelling work-life balance creates the permission for my teams to do the same. When everyone is mentally clear and rested, the whole organisation thrives-not just for a few quarters, but for the long term.

AutoPulse Team: If you look ahead five years, what is your ultimate vision for Grand Service Station and the wider division you lead?

Vasanth: My vision is for Grand Service Station to set the benchmark for the UAE and region: where technology, operational excellence, and customer-centricity deliver exceptional value. I want us to be seen as the most trusted, innovative, and sustainable automotive service provider-whether that means clean operations, digital transparency, or being the go-to partner for EVs and new technologies.

We'll keep scaling our network, introducing new value-added services, and investing in the best people and systems. At every step, we will lead-not just follow-industry change. Every transformation, every innovation, is about sustaining profit while building lasting relationships with customers and delivering meaningful careers for our people.

AutoPulse Team: Vasanth, thank you for taking the time to give us such a complete, candid view of your philosophy, strategies, and the future you see for Grand Service Station.

Vasanth: Thank you. It's a privilege to share what we are building, and I hope our experience inspires others to embrace change, invest in people, and always put the customer at the center of their journey-whatever the size of their business.

REIMAGINING CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE IN TIRE RETAIL: OMAR SAKR OF BLACKCIRCLES



OMAR SAKR

General Manager |
Blackcircles, Egypt

Omar Sakr is the driving force behind Blackcircles.com.eg, Egypt's leading digital tire retail platform. With a background in technology and e-commerce, he has reshaped how customers buy and install tires by building a network of 150+ partner garages across the country. His vision goes beyond sales - from predictive analytics and AI-driven reminders to nationwide mobile installations and EV-ready services, Omar is positioning Blackcircles 2.0 as the future of smart, customer-centric tire care in the region.

AutoPulse Team: Omar, thank you for taking the time to speak with us. Let's begin with how your career started. How did you get into the auto service business?

Omar Sakr: Thank you for having me. My entry into this industry is a bit different. I started in technology, working for a company that ran an online store for spare parts and mobile car services. My job gave me a good understanding of how digital tools can improve automotive services. Later, I joined Blackcircles.com.eg because I wanted to use technology to make buying tires easier and more modern.



AutoPulse Team: What is Blackcircles.com.eg all about? How does your company work?

Omar Sakr: At Blackcircles.com.eg, we run a website where people can buy tires online. Customers can compare different brands and sizes and book a time for installation. We work with over 150 garages and service centers across Egypt. This big network means our customers can find a convenient location anywhere in the country. After they buy, they can choose to pick up and install their tires at a local garage or, if they're based in the Capital, use our mobile installation service. For now, this is available only within Cairo, but it's a growing part of our offering..

Behind the scenes, we use modern e-commerce tools and a CRM (Customer Relationship Management) system. This helps us keep track of everything-orders, deliveries, installations, and customer feedback. Using these digital tools, we can solve problems quickly and improve our service all the time.

AutoPulse Team: Handling so many partners must be tough. What challenges do you face in managing partner garages and keeping service consistent?

Omar Sakr: The main challenge is maintaining the same quality across many different garages. Some places might start strong but could slowly slip on standards.

To address this, we train all our partners and give clear instructions about our requirements for installation, service, and how to treat customers. If a customer shares feedback-especially a complaint, quickly check what happened and work with the partner to fix it.

Our CRM system is very helpful. It collects customer reviews and ratings after every installation. If we spot a pattern of issues, we step in with extra support or refresher training for that location.

Our goal is to make sure every customer gets the same good experience, no matter which garage they visit.



(Omar with his son and wife)

Another challenge is logistics. Tires are heavy and bulky, and delivering them on time-while matching installation with customers' schedules-requires careful coordination. We have invested a lot in route planning and tracking solutions so that the customer's appointment is always met.

AutoPulse Team: What do you picture as the future of Blackcircles.com.eg? What is “Blackcircles 2.0”?

Omar Sakr: Blackcircles 2.0 is what we call the next level for our business. We want to go from being just a tire store to a complete digital service for anything related to tires and car care. Our goal is for the whole process to be easy, fast, and smart.

We are working to add predictive analytics and artificial intelligence. For example, our system could remind customers when it's time to change their tires or offer suggestions based on how they drive. We also want the website to be more user-friendly and expand mobile tire installations beyond the Capital, making them available nationwide. The vision is that customers anywhere in Egypt could have their tires installed at home or office if that's more convenient.

We are preparing for electric vehicles (EVs) as well. They have different tire needs than regular cars—heavier vehicles, bigger tires, more frequent replacements. We want our service to be ready for that. Another goal is sustainability. We plan to recycle old tires safely and reduce waste wherever possible.

AutoPulse Team: Are there any new ideas you're especially excited about for Blackcircles 2.0?

Omar Sakr: Yes. We want to make the tire buying process easier with things like virtual fitting. Customers could see how different tires would look on their car using their phone or computer. We're also developing systems that can use data from your car-like mileage or wear sensors—to suggest when you need replacements or maintenance.

AI can help us offer maintenance plans that fit each customer's needs. For example, it can send reminders for tire rotations and checks based on how many kilometers you have driven.

We also believe in giving customers clear prices, service choices, and as much information as possible to help them make good decisions.

AutoPulse Team: How do you see the future of auto service centers, both in Egypt and globally?

Omar Sakr: Service centers in the future will be very different. Technology is changing everything—big data and AI are already improving how we predict when cars need service or parts. I think workshops will use digital systems to manage bookings, parts, and even customer interactions.

For example, we might see more workshops using virtual reality (VR) or augmented reality (AR) to train their staff. These tools can also help customers understand what work is being done to their car, maybe by showing them a simple 3D video instead of trying to explain with words. The main idea is that technology should make the experience faster, clearer, and less stressful for everyone.

The big goal is to make the process as connected as ordering food from an app—where you track the order, know who is working on it, and can give instant feedback.



AutoPulse Team: How does customer experience fit into your strategy for the business?

Omar Sakr: Customer experience is at the core of our strategy. Tires might not be exciting to buy, but we want the process to be smooth and problem-free. We track the whole journey—from website visit, to purchase, to installation and after-sales follow-up. If we see any issues or delays, we act right away.

We use technology to be transparent; customers get live updates, order status, and clear instructions about what will happen at each step. If there's ever a problem, our support team can jump in quickly to resolve it and make sure the customer feels heard. Building trust, keeping things simple, and always being ready to help—that's what keeps people coming back.

AutoPulse Team: Is there an important industry trend that you think people are missing?

Omar Sakr: One trend I think people are missing is how important artificial intelligence can be-not just for marketing, but for operations. AI can help automate things like inventory, customer help desks, scheduling, and even answering basic questions instantly. It can also make personal recommendations-like which tires will last longer for a particular customer.

Many companies use technology for the sales website, but fewer look at how these tools can make everything in the background run smarter and faster. If we focus on both, we can offer better service and keep costs down.



AutoPulse Team: Let's talk about electric vehicles again. How will the rise of EVs affect what you do?

Omar Sakr: Electric vehicles are one of the biggest changes to happen in the car world in decades. They use bigger and heavier tires, and those tires often wear out faster than traditional ones. This creates new business for us-more replacements, more demand for special sizes, and new types of accessories.

But it also means we need to work with new brands and develop expertise in EV-specific products. We're building partnerships with EV makers and focusing on training so that we can always answer our customers' questions about their unique needs.

I think the companies that adapt quickly to the EV market and offer services made just for those cars will grow the fastest in the coming years.

AutoPulse Team: Partnerships are a big part of your growth. What's the key to building strong business relationships?

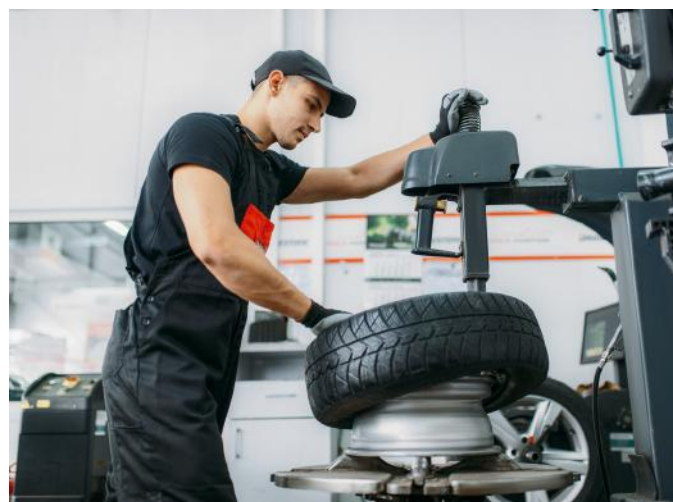
Omar Sakr: The most important thing in any partnership is trust. Everyone needs to be clear about goals and benefits. We believe in open and honest communication-listening to what our partners need, sharing data and feedback, and being quick to fix any problems.

We set clear standards, and we always aim for relationships where everyone wins. If our partners grow and succeed, so do we. We keep in touch regularly, check on progress, and celebrate milestones together-that keeps everyone engaged and committed.

