

AutoPulse

Community initiative by **GaragePlug**

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

#AUTOSERVICE2.0

“LEADERSHIP IS
ADAPTABILITY.
IDEAS ARE EASY-
EXECUTION ACROSS
CULTURES IS THE
REAL WORK.”

“BE NIMBLE, BE FAST, ADAPT
QUICKLY. LOOK AFTER THE
CUSTOMER AND YOUR TEAM, AND
EVERYTHING ELSE FOLLOWS.”

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EXCLUSIVE CONVERSATION

WITH THE GROUP CEO OF PETROMIN CORPORATION

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

DEC 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.

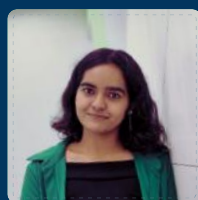
HAPPY READING!

-TEAM AUTOPULSE + TEAM GARAGEPLUG



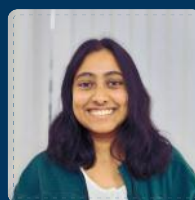
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“THE AUTOPULSE COMMUNITY - REFLECTION”

Networking Events

Jeddah Dinner Event



Riyadh Dinner Event



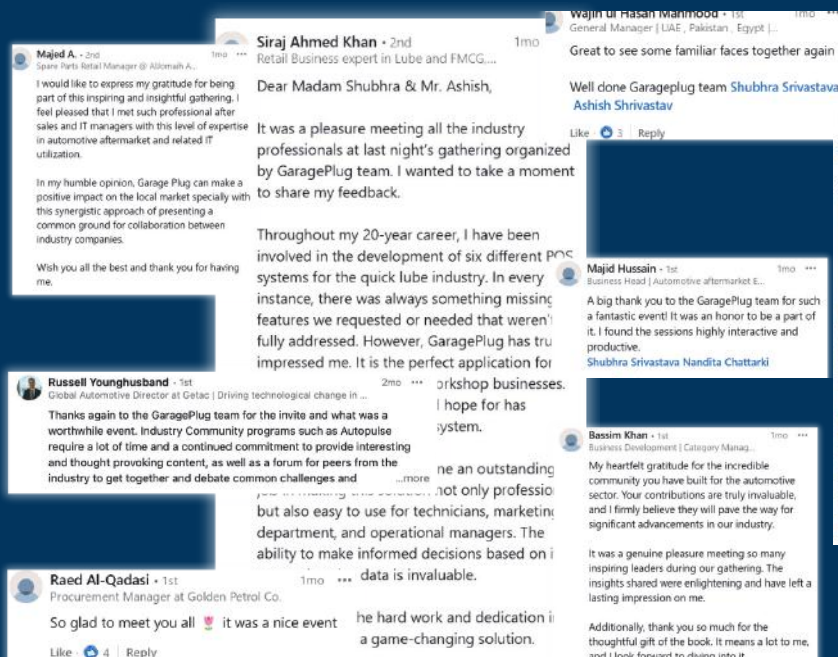
Dubai Breakfast Event



AutoPulse Vol.4 Launch Event



Loved by the community!



“ THE AUTOPULSE LEADERSHIP EXCELLENCE AWARDS ”

Leadership Excellence Awards Q4 2025 Riyadh Edition



Majid Almadi — AcDelco & AlJomaih

Recognised for driving AI-enabled aftersales performance across AlJomaih Automotive's eight sales channels, improving profitability, customer trust, and market share through disciplined inventory strategy and operational efficiency.



Bassim Khan - Wafi Energy

Recognised for building Wafi's car service division from the ground up and scaling it sustainably through structured execution, operational discipline, and consistent performance improvement.

Leadership Excellence Awards Q4 2025 Jeddah Edition



Ijaz Ali – Shift Inc

Ijaz led the Aramco 17 QS PMS project and launched 11 mobile workshops, significantly improving cost control, customer satisfaction, and operational transparency across Shift Inc's network.



Abdulkader Adam – Motocare

Abdulkader reversed a loss-making business into a profitable operation through strategic discipline, decisive downsizing/ restructuring, and consistent focus on efficiency, performance, and customer trust at Motocare.

AUTOPULSE RESEARCH

THE RISE OF AI VOICE AGENTS: AUGMENTING HUMAN POTENTIAL IN AUTOMOTIVE SERVICE

AI voice agents are becoming standard in automotive service because they remove operational friction that slows customers and staff. Service centers don't lose business because of poor intent, they lose it when phones ring unanswered, queues stack up, advisors multitask between the counter and workshop, and simple questions consume time that should be used for real problem-solving. Voice agents absorb that load.