AutoPulse Team: How do you keep teamwork and motivation high, especially with so many partners spread out across the country?

Omar Sakr: Regular communication is key. We hold frequent meetings and use online tools to share updates, goals, and best practices. Everyone knows what's expected and what success looks like. When teams work under pressure, it helps if they know they are not alone and that help is always available.

Shared targets and group challenges help build unity. When a big achievement happens-like a partner reaching a service milestone-we make sure to celebrate it publicly. Keeping everyone involved and making them feel like part of a larger mission is important.



AutoPulse Team: Maintaining a work-life balance in such a fast-paced industry can't be easy. What do you do to take care of yourself and your team?

Omar Sakr: Balance is very important to us. We allow flexible schedules and make sure people have time to rest when they need it. I set an example by protecting my own time-taking regular breaks, spending time with family, and switching off work in the evenings.

For the team, we run wellness programs, sometimes with outside partners, to support both mental and physical health. We encourage people to practice mindfulness and offer resources for stress management, like workshops or counseling if needed. Group activities, like team sports or walks, are a fun way to boost morale.

When people feel good-physically and mentally-they work better and treat customers better. So looking after well-being isn't just nice to have, it's essential for business.



(Abrar with his son and wife)

AutoPulse Team: We'll end with some quick questions.

- What technology do you think will change tire retail in the next five years?

Omar Sakr: Probably AI-and predictive systems that help you know, in advance, when your car will need something. Customers will get reminders, offers, and fast service without having to ask.



- Is there a common misunderstanding about running a business like Blackcircles?

Omar Sakr: Yes-people think it's just about running a website. In fact, it's the behind-the-scenes work-managing orders, deliveries, partner relationships, and solving problems-that makes the real difference.

- Finally, what's one thing you wish customers understood about your work?

Omar Sakr: I'd like them to know that each smooth transaction is the result of a lot of careful planning, communication, and teamwork between us and our partners-all so the customer has a safe, easy experience.

AutoPulse Team: Omar, thank you for such a thoughtful and clear conversation. Your approach to technology, people, and service is impressive, and it's exciting to see how Blackcircles 2.0 will help shape the industry's future.

Omar Sakr: Thank you very much. I'm proud of what our team and partners are building, and I look forward to helping more people make smarter, simpler choices for their cars.

TRAINEE TO TITAN: MURUGAN'S INSPIRING JOURNEY FROM TATA MOTORS



MURUGAN DNA

Head of Aftersales | Tata
International, Africa

Murugan is a seasoned automotive aftersales leader with over three decades of global experience spanning India, Africa, and international markets. Having held pivotal roles at Tata Motors and later heading Aftersales at Tata International across Africa, he has built deep expertise in service operations, parts distribution, and dealer network management. Today, his focus lies in driving process excellence, operational transformation, and building future-ready aftersales strategies that align with evolving customer expectations and mobility trends.

AutoPulse Team: Mr. Murugan, thank you for joining us. I'd love to begin at the very start. We saw that you began as a trainee in Jamshedpur and eventually moved into high-impact global roles within Tata. When you started, did you imagine the journey would widen this way? Could you walk us through that early arc and how it shaped you?

Murugan: Thank you for having me. I began with Tata Motors as a Graduate Trainee in Jamshedpur in 1995. I was there for roughly a year, embedded in a culture that takes manufacturing discipline and after-sales responsibility very seriously. Even in those early months, you understand that a vehicle isn't a finished story at dispatch—it's a commitment that lives on the road, which is where after-sales really matters. After Jamshedpur, I was posted to Karnataka as a **service engineer** for **commercial vehicles** and **buses**, and I was based out of **Hubli** for about four years.

Those were formative years. That was when Tata and Cummins JV, getting shaped to put Cummins engines into state transport buses. The pilot batch of buses was sent to Karnataka and I headed the Karnataka Cummins Engine-fitted bus project. My responsibility was to work closely with the Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation, making sure we could stand behind the product: after-sales, warranty, diagnostics, training, and technical support.

AutoPulse Team: That's a lot of responsibility early on. Were there specific moments in that pilot that still feel pivotal to you now?

Murugan: A few. One stands out: Karnataka was the first state to induct the Cummins Engine-fitted buses. We began with a pilot batch split between Hubli and Bangalore. The infrastructure and early performance indicators proved stronger in Hubli, so all the buses were relocated there. From that single, stable base, we increased volumes and deliberately focused on tier-2 and tier-3 depots instead of only capital or metro depots. That made sense because you learn faster in the places where fleets run long hours on tough roads and where uptime is make-or-break for livelihoods.

In a couple of locations, depots became all-Cummins buses for that phase; people even nicknamed them "Cummins bus depots." That confidence then spread to other regions and eventually informed national adoption. This was 1996 to 2000—those four years taught me the power of proving reliability in the right environment and then scaling with discipline.

AutoPulse Highlights

Community Initiative by Gurgaon

When global OEMs stuck to diesel pickups in Thailand's 95% Japanese-dominated market, Murugan & his team bet on a dedicated CNG powertrain. That bold pivot halved operating costs for fleets and carved Tata a credible space in the world's toughest pickup battleground.

AutoPulse Team: So you began by making reliability visible where it counts most, and then scaled it outward. After Karnataka, your career takes a global turn. How did that shift begin?

Murugan: I moved to Tata Motors' International Business headquarters in Mumbai, supporting after-sales distributors for more than 30 countries. It was a back-end role—one of those positions where you are never directly in the spotlight but are constantly enabling the team in the field: service policies, warranty management, technical escalations, and information flow. That prepared me for the next step. In 2003, Tata posted me to Latin America; I was based in Ecuador and managed Ecuador, Colombia, Chile, and Peru as a regional after-sales manager for about a year and a half.

After Latin America, I moved from commercial vehicles to the passenger car division. We were exporting Safaris and Sierras to Europe at the time, and I was based in Spain from 2004 to 2007. Spain was then our largest passenger car market. Across those three years, we sold a few thousand vehicles—mostly Tata Sierra, Tata Safari, Indica, Indigo and Pickups (the older generation, not the present one). Spain taught me three things: European customer expectations are precise; dealer standards must be consistent day after day; and after-sales must close gaps quickly instead of allowing them to widen.

AutoPulse Team: That's a big chapter. And then you went to Thailand for what became a greenfield moment for Tata. What did that require from you and your team?

Murugan: Thailand was a greenfield project centred on pickups. I joined the founding team; we located the assembler and formed a JV, set up assembly operations, built the distribution network, and I headed after-sales for the project. We started the project in 2007, and by 2008, we were assembling and selling vehicles. Over six years, we sold a significant volume of Pickups.

The key was differentiation. At that time, nobody in the Thai pickup segment offered a dedicated CNG powertrain. We decided to be the first. It wasn't an easy call because the default instinct in a pickup country is diesel. But if you enter a market where Japanese brands hold around 90%+ market share, not easy to compete with Toyota/Isuzu, who were market leaders. You need a wedge-a reason to exist for a specific, economically rational customer.

AutoPulse Team: How did you gain confidence that CNG would be the right wedge for Thailand?

Murugan: We looked hard at the scale. Thailand used to sell about 550,000 pickups domestically per year and exports a similar number-so 1.1 to 1.2 million pickups are produced annually. Even capturing 5,000-6,000 units is transformative for any international business portfolio. We initially tested diesel pickups for a year and started selling a few units, but the game was not easy. We changed our strategy to get into the new & niche segment with a strong petrol engine in Tata's portfolio, so we engineered a dedicated CNG variant and pivoted.

The operating cost of CNG was about half that of diesel. Fleet customers did the math and immediately saw the upside. After we launched CNG, we moved ahead with good volume month on month. That was product-market fit. It reminded me that discipline in research, courage in positioning, and speed in execution must show up together; if one is missing, the story doesn't change.

AutoPulse Team: And after that breakthrough, you moved back to India to lead SCV and pickups nationally. How did that role differ from the greenfield experience?

Murugan: From 2013 to 2016, I was National Head for Small Commercial Vehicles (SCV) and Pickups. We launched new SCV variants, including the Ace Mega, and I worked upstream with R&D, marketing, and field teams on design inputs, validation, and rollout. In India, SCV's success is built in tier-2 and tier-3 markets. Because of that, we invested heavily in training. We ran Gurukul programs for roadside mechanics and small garage owners to familiarise them with new models. We would go state by state, into smaller towns, and run hands-on learning so the local ecosystem gained confidence in the vehicle.

When the local mechanic-the person an operator trusts-is comfortable with the platform, customers buy with confidence. Later, you saw the Intra series-V10, V20, V30, V50-arrive; an enriching experience working with design and validation upstream. Watching those variants succeed in the field was an extremely satisfying loop to close.

Managing Across Cultures and Markets

AutoPulse Team: Let's talk about leadership across regions. You've led teams in India, Africa, Latin America, Europe, and Southeast Asia. What shifts when you cross borders, and what stays constant?

Murugan: Culture is non-negotiable. If you walk in with a fixed mental model, the country will reject you without saying a word. In Latin America and Spain, language was my first hurdle. I learned basic Spanish quickly; it changed the tone of conversations, increased support, and opened access to more candid information. People are more generous with their help when they feel you are willing to meet them halfway.

Second, I've learned to build an informal peer forum quickly. In any new country, I would form a small group of 10–15 automotive distributor after-sales leads. We met monthly for two to three hours, not to trade secrets, but to discuss happenings in the industry, how launches were staged, what finance models were working, and where the pressure points were in service and parts. That cadence gives you a signal through the noise and allows you to respond quickly when your OEM or your leadership wants ground truth.

And yes, my leadership style has evolved. At the OEM, you do a lot of coaching and support—you could say you “preach” best practices. At the distributor, you execute. You don't tell someone else what to do; you do it, end to end. That creates a different ownership mindset. You start seeing warranty policy, technician productivity, dealer profitability, and customer cost of ownership as one system rather than separate metrics.

AutoPulse Team: Speaking of ownership, what would you call a defining professional win kind that still makes you smile?

Murugan: Thailand's CNG pivot. It's one thing to say “differentiate,” it's another to do it in a 95% Japanese-dominated pickup market. We answered the first question—“Who is Tata? What is Tata?”—by not being a follower of diesel. We offered a CNG alternative whose operating economics customers could instantly validate. Watching that as the research and bet were sound. It was rewarding for the whole team.

Africa: Growing Deeper, Not Wider

AutoPulse Team: Let's turn to your current world. You left Tata Motors in 2016 and joined Tata International, first in Tanzania, then added Uganda, and now you're based out of Dubai, heading after-sales across 12 African countries. What are your priorities, and how do you see “After-Sales 2.0” for the region?

Murugan: We prioritise to grow deeper, not wider. We're present in 12 countries. In some -Zambia is a good example - we've been present for nearly 50 years. But being present in a country is not the same as being present in every segment that matters. Zambia is a mining economy; that means heavy tippers and long-haul prime movers are critical. We should be stronger in the long haul.

Across Africa, passenger movement is a huge opportunity because rail is limited. There's real growth in luxury and inter-city/cross-border buses. We are stronger today in city/suburban buses (30/40/50-seater ranges). After-Sales 2.0 means deepening in those under-penetrated segments—long-haul heavy trucks for mining/logistics, and luxury/inter-city/cross-border buses—so where service and parts matter most.



AutoPulse Team: In many markets, once the warranty expires, customers move toward independent channels. How do you keep your installed base close-without trying to force them?

Murugan: You can't force loyalty; you earn it. It's a service and parts strategy together. On the parts side, anyone can participate—genuine, non-genuine, or imitation. Customers balance price and quality. So within the OEM, you need tiers that keep them with you even if they are stepping down on price. We have Tata Genuine Parts (TGP). What we also needed was a Tier-1 brand below TGP. Recently, Tata Motors introduced Durafit. Different markets may see the label differently, but the point is a tiered OEM offering that prevents post-warranty drift. Japanese, Korean and European OEMs have offered Tier-1 (and sometimes Tier-2) lines for years. With tiers, customers can stay inside the OEM ecosystem at a price–quality point that works for them.

AutoPulse Team: What are your core KPIs today?

Murugan: Four, very simply: Customer Satisfaction, Throughput (vehicle throughput), Uptime, Dealer Profitability (unsustainable networks eventually collapse), and Customer Cost of Ownership. If operating costs feel high, customers find ways to circumvent you. Keeping cost of ownership competitive is a strategic KPI, not just an accounting metric.

AutoPulse Team: And how do you “ring-fence” customers in practical terms?

Murugan: You understand them and then act consistently. Our business is cyclical. In lean years, you survive because the installed base from good years trusts you to keep their fleets healthy. About 20-30% of our sales are key accounts-fleets with 100+ units, or buyers doing 25–50, even 50 vehicles annually. For them, we station teams on-site, run parts counters inside their premises, and offer 24x7 roadside assistance. That is especially vital for essential services-beverages, food, water distribution-where uptime is everything. If help is always there, they don’t feel the need to explore alternatives.

AutoPulse Team: Could you map your current footprint for our listeners?

Murugan: We operate in South Africa, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Malawi, Zambia, Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, Senegal, Ivory Coast, Ghana, and Nigeria-12 countries. All our business is fully African.

AutoPulse Team: What’s the used-versus-new reality across these countries?

Murugan: South Africa is a mature new-vehicle market. Kenya is roughly half new, half used. Much of the rest of Africa’s passenger-car space is used-import dominated-90% used driven by affordability, with 3–4% new, mainly pickups and government purchases. Private retail buyers rarely buy new passenger cars. In commercial vehicles, enterprises buy new ones because of tax and depreciation benefits. Retail CV buyers need good financing to buy new; otherwise, they go for used. That’s the baseline reality.

AutoPulse Team: In such a landscape, what must service providers do differently?

Murugan: Two words-trust and stability. Many companies enter and exit; very few stay. You build trust by embedding yourself in the society: assembling in-country where feasible, creating jobs, and engaging communities. When citizens see that you support the local economy and employ their youth, they feel an ownership stake in your brand. Always a vehicle assembled “here” triggers genuine pride-and that converts into purchase and service loyalty.

AutoPulse Team: Is there an example of community engagement you’re personally proud of?

Murugan: Yes-Skill Pro. We launched it in 2016 (the year I joined Tanzania). Each year, we select about 25 students from technical schools across our markets-two to four per country-and send them to Tata Motors’ Jamshedpur plant for one year of residential learning: half-day in school, half-day in the factory. This program is completely covered by TML & Distributors. On their successful completion & return, we placed them as workshop supervisors. This program attracted the attention of the local government and the community. We ran it every year until COVID-19; by then, around 100 Skill Pro alumni were working across our markets. The program paused during COVID and was relaunched in June 2025. When you walk into a technical institute and people know “Tata employs our graduates,” the trust dividend is immediate.



AutoPulse Team: Who are your main competitors across Africa?

Murugan: In most of our markets, we are market leaders in commercial vehicles and buses in new vehicle sales.

How to Enter a New Market (and Stay There)

AutoPulse Team: Let's draw out a practical playbook for service businesses that want to enter a new geography. What's the simplest, most reliable SOP you've used?

Murugan: I keep it to five steps:

1. Research deeply. Map the brands and segments (SCV, Pickup, LCV, MHCV). Quantify TIV by segment. Study customer behaviour and openness to new brands. This will tell you where your odds are best.
2. Product-market fit. From your range, shortlist the models that suit local needs. Run blind surveys with dealers and customers to compare what you offer vs what they expect. Decide whether you should localise an existing variant or develop a new one.
3. Cross-functional task force with stage gates. Bring sales, marketing, and product development together. Create a project charter, define milestones for each box, and don't move forward until you clear each gate.
4. Test, seed, refine. Test thoroughly, seed a small number of vehicles with dealers and select customers, gather feedback, refine, and launch.
5. Build a network of financiers & service reach early. Customers commit when they know they can service the product close to where they operate. A full dealership might take 12+ months. Start by vetting independent workshops, train and certify them for your brand, upgrade the best ones as sub-dealers, and eventually to dealers under the distributor. This builds density and confidence faster than waiting for perfect infrastructure.

AutoPulse Team: That last step, service reach, feels like the “quiet” enabler of market entry. If the local mechanic knows the platform, sales flow more naturally.

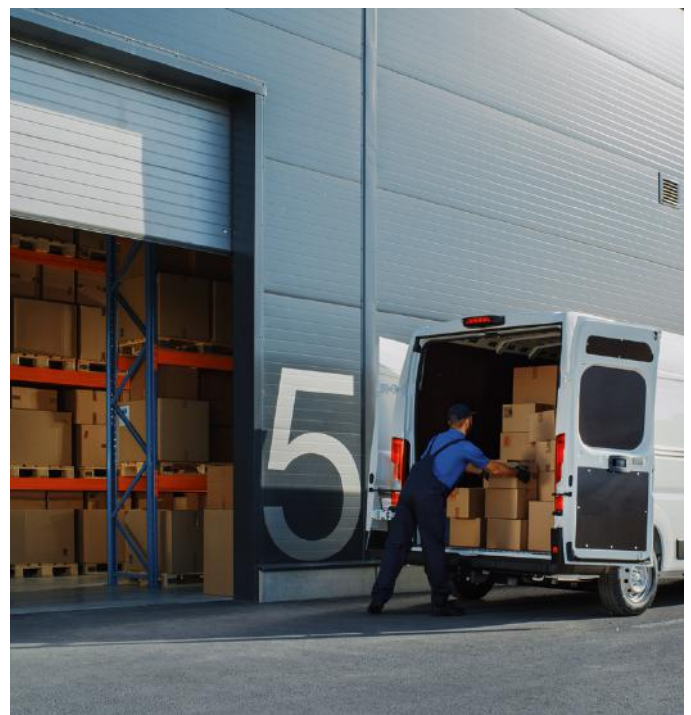
Murugan: Exactly. In SCV's work in India, we saw how Gurukul training unlocked adoption in smaller towns. The same logic extends to any market entry: install confidence in the technicians first, and customers will follow.