When staff are busy, away from the desk, or outside working hours, incoming inquiries are still answered instantly instead of becoming missed calls. Tasks such as appointment scheduling, follow-ups, reminders, availability checks, service updates, and basic record lookup move to automation with consistent accuracy.

This does not replace humans. It separates low-value repetitive work from high-value advisory work. People still handle complaints, special requests, cross-selling, technical clarifications, delivery coordination, and sensitive conversations. The division is clean: automation handles predictable tasks, humans handle judgment.

The impact is measurable—fewer dropped interactions, faster response times, higher booking rates, and less burnout at the front desk.

GaragePlug builds around that principle. The system doesn't aim to substitute manpower. It transfers the administrative burden to AI so service teams apply their time where it changes outcomes: customer trust, revenue, and experience.



Rohit Bhatnagar

Chief AI Officer, GaragePlug
AutoPulse Community Evangelist

Rohit Bhatnagar, a NUS Gold-medalist, is GaragePlug's CTO and the brains behind transforming a workshop-side prototype into the successful region-wide auto service platform that GaragePlug is today. He guides product strategy, architecture and AI innovation, translating daily shop-floor challenges into easy-to-use features.



AUTOPULSE RESEARCH

THE COMING SPLIT IN AUTOMOTIVE AFTERSALES: AI-ENABLED SERVICE NETWORKS VS. LEGACY OPERATIONS - ACROSS OEM DEALERSHIPS, AFTERMARKET, QUICK-SERVICE, TBA, AND FLEET MAINTENANCE

Aftersales is fragmenting into two categories: operations that treat AI as core infrastructure and operations that continue to run on labor availability, experience, and analog processes. The gap is not theoretical.

It is materializing in profitability per repair order, technician throughput, customer retention, warranty leakage, and uptime metrics across every segment of the service industry: OEM dealer networks, multi-brand aftermarket workshops, quick-service chains, TBA shops, commercial vehicle depots, and fleet maintenance hubs.

OEM dealership servicing — the first domino

Dealers sitting on connected-car telemetry, warranty records, and diagnostic histories already have the data required for AI. Predictive

maintenance models convert fault signatures and driving patterns into concrete service opportunities before breakdown.

Jobs are booked automatically when the vehicle is geographically near the dealer and parts inventory aligns with forecasted demand.

AI-augmented diagnostics reduce troubleshooting time, especially on ADAS and EV powertrains. Computer-vision inspection tunnels cut subjective upsell conversations; tire wear, leaks, and underbody issues are surfaced impartially.

OEM groups that implement AI across all sites gain consistent first-time-fix rates and predictable margins. Dealers that rely on advisor intuition and technician memory will watch productivity sink as vehicle complexity increases.



Independent multi-brand workshops — the volatility segment

Aftermarket networks handle the widest variety of brands and fault patterns. This is exactly where AI produces the highest marginal benefit.

Pattern-recognition models learn failure signatures across OEM boundaries, eliminating diagnostic blind spots caused by limited brand specialisation. Generative copilots compress thousands of pages of multi-OEM manuals into step-by-step repair logic.

AI pricing and scheduling tools lift workshop utilisation by matching job mix to available skill sets instead of filling the calendar randomly.

The independents that adopt AI rapidly become a credible alternative to dealership service. The ones that don't will continue to lose complex repairs and only retain basic maintenance until even that migrates to quick-service and mobile operators.

Quick-service and fast-fit — volume economics under pressure

High-throughput chains make money on speed and predictable parts inventory.

AI removes two chronic bottlenecks: uncertain inspection outcomes and inconsistent parts planning. Vision-based tire and brake analysis allows rapid triage at service-lane entry, meaning the technician starts with a predefined work package instead of rediscovering problems mid-job.

Parts demand forecasting aligns stocking levels with real local consumption. Bay downtime from part unavailability becomes an exception rather than the norm.

Without AI, fast-fit chains will drown in the growing variance in repair complexity as ADAS and EVs enter mainstream miles-driven cycles.

TBA (Tyres, Batteries, Accessories) — short-cycle services becoming data-driven

The TBA sector historically operated on walk-ins and seasonal patterns. AI replaces guesswork. Battery health scoring from telemetry predicts replacement windows months ahead of failure. Tire-life prediction models generate service reminders based on driving style and surface conditions, not mileage alone.