Technology. Digital, Data, and the Discipline of Inventory

AutoPulse Team: What does digital transformation look like across your markets today?

Murugan: We are still early on the curve in terms of Technology in many African markets. Much of the vehicle parc has been mechanical; only recently have ECU-based vehicles started growing in numbers in key markets. In Africa, many garages still open job cards with paper and pen. Some organised networks use a basic DMS; big OEMs like Toyota run their own DMS stacks.

When I joined in 2016, we had just moved to a simple DMS. Now we've standardised on SAP across. The first reaction to a system like SAP is often resistance due to maker, checker and approver controls, but once teams adopt it, the benefits are undeniable: you can pull data with a click, you're campaign-ready without hunting for lists, and you can run analytics to make fact-based decisions. Over time, people stop seeing digital as a cost centre and recognise it as an efficiency and revenue enabler.



AutoPulse Team: Let's talk about inventory and parts. Many service businesses tell us that this is where profitability silently erodes. How do you approach it?

Murugan: Inventory can make or break you. If you carry too much, your interest costs rise, and you're exposed to obsolescence and shrinkage. If parts don't move, around 28% of their value can effectively become non-value-adding. So you must focus on inventory turns, planning, and procurement.

At Tata International, we adopted the Theory of Constraints (TOC) for complete Supply Chain Re-Engineering. We centralised procurement for all 12 countries into a Dubai parts hub across the brands we handle-Tata Motors, Tata Daewoo (Korea) and FML, etc. Previously, each country used to source parts directly from each OEM. That meant many parallel transactions and high buffers.

With the hub, countries buy from Dubai Hub, and Dubai Hub buys from OEMs-we decoupled countries from OEMs. The main gain is in buffer stock. Historically, a typical country might hold 4.5-5 months of stock cover. We see the benefits cascade: lower obsolescence, better cash flow, lighter working-capital load, and improved profitability because interest costs drop. We started seeing the impact now, and it remains a continuous optimisation journey.

AutoPulse Team: That's a very clear articulation: TOC, centralisation, and buffer discipline. And it aligns with your earlier theme-do the unglamorous fundamentals very well and the visible wins follow.

Murugan: Exactly. Most "overnight" breakthroughs are years of fundamentals compounding. The years of research, the powertrain conversion, the service readiness, the early dealers who believed, and the mechanics we prepped- it was pure discipline and unwavering support from everyone involved. The same applies to inventory. If your parts strategy isn't tight, every other KPI will eventually suffer.

Legacy: What Comes from People Goes Back to People

AutoPulse Team: A final question, on a personal note. What legacy do you hope to leave for your teams, your industry, and the next generation of after-sales leaders?

Murugan: I've spent nearly my entire career shaped by Tata values. The legacy, to me, is simple and best to follow as told by the late Mr Ratan Tata: what comes from the people must go back to the people. Whatever we do-sales, service, training, supply chain-should support the community around us. That means building skill, creating jobs, strengthening institutions, and earning trust by showing up consistently. If, at the end of our efforts, people are stronger and the ecosystem is healthier, then we've done it right. That's what I hope the next generation carries forward.

AutoPulse Team: Thank you, Mr. Murugan. This has been a masterclass in how to build trust, scale capability, and turn fundamentals into lasting competitive advantage across continents and cycles.

We appreciate your time and the generosity of your insights.

Murugan: Thank you, I appreciate this. It was great thinking back and recollecting some of my fondest business-building memories. Thank you for this once again.



DRIVING TOWARD DIGITAL LEADERSHIP IN AUTOMOTIVE AFTERSALES.



DHANESH SEN

General Manager-
Aftersales (Chinese
brands), Alghanim
Industries.

Dhanesh Sen recently stepped into a pivotal role as General Manager – Aftersales (Chinese Brands) at Alghanim Industries, bringing with him proven expertise in orchestrating digital-first aftersales ecosystems. Previously, as Group Operations Manager, he united brands like BestDrive, YallaTyre.com, and Arroyo Tires under one cohesive operations strategy. Armed with an Executive MBA and seasoned in scaling operations across digital and physical platforms, Dhanesh combines strategic vision with executional precision to elevate aftersales performance and customer experience.

AutoPulse Team: Dhanesh, thank you for agreeing to this deep-dive interview. You lead operations that touch all corners of automotive aftersales-from traditional workshops to cutting-edge digital platforms. How did your journey in auto service begin, and how has it prepared you for your leadership role today?

Dhanesh Sen: Thank you for the introduction. My journey into automotive has been unconventional. I began my career in finance, a preferred choice for any Chartered Accountant, working at Alghanim Industries in Kuwait. Through finance, I helped businesses understand their financial numbers, build effective strategies, and make informed decisions, particularly in the automotive aftersales sector.

While that gave me clarity on what drives performance, I soon realised that change only happens on the ground. A decade ago, I shifted to operations at Alghanim to bridge planning with execution, connecting finance, marketing, technical, and customer care into one seamless flow. Pursuing an Executive MBA further reinforced this 360-degree approach.

In between, I spent the last three years in the UAE with AMS Automotive Group, leading BestDrive, YallaTyre.com, and Arroyo Tires brands that deepened my belief that customer trust and digitalisation are the real engines of competitiveness.

Today, I joined back as General Manager – Aftersales (Chinese Brands) at Alghanim. I bring that experience to some of the most exciting manufacturers redefining mobility, where cars are becoming smarter, more connected, and increasingly software-driven.

AutoPulse Highlights

As of mid-2025, China has overtaken Japan as the world's biggest exporter of vehicles-spurred by its vast electric vehicle (EV) production and dominance in the battery supply chain

AutoPulse Team: Let's talk about that. Chinese brands have been reshaping the global automotive landscape. How do you see them changing the game in Kuwait and the region?

Dhanesh Sen: Chinese brands are no longer followers-they are leading in many areas. They are pushing aggressively into EVs, PHEVs, autonomous driving, ADAS (Advanced Driver Assistance Systems), and smart in-car ecosystems. These vehicles are more computers than cars.

That shift means aftersales must evolve as well. It's not just about mechanical skill anymore-it's about software diagnostics and data-driven servicing. We are building teams who can bridge both worlds: mechanical precision and digital fluency.

And importantly, these brands resonate with Gen Z customers. This generation values paperless processes, app-based interactions, and eco-conscious practices. They want a seamless, digital-first service experience, and we're structuring our aftersales to deliver just that.

AutoPulse Team: You mentioned the talent shift. How are you ensuring your teams are prepared for this future of software-driven vehicles?

Dhanesh Sen: Talent is everything. In the past, the best technician was the one who could strip down an engine the fastest. Tomorrow, the best technician will be the one who can decode a fault in the ADAS system, update firmware, or troubleshoot an autonomous driving module.

We're creating an ecosystem of continuous learning-digital training libraries, manufacturer-led certification, and cross-training between mechanical and software disciplines. I also believe in empowering technicians to think like knowledge workers-problem-solvers who document, share, and improve processes.

After-sales success will be determined by how quickly teams can adapt to new technologies. At Alghanim, we are building that adaptability into the DNA of our workforce.

AutoPulse Team: The industry is rapidly changing, especially with EVs, PHEVs, and in-car technology. How is your group preparing for tomorrow, and what will matter most?

Dhanesh Sen: EVs are a big part of the story, but not the only one. The new challenge is the rise of “micro-tech:” ADAS features, advanced diagnostics, infotainment, onboard computers, and constant software updates-even in budget models.

We’re preparing by:

Building up EV “readiness”-special tools, safety training, and forming close partnerships with brands to stay ahead of new systems.

Investing in diagnostic equipment and software licenses for all key brands and technologies.

Developing a technical knowledge “hub”-so any technician can get instant help when they face a new system or fault code.

Running beta-tests of new protocols: As soon as a partner or OEM releases updates, we’re trialling processes, documenting changes, and rolling out playbooks network-wide.

The most important skill for the future will be learning agility-being able to adopt and master new tech quickly. We’re building a team of innovators, not just implementers.

AutoPulse Team: At YallaTyre, you championed tools like YallaScan for AI-driven tire checks. What role does technology play in your vision for Chinese brands’ after-sales in Kuwait?

Dhanesh Sen: Technology is the backbone to enhance customer experience. Yes, we introduced AI-driven tools like YallaScan. Most people can’t tell when their tires need replacing, so we built a web-based scanner. Customers have to scan the tire through their mobile phone, and the system tells them the tire’s health. This eliminates, for the first time, that uncomfortable pressure of walking into a random shop and being forced to trust someone blindly. It’s about returning power and peace of mind to the customer.

We’re moving toward connected workshops where every vehicle communicates directly with our systems, providing real-time health reports, predictive maintenance alerts, and over-the-air updates seamlessly integrated into the service journey. Customers will no longer wait for breakdowns-they’ll be proactively notified, scheduled, and supported.

Transparency remains key. Imagine a customer seeing live updates on their phone during a service, or storing their entire vehicle history, digitally accessible forever. That’s the direction we’re building.

AutoPulse Team: What operational challenges come with managing this kind of ecosystem, particularly with both digital and physical service points?

Dhanesh Sen: It’s a constant balancing act. For example, one key challenge is customer education. Many customers are new to digital aftersales, so we have to invest in onboarding-making the website user-friendly and training our support teams to guide people through, whether they are experts or completely new to e-commerce for auto needs.

In physical service centres, the challenge is standardisation, making sure that the service experience across different branches matches what you’d get in the Head branch. This is where centralised SOPs (Standard Operating Procedures) and regular training, both in-person and online, become critical.

Technological integration is another ongoing effort. Our systems must talk to each other-inventory, bookings, customer history-so we can seamlessly serve customers, regardless of how they interact with us. This is why we invest deeply in CRM (Customer Relationship Management) platforms and digital dashboards.

Lastly, technician upskilling and process documentation are essential. Our inventory and customer care solutions are only as good as the team using them, so we focus on relentless training and developing a culture where the right process matters as much as the final outcome.

AutoPulse Team: Let's go deeper into innovation. Could you describe your vision for the next generation of automotive aftersales business?

Dhanesh Sen: For me, for any after-sales business, the next generation is best described as a personal digital assistant for every car owner. We want our platform and network to act as a full-service advisor. The vision is for each user to have a smart agent connected to their vehicle's telemetry, capable of predicting needs, scheduling future maintenance, and providing full transparency for every job. Practically, this means:

Your phone reminds you of maintenance, wear, and upcoming costs, based on real mileage and driving behaviour. When it's time for service, you can instantly check the real-time availability of an appointment, book remotely, and track your vehicle's work in progress (just like a delivery tracker).

During service, you could watch a live feed from the workshop, making the process totally transparent.

For products, an AI-powered chatbot can help choose the best tire or battery just by knowing your car model, your driving style, and your budget. No more technical confusion.



We also want to bring digital practices to physical workshops-giving every customer the option to interact live with their service advisor, view reports, and store their vehicle's history in one place, forever accessible.

This isn't just about gadgets. It's about making aftersales worry-free and closing the "distrust gap" that's historically plagued the industry.



(Dhanesh with his Daughter and Wife)

AutoPulse Team: What features do you believe should be standard for all next-generation workshops?

Dhanesh Sen: I have a list, which we could build into all outlets:

1. **Agentic automation:** Not just reminders, but AI that can genuinely predict and manage tasks for users and staff.
2. **Full digital customer onboarding:** Let customers do everything-scheduling, payments, tracking-online.
3. **Connected equipment:** IoT-enabled diagnostics, lifts, and tools for instant data (and faster repairs).
4. **AI-powered inventory:** Automatic restocking and forecasting for zero out-of-stock issues.
5. **Technician digital manuals:** In-app guidance that's instantly updated, so staff are always working from the latest, most accurate procedure.
6. **Live customer transparency:** Video feeds, digital service histories, clear pricing, and real-time status updates.
7. **Sustainability tracking:** Digital logging of parts recycling and green initiatives, giving customers a visible record of their positive impact.

These features, together, make the experience smarter, faster, safer, and-most importantly trustworthy.

AutoPulse Team: Customer experience and trust come up again and again in your approach. How do you practically build trust with customers, especially in such a fragmented market?

Dhanesh Sen: Trust is earned daily, not just through marketing but through consistent, clear action. We do this by:

1. **Radical transparency:** Every step is visible; customers know what was done, why, and how much it cost-there are no surprises.
2. **Reliable service:** We publish and track our “first-time fix” and “on-time completion” rates, holding ourselves accountable.
3. **Proactive communication:** We don’t wait for complaints; customers get updates before problems become frustrations.
4. **Feedback-driven improvement:** Every job is followed by a feedback request, and every major negative comment results in outreach and process review.
5. **Value, not just price:** We educate our customers-using simple content-on how to check their own tires, compare products, and avoid rip-offs. This empowers rather than pressures them.

Our NPS (Net Promoter Score) and repeat customer rate are reported widely within the team-everyone is responsible. We celebrate high scores, but we look hardest at the cases where trust wavered and learn from them.

AutoPulse Team: What major industry trend do you think others are neglecting, to their own risk?

Dhanesh Sen: People underestimate the importance of CRM-not just as a customer database, but as a growth engine. Most treat it as an administrative tool, but in fact, the CRM, when embedded with AI and data analytics, is the system that allows you to personalise every touch, upsell, solve complaints faster, and grow share of wallet.

If workshops and aftermarket brands treat CRM as the backbone-linking parts, service, and sales-they’ll unlock new efficiency, reduce leakage, and create fans, not just “customers.”

AutoPulse Team: Finally, for those leading traditional service centres or aspiring to modernise, what practical steps would you recommend for bridging the gap to the next era?

Dhanesh Sen: Start with your core-map your customer journey honestly. Where do people get confused, wait too long, or end up unhappy? Use even simple digital tools (online booking, WhatsApp status, automated texts) to fix these first.

Next, invest in your people-train, empower, and reward them for new skills.

Digitise your service histories and parts orders.

Finally, realise that customers will expect more convenience every year: transparency, customisation, and support from their pocket-whether in person or online.

Don’t be afraid of small pilots: test a digital advisor, try live-streaming, introduce a loyalty program, or show finished service videos to customers. Each step moves you closer to becoming a digital leader.



AutoPulse Team: Dhanesh, thank you. Your journey from digital pioneer at YallaTyre to leading the future of Chinese brands in Kuwait shows exactly how after-sales can transform into a driver of innovation and trust.

Dhanesh Sen: Thank you. For me, it’s simple-whether in Dubai, Kuwait, or anywhere, the goal is the same: take away the worry of car ownership and replace it with confidence, transparency, and delight. That’s what keeps me motivated.

THE EVOLUTION OF MOBILITY AND AFTER-SALES IN AFRICA.



DR PETER

General Manager
Parts & Service Toyota,
CFAO Group, Africa

Dr. Peter Kungeke is a seasoned automotive expert and corporate entrepreneur with more than 25 years of experience shaping aftersales excellence across Sub-Saharan Africa. Currently serving as the General Manager-Automotive at Toyota by CFAO, he blends deep technical expertise with strategic leadership, driving profitability, customer experience, and operational transformation. With a PhD in Business Administration and an entrepreneurial mindset, Dr. Kungeke has played pivotal roles in Toyota Tsusho Africa and regional dealer networks, building sustainable growth across cultures and markets.

AutoPulse Team: Dr. Peter, thank you so much for joining us today. It's a privilege to have you on the AutoPulse platform. You've become a respected voice in the industry, not just in Nigeria but across West and Sub-Saharan Africa. To begin, I'd love to take our audience back to the start. Could you share what first brought you into the automotive sector, and what made you stay?

Dr. Peter: Thank you very much, and it's an honour to have this discussion. My entry into the automotive industry was through an apprenticeship program in 1996. I had a natural appetite for cars from a young age and the opportunity to enter the automotive industry was an offer I grabbed with both hands. I later complemented my engineering strength with business knowledge, which eventually changed the way I see the automotive industry.

I realised very quickly that this industry is not just about products or distribution. It's a critical enabler for everything else-agriculture, logistics, public transport, energy, and healthcare supply chains. It made me understand that mobility is really a development tool. Once I saw that, the industry became deeply meaningful to me. I didn't want to treat it as a commercial transaction. I wanted to understand how to structure it in a more long-term, system-based way.

AutoPulse Team: That's incredibly refreshing. Most people talk about vehicles purely in terms of units, margins or volumes. You're actually framing it as a development vehicle, literally and figuratively. So maybe let's build on that. When you joined CFAO, what kind of organisation did you find? What did it feel like from the inside?

Dr. Peter: When I joined, CFAO (which of course carry the Toyota heritage in our region) already had tremendous operational and strategic strength. The supply chains were solid, the workshops were disciplined. But it was still very linear. What I mean by that is: we sold a vehicle, then we serviced it, then we supplied parts. Three activities, more or less in a line, are boring, right? If you look at the market now, customers are not looking for linear delivery-they're looking for ecosystems.

As an example: a large fleet doesn't only want a Hilux; they want an uptime guarantee, quick parts access, access to financing, predictive maintenance alerts, and potentially telemetry services. So my role over the years has gradually moved from operational execution into ecosystem design. When you move to ecosystem thinking, you realise that you have to connect after-sales, finance, training, policy engagement and data analytics under the same roof. That's what we're working towards.

AutoPulse Team: It's fascinating that you call it "ecosystem design," because that also means thinking much more deeply about the gaps. And I'd love to hear your unfiltered view on that. When you look at the African mobility landscape today, what would you say are the biggest capability gaps we still have to address?

Dr. Peter: I would put two things on the table immediately: one is skills, and the other is data.

On the skills side, the entire vehicle architecture has changed. A modern vehicle today has multiple electronic control units, software-driven diagnostic modules, telematics modules, and increasingly electrified components-even in non-EV vehicles. But we still train people primarily as mechanical technicians. They are extremely good with mechanical systems, but we have a very clear gap in mechatronics and diagnostics. So we absolutely have to build a new kind of technical competence-otherwise the vehicles may enter the country, but we won't be able to support them in the field.

The second gap is data visibility and usage. We service thousands of vehicles every month. The data is there: part failures, usage behaviour, repeat repairs. But the reality is that this data often remains in separate silos. It does not always feed into product strategy or into service strategy. In our next phase, CFAO is moving towards a model where we don't just collect the data-we actually convert it into insight. My view is that a modern mobility organisation must be an intelligence company, not just a physical distribution network.

AutoPulse Team: That leads me to a line of yours that really resonated with the community. You once said, “After-sales is the largest R&D lab in Africa.” Can you unpack that a little bit for our audience?

Dr. Peter: Yes, I say it very deliberately and not as a metaphor. In many parts of the world, OEMs have formal R&D centres with test benches and simulation labs. In Africa, we sometimes don’t have those formal R&D structures at scale. But every time a vehicle comes in for service, or a part fails in the field, or a customer calls and says “this is not working as expected”-that is real-world R&D data. It’s the product being tested in actual operating conditions. The only difference is that the people doing the testing are technicians, not engineers in a lab coat. So if we discipline ourselves to capture that, and feed it back to the product teams and the OEMs, then we’ve created a continuous R&D system-but one that is born in Africa and reflects African conditions. So I’m quite serious when I say that after-sales is our R&D centre. We should treat it as such.

AutoPulse Team: That also brings us to the question of localisation versus copy-paste. There’s a sentence of yours that a lot of people have quoted at events: “Africa is not a copy-paste market.” What do you mean by that in practice?

Dr. Peter: The danger is that many international players arrive with a template that worked in another region and assume it will work here the same way. And initially, it does work, because the first 6–12 months are full of “easy” wins. But over time, the friction becomes visible. Africa is not one country. It is more than 50 different markets with very different logistical behaviours, policy frameworks, import regimes, tax structures, and even power stability. In many African markets, you have to build your workshop infrastructure to include power redundancy, e.g. generator or solar, otherwise every time power goes down, your entire after-sales operation shuts down for three hours or more, no matter how good your people are.

That’s just one example. So we always say: yes, use international best practice, but then invest the time to recalibrate it to local operating reality ‘Country Factor’. The trick is to adapt without diluting the standard.

AutoPulse Team: Completely agreed. If you look ahead now, what does CFAO 2.0 look like in your mind? What are the core shifts you want to drive over the next 5 to 10 years?

Dr. Peter: CFAO 2.0 will be shaped by three strategic moves.

First, digital integration of the customer journey. Whether it is real-time booking, digital maintenance history, telematics-based diagnostics, or even simple QR-based parts verification, functions must be digitally connected and visible to the customer.

We want customers to experience CFAO as a mobility operating system, not a series of separate touch points.

Second, industrial depth. At the moment, we import and distribute. That is important, and we do it well and exceptionally, but we have to go deeper. That means assembly, local content, and eventually component manufacturing, where it makes sense. If Africa does not build industrial depth, we will remain a consumption market.

Our goal is for CFAO to participate in building the industrial backbone as well.

Third, we want to shift toward network-as-a-service. Today, we run workshops primarily for CFAO customers. But what if those workshops, those technician capabilities, and those diagnostic tools became an infrastructure layer that other small service providers could plug into?

Imagine an independent garage using CFAO’s platform to access genuine parts, technical updates or even booking slots. Then CFAO becomes part of the continent’s mobility infrastructure. That is the long-term horizon.

AutoPulse Team: There's a line you said recently that went viral in our community: "If we don't organise the aftermarket, someone else will organise it for us." Can you share what you meant by that?

Dr. Peter: Absolutely. A market is never empty. If we, as formal players, don't build structure-standards, certification, traceability, integration-then someone else will step into that vacuum. And sometimes that "someone else" is not a positive force. It could be counterfeit importers, fragmented informal distributors, or even platforms that don't care about safety or quality. The point is: nature hates a vacuum. So if we want a safe and competitive aftermarket, we must organise it. Not by excluding people, but by including them in a structured way. That is the responsibility of formal actors.

AutoPulse Team: Which brings us naturally to the talent question. From everything you've said so far, skills are almost the foundation of everything else. Where will the next generation of technicians actually come from, and how do we bring them into the value chain?

Dr. Peter: We need two parallel systems. The first is upgrading the formal institutions, so that they teach the right competencies-diagnostics, high-voltage safety, and data interfaces. We cannot afford curricula that are stuck in 1995. The second, equally important, is a platform for the informal sector. I personally believe we should integrate the informal ecosystem rather than replace it. Many of the most talented technicians in Africa are currently outside the formal value chain.

What they need is access to micro-training, certification pathways, shared tools, and updated service data. If CFAO and the OEMs can provide that, those independent technicians become an extension of the formal network. That is how we scale capability at the continental level.

AutoPulse Team: I want to bring in electric and alternative drivetrains for a moment. Where do you personally believe we stand in Africa today? Is the market still exploratory, or are we already in the adoption phase?

Dr. Peter: We are definitely moving from exploration into adoption. But it is important not to oversimplify the narrative. In Africa, it's not a binary question of "EV or no EV." The real question is, "Which drivetrain creates value for which use case?" In some segments, full EVs will make sense. In others, hybrid solutions might be the better first step. In some cases, CNG might be the most pragmatic way to reduce operating costs. What makes me optimistic is that the conversation is becoming much more use-case driven. Three or four years ago, people were still asking whether it's worth "going electric." Now they are asking much more pragmatic questions like: "Which segment would directly benefit from an electric drivetrain in year one?" That's a much healthier conversation. It shows that the market is moving from ideology to practicality decision-making

AutoPulse Team: As that happens, where does the after-sales side of the industry need to evolve the most?

Dr. Peter: There are two areas. One is safety and infrastructure for high-voltage systems. You simply cannot handle an EV the way you handle a diesel drivetrain. The equipment is different, the diagnostic interfaces are different, technician safety procedures are different. The second is the data interface. EVs talk to the OEM in a much more direct and regular way than an internal combustion engine vehicle. So if your workshop or your network is not prepared to absorb that real-time data, then you lose all the benefits of electrification. In other words, EVs don't just change the powertrain; they also change the information architecture of the workshop.



AutoPulse Team: That's such an overlooked point. If the vehicle becomes digital but the workshop remains analogue, nothing really changes. Let me ask a very practical question now. If you walk into a small independent workshop in Lagos, and you could give the owner one single piece of advice to remain relevant for the next decade-what would that advice be?

Dr. Peter: One piece of advice would be: start capturing information now. It doesn't have to be complicated. But you need to know which vehicle you serviced, what part you installed, and when you did it-and have that saved in a way that can be accessed later. Because very soon, OEMs and platforms will only integrate with partners who have some data visibility. If you have that, you're inside the ecosystem. If you don't, you're outside of it. It's as simple as that.

AutoPulse Highlights

Community Initiative by GaragePulse



Chinese EVs are powering Africa's mobility revolution in unexpected ways. Unlike other regions focusing primarily on cars, Africa is embracing the full spectrum of electric mobility - from bicycles and scooters to tricycles, tractors, and full-sized buses.

AutoPulse Team: You've led very diverse teams in different countries and cultures. Has your leadership style changed over the years?

Dr. Peter: Yes, very much so. Earlier in my career, I tried to solve problems directly-and in some situations, that was appropriate. But as the organisation becomes more complex, the only sustainable way to operate is to build capability in others, build leaders. So I shifted my role from "problem solver" to "context provider." My job now is to make sure people understand why we are doing something, how it fits into the bigger ecosystem, and then they can make decisions locally. One person can only make a limited number of decisions. But if many people have the right context, the organisation becomes far more capable.

AutoPulse Team: It's a very intentional approach to leadership. Which brings me to my last question. When people look back one day at your tenure at CFAO, what would you personally hope they remember?

Dr. Peter: I hope they will say that we built something that was globally robust and locally rooted.

I hope they will say we didn't treat Africa as a copy of another region, but we also didn't allow it to be isolated from global standards. We built something that is both African in its design and world-class in its execution. If people say that, then that's enough for me.

AutoPulse Team: A powerful way to close. Dr. Peter, thank you for your generosity and clarity. You've not only shared operational wisdom, but you've also offered a different mental model for the industry-one where after-sales becomes R&D, informal becomes integrated, and Africa becomes a reference point instead of a replication market. On behalf of the entire AutoPulse community, thank you for this conversation.

Dr. Peter: Thank you very much. It's been a pleasure, and I truly appreciate the opportunity.



A CANDID BUSINESS CHAT WITH THE CEO OF SPEEDEE MEXICO



JORGE DIECK IZA

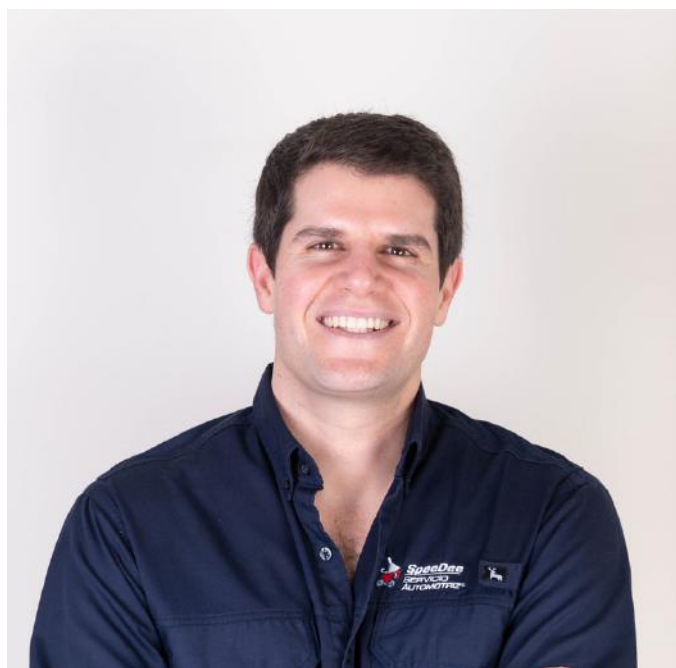
CEO
SPEEDEE,
Mexico

Jorge didn't step into the auto service world because of a lifelong love for cars—he stepped in because of his passion for building businesses. After leading operations at Uber Mexico across 26 cities, he took on the challenge of bringing Speedee to Mexico as Master Franchisee. Today, with 23 locations and a bold digital roadmap, Jorge is blending family legacy with cutting-edge technology to redefine fast, trusted auto care in Mexico.

AutoPulse Host: How did your journey into the auto service industry begin? Was it something you always planned, or did opportunity lead you here in an unexpected way?

Jorge: It might surprise people, but I didn't join the auto service industry because I've always loved cars - I joined because I love building and growing businesses, especially our family's. My father invited me to be part of an exciting project: bringing a well-known U.S. auto service brand to Mexico as its Master Franchisee.

Before that, I was managing operations in 26 cities as Senior Operations Manager at Uber Mexico. Making the leap into a completely different industry wasn't something I had planned, but it's been one of the best decisions I've made. Today, I'm passionate about blending technology with the traditions of this beautiful industry, and I've grown deeply attached to both the auto service world and our beloved brand, SpeedDee.



AutoPulse Host: Tell us about your current auto service business. How does your network look today, and what are the services and focus areas that really define the way you operate?

Jorge: SpeedDee Mexico currently operates 23 locations across the country - 4 run directly by us as the Master Franchisee, and 19 operated by our outstanding franchise partners.

We're best known for our Total Trust Guarantee and for offering a wide range of services, from minor preventive maintenance to major services in select locations. Our most common offerings include oil changes, tune-ups, brake jobs, suspension work, component replacements, and tire sales and services.

One of our ongoing priorities is to standardize our pricing structure nationwide. It's a challenge - costs for parts, labor, and rent can vary greatly between regions - but with the right mix of technology, strategy, and teamwork, we're making steady progress.

Like many in the industry, we've faced resistance to change, especially when introducing new technology and processes. In November 2024, we launched our SpeedDee Digital Strategy Roadmap, built on three pillars: Strategy, People, and Technology.

We believe:

- You can't succeed without People to embrace and drive the change.
- You can't scale without the right Technology.
- You can't achieve total integration without a clear Strategy.

Our digital transformation efforts are already showing results. We're enhancing customer acquisition through SEO and targeted Google and Facebook campaigns, improving our digital storefront with a better web experience, and rolling out SpeedBot - an AI-powered WhatsApp chatbot designed to convert inquiries into visits. Our goal is to connect every customer's experience to a loyalty program and automated follow-up system, all while strengthening our Google My Business presence and growing our base of five-star reviews.

Looking ahead to late 2025 and into 2026, our focus will be on territory expansion (especially in Northern Mexico), process specialization and training, and full implementation of our digital strategy - all to deliver a consistent, high-quality SpeedDee experience nationwide.

Next-Gen Service Centre (AutoService2.0)

AutoPulse Host: If you imagine your brand's Version 2.0 - the next evolution of what you're building - what would that look like? How do you see it being different from today, and what kind of roadmap would take you there?

Jorge: SpeedDee 2.0 will be the perfect blend of our trusted, human touch with the power of smart technology. We'll still be the neighbourhood auto service experts our customers know, but we'll deliver that experience faster, smarter, and more consistently across every location in Mexico.

Today, we provide preventive and corrective maintenance in 23 stores, with our Total Trust Guarantee and a growing franchise network.

We've already begun standardising pricing, rolling out our Digital Strategy Roadmap, and using tools like SpeedBot, SEO campaigns, and Google My Business to strengthen our reach.

Version 2.0 will mean:

- **A fully integrated customer journey** – from online booking to AI-powered follow-ups, loyalty rewards, and personalised maintenance reminders.
- **Standardised service excellence** – the same price, speed, and quality whether you're in Monterrey, Querétaro, or Merida.
- **Real-time operational dashboards** – so every franchisee knows exactly how their store is performing, and customers know exactly what's happening with their car.
- **SpeedDee University 2.0** – an upgraded training platform blending in-person expertise with gamified online learning to keep our teams sharp and engaged.

The roadmap to get there:

1. **People:** Intensive training and change management to bring every franchisee and team member on board.
2. **Technology:** Connect POS, CRM, loyalty, and operations into one platform for full visibility.
3. **Strategy:** Phased rollouts starting with top-performing locations, then scaling nationwide.
4. **Culture:** Make innovation a core value so change is expected, not feared.

We're not just looking to be better - SpeedDee 2.0 will redefine what "fast, trusted, and technology-driven" means for auto service in Mexico.

If SpeedDee 1.0 is the fast, trusted neighborhood auto service, SpeedDee 2.0 will be a frictionless mobility partner for every driver in Mexico. We won't just fix cars - we'll own the customer's peace of mind.

The vision:

1. **Subscription Car Care** – Customers pay a flat monthly fee that covers all preventive maintenance, inspections, and discounts on repairs. No surprises, no budgeting headaches - just predictable car care.
2. **Mobile SpeedDee Vans** – Our service comes to you: at home, at the office, or even while you're at the gym. Oil changes, inspections, and tire services without stepping into a shop.
3. **SpeedDee SmartPass** – A digital pass linked to your license plate and our AI. Pull in, we scan your plate, bring up your history instantly, and get to work without filling out a single form.
4. **SpeedDee Partner Hubs** – Pop-up service bays inside shopping centers, office complexes, and gas stations, so you can get maintenance done while you shop or work.
5. **A Leading Fleet Program** – Build the leading nationwide maintenance program for companies and organizations with more than 50 vehicles in their fleet.
6. **SpeedDee DriveScore** – Gamify maintenance: customers earn points for on-time services, safety checks, and eco-friendly practices, redeemable for discounts or partner perks.

The unorthodox roadmap:

1. Pilot subscription and mobile van programs in one city by 2026, then scale if adoption exceeds 50% in the first year.
2. Negotiate with malls and gas stations for “SpeedDee bays” in high-traffic locations.
3. Implement a Fleet Hub, fully integrated with shops and customers for a fast-paced authorization flow and administrative follow-up.
4. Integrate every touchpoint - store, mobile, pop-up - into a SpeedBot where customers manage their entire car care journey through Whatsapp with their number.

Why this is bold: Most auto service brands focus on getting customers to come to them. SpeedDee 2.0 will go to the customer, live on their phone, and make car maintenance so easy that drivers barely think about it. That’s how you turn a service business into a lifestyle brand.

AutoPulse Host: When you think about the future of auto service centres - the so-called next-gen workshops - how do you imagine them evolving? In your view, what will it take for today’s service centres to become tomorrow’s leaders? Do you feel ready for the big shifts coming in the next few years, whether it’s EVs, AI, or rising customer expectations?

And if you had to boil it down, what are the absolute must-have features every next-gen workshop should offer, and how can customer experience become the real driver of that future?



Jorge: The service centre of the future will be a hybrid of technology, efficiency, and human connection. Cars are changing, customer expectations are evolving even faster, and workshops need to transform from “repair shops” into mobility solution hubs.

Tomorrow’s leaders will be the ones who:

1. **Adopt technology early** – integrating AI diagnostics, connected vehicle data, and digital customer communication into daily operations.
2. **Standardize service quality** – whether you visit in Monterrey or Mérida, you get the same price transparency, turnaround time, and customer care.
3. **Offer flexibility** – mobile service units, pick-up & drop-off, and extended hours to fit into customers’ lifestyles.

Yes - we’re ready for the changes coming. At SpeedDee Mexico, our Digital Strategy Roadmap is already aligning our people, technology, and strategy to handle EV/hybrid maintenance, automation in scheduling and follow-ups, and data-driven decision-making across all locations.

Key features of a next-gen workshop:

1. Smart bays with real-time job tracking visible to both staff and customers.
2. Integrated CRM linking every service to customer history, loyalty rewards, and follow-up reminders.
3. Fleet Focus – ready to tackle pain-points of company operated vehicles without delivering the same consistent experience.
4. Transparent digital estimates customers can approve from their phone before work begins.
5. Customer-first amenities – fast Wi-Fi, comfortable lounges, and live service status updates.

Improving the customer experience isn’t just good service - it’s the business model of the future. Customers will choose the workshop that makes their life easier, keeps them informed, and builds trust at every touchpoint. In the next-gen world, that trust will be the most valuable currency any auto service brand can have.

Industry Trends

AutoPulse Host: Looking at the industry today, what's one trend you believe is still being overlooked but will be critical for long-term success? And how do you see the shift toward electric vehicles reshaping not just the industry, but also your own role and business?

Most Overlooked but Critical Trend:

I believe the most overlooked trend is the integration of customer experience with operational technology. Many in our industry see digital tools only as a way to market or manage operations, but the real opportunity is in connecting the entire journey - from online search to service completion - into a seamless, data-driven loop. Whoever masters that integration will not just win more customers, but keep them for life.

Impact of Electric Vehicles:

The shift toward EVs and hybrids will absolutely reshape the industry in Mexico. While adoption here is slower than in the U.S. or Europe, it's inevitable - and those who wait until the market is "ready" will already be too late.

For Speedee Mexico, it means:

1. Investing now in EV/hybrid training for our technicians.
2. Equipping our stores with the right diagnostic tools and safety equipment.
3. Expanding our service menu to include EV-specific maintenance, battery health checks, and software updates.
4. Educating customers on the realities of EV ownership and maintenance.

That said, we're not overly worried about EVs - because even as the powertrain changes, many of the services we already excel at will still be needed. EVs still require tire care, suspension work, brake services, fluid changes for certain systems, and above all, a trusted service provider to keep them safe and running smoothly.

Our role will evolve from being just a service provider to becoming a trusted advisor on vehicle technology, whether it's combustion, hybrid, or fully electric. We see this transition not as a threat, but as one of the most exciting opportunities to future-proof our brand and grow into new markets.

Collaboration and Growth

AutoPulse Host: Partnerships and teamwork often make or break success in our industry. From your perspective, what's the single most important factor in building strong, lasting partnerships - and how do you carry that same spirit of trust and collaboration into your own teams, especially when the pressure is high?

Jorge: For me, it's all about trust and shared vision. In the auto service industry, partnerships only thrive when both sides are committed to the same long-term goals - whether that's delivering a consistent customer experience, maintaining quality standards, or innovating together. Transparency is key: share the wins, share the challenges, and make sure every partner feels heard and valued. That's how you create relationships that survive the tough days and celebrate the good ones.

Encouraging Teamwork in High-Pressure Environments:

In high-pressure situations - whether it's a busy service day, a national rollout, or solving a customer challenge - clarity and communication are non-negotiable. I focus on three things:

1. Set clear roles and priorities so everyone knows exactly what's expected.
2. Stay visible and approachable as a leader, so the team knows I'm in the trenches with them.
3. Celebrate small wins in the moment to keep morale high even when the workload is intense.

At Speedee Mexico, we also put a lot of effort into building relationships before the pressure hits - through regular calls, training sessions, and strategy meetings with our franchisees and teams. That way, when things get tough, we're not just coworkers trying to coordinate under stress - we're a team that trusts each other and knows how to deliver together.

EFFECTIVE MENTORSHIP IN THE AUTOMOTIVE SECTOR: FROM JUDGMENT TO CONSTRUCTIVE OPINION



PREM ANAND KUMAR NALLASAMY

Business Head,
AutoFix & Service My Car at
Bhawan International Group

With more than two decades of leadership across the GCC automotive sector, Prem Anand Kumar has built a reputation for transforming aftersales businesses into customer-centric, growth engines. Currently leading AutoFix UAE & Service My Car at Bahwan International Group, he specializes in multi-brand workshop operations, service excellence, and digital innovation. From restructuring operations at AG Cars and Renault KSA to driving Balanced Scorecard-based growth at Autotruster, Prem has consistently bridged operational discipline with customer trust - shaping the next era of aftersales in the region.

In today's fast-evolving automotive landscape—where technological advancements, evolving customer expectations, and rapid market shifts are the norm—leadership is no longer defined by technical expertise alone. The ability to mentor and build resilient, high-performing teams has emerged as a crucial differentiator. Yet, one persistent challenge continues to undermine many leadership efforts: the tendency to judge rather than guide.

The Hidden Cost of Judgmental Leadership

In performance-driven environments like workshops, call centres, or logistics departments, it's not uncommon for supervisors or managers to evaluate team members through a lens of judgment. Whether it's a technician missing a diagnosis or a service captain underdelivering on customer experience, judgmental reactions often stem from frustration.

However, such responses can stifle motivation, weaken trust, and discourage open communication.

In my own experience managing cross-functional teams in after-sales and service operations, I've witnessed how some mid-level leaders-perhaps unintentionally- fall into the habit of labelling mistakes instead of investigating their root causes. This approach rarely yields improvement. More often than not, performance issues are the result of systemic factors: miscommunication, unclear processes, or lack of support, not individual incompetence.

Embracing Constructive Opinion: A Leadership Shift

Truly effective leaders understand the power of reframing. Instead of issuing judgments, they offer constructive opinions-grounded in observation, respect, and a desire to support. This subtle but profound shift transforms feedback into a tool for growth rather than a trigger for defensiveness.

Constructive opinion is not about sugarcoating criticism. It is about providing clear, actionable feedback in a way that shows empathy and encourages reflection. When leaders adopt this mindset, they create a culture where feedback is welcomed and learning is continuous.

A Personal Reflection: From Assumption to Impact

mentorship philosophy into practice with one of our lead captains at Service My Car, who supervises 13 logistics captains responsible for vehicle pick-up and delivery. Known for his strict and top-down approach, his interactions with the team often lacked warmth and flexibility. Initially, I too had formed a judgment about his leadership style. But rather than confronting him with criticism, I chose to shift my approach and offer a constructive opinion.

Recently, I had the opportunity to put this. We had an open conversation, grounded in mutual respect and shared purpose. I simply highlighted how a small change in tone and connection could empower the captains under his guidance.

To my satisfaction, he was receptive. Over time, he adjusted his approach and became more supportive of his team. The captains, in turn, began engaging customers more positively-something that quickly reflected in our customer feedback. We started receiving a surge in positive Google reviews that specifically mentioned the captains' courtesy, communication, and professionalism.

This experience reinforced my belief that effective mentorship starts with intentional energy and clarity of intent. As Albert Einstein famously said, "Everything is energy and that's all there is to it... Match the frequency of the reality you want and you cannot help but get that reality. It can be no other way. This is not philosophy. This is physics." I've implemented this wisdom in my leadership journey-choosing to operate at the frequency of collaboration, trust, and solution-orientation. And more often than not, I've witnessed my team reflect the same.

Nurturing a Culture of Trust and Growth

In the high-pressure world of aftersales and operations, psychological safety is often overlooked. But it is precisely this sense of safety that enables innovation, accountability, and team cohesion. When leaders mentor with intention-by sharing perspectives instead of passing judgment-they unlock the full potential of their teams. Such leaders become enablers, not enforcers. They listen more, coach often, and build bridges across departments. Over time, this builds trust not only within teams but also with customers, partners, and stakeholders who value consistency and integrity.

In a sector defined by precision, efficiency, and customer trust, leadership style can be a competitive advantage. By moving from judgment to constructive opinion, automotive leaders set the tone for a culture of continuous improvement and mutual respect. The road to operational excellence doesn't begin with stricter rules or louder voices-it starts with a shift in mindset. When we lead with empathy and mentor with purpose, we don't just fix cars-we build committed, capable teams ready to drive the future of mobility.

UPCOMING EVENTS

2025-2026



Dec 9 – Dec 11
2025

Automechanika Dubai
Dubai, UAE



Sept 23 – Sept 24
2025

MENA EV Show,
Dubai, UAE



Sept 3 – Sept 5
2025

China International Tire
Expo, Shanghai, China



Sept 30 – Oct 2
2025

SDV & AI in
Automotive USA 2025



Nov 4 – Nov 6
2025

AAPEX,
Las Vegas, USA



Oct 29 – Nov 9
2025

Japan Mobility Show,
Tokyo, Japan



Nov 19– Nov30
2025

Brazilian Motor Show,
São Paulo, Brazil



Jan 14– Jan 25
2026

Detroit Auto Show
(NAIAS)
Detroit, USA



Feb 17– Feb 19
2026

Heavy Duty
Aftermarket Week
Texas, USA



May 13 – May 15
2026

TyreXpo Asia 2026
Bangkok, Thailand



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As we reach the last page of this volume, 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.

IGNITING PASSION, FUELLING INNOVATION:
JOIN THE AUTOPULSE COMMUNITY IN REVOLUTIONIZING THE AUTOMOTIVE
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