Accessories demand forecasting uses regional factors and vehicle-mix trends rather than gut feel. TBA centers integrated into OEM apps or fleet portals become preferred vendors with guaranteed lead flow. The rest remain dependent on unpredictable retail footfall.

Commercial vehicle workshops — uptime dictates survival

A commercial vehicle off the road costs more per hour than any consumer car. Predictive maintenance, automated diagnosis, and remote triage are not optional features; they are operational safeguards.

AI models optimised for heavy-duty platforms detect turbo, cooling, and suspension degradation long before symptoms trigger warnings on the dash.

Remote AI triage determines whether a truck must return to the depot or can safely finish the route. Scheduling engines batch multiple pending repairs into a single downtime window. Workshops serving logistics companies that fail to implement this will lose fleet contracts because uptime guarantees will become a base criterion.

Fleet maintenance — the most aggressive adopters

Fleet operators have the strongest incentive to treat service as a continuous optimization problem.

Centralized AI platforms monitor the entire fleet's telematics, wear patterns, and service histories. Vehicles are routed to specific workshops based on technician capability, parts readiness, and projected time-to-repair.

AI identifies anomalies across depots and suppliers, exposing chronic over-billing, premature replacements, or low quality of fix. Fleet owners are already consolidating spend toward workshops that operate with data transparency.

The ones without AI governance will be phased out of enterprise contracts.

Where this leads — a structural separation, not a gradual evolution

The coming divide in aftersales will not be a gentle migration curve. It will be a step change. As soon as one player in a region or category proves that AI can drive higher utilisation, higher first-time-fix rates, lower warranty leakage, and faster customer response, the baseline expectations of the market reset. Competitors are no longer compared to each other; they are compared to the new operational ceiling.

This is the pressure point: once customers, fleets, and OEM programs experience AI-enabled service, they don't return to the old model of unanswered calls, ambiguous estimates, and unpredictable turnaround. The switch is one-way.

The decisive phase is next

As vehicle platforms get more complex — EV, ADAS, connected-car stacks — legacy service models degrade. Technicians capable of troubleshooting without AI will become scarce and expensive. Workshops and dealer groups that rely on institutional memory will face a combinatorial explosion of models, software versions, and fault signatures. Labour alone won't scale to the task.

Networks that operationalise AI early will lock in the talent, the fleet contracts, and the OEM programs because they can guarantee turnaround, uptime, and transparency. Those that wait will discover that adoption at that stage is not modernisation — it is catch-up under competitive pressure.

The industry has already picked its direction. The only question left is which side of the split each organisation ends up on.



WHAT'S IN THIS MAGAZINE?

Featuring top auto aftermarket service industry leaders

PROLOGUE - (AUTOPULSE COMMUNITY REFLECTION)

AutoPulse Research - The Coming Split in Automotive Aftersales: AI-Enabled Service Networks vs. Legacy Operations - Across OEM Dealerships, Aftermarket, Quick-Service, TBA, and Fleet Maintenance

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GENERAL INDUSTRY & EV NEWS

- Global automotive aftermarket now estimated at US\$465B in 2025, projected to reach US\$556B by 2030, driven by aging vehicles, higher annual mileage and digital sales channels. [Mordor Intelligence](#)
- The automotive repair and maintenance services market is expected to grow from about US\$0.81T in 2025 to over US\$1.09T by 2030, as vehicle age rises and owners shift to professional service networks. [Mordor Intelligence](#)
- In Saudi Arabia, the repair and maintenance market is valued around US\$1.5B in 2024 and forecast to grow at 8% CAGR to 2030, powered by rising car ownership and preference for organized workshops. [Nexdigm](#)
- The EU is debating a fleet rule that would force large corporates and rental players to buy mostly EVs by 2030—industry leaders are calling it a “backdoor ban” on petrol cars and warning of infrastructure gaps. [Financial Times](#)
- Global collision repair is booming: the market, valued around US\$216B in 2024, is projected to grow at nearly 5% CAGR this decade as vehicle complexity and average age increase. [Yahoo Finance](#)
- Analysts warn dealers are leaving billions in aftermarket revenue on the table by under-using connected-car data; US dealers capture only about half of a US\$2.4T service and parts spend, even as modems sit idle in most vehicles.
- The global EV aftermarket is projected to surge from US\$84B in 2025 to over US\$351B by 2034, compounding at more than 17% annually as EV parc and parts demand explode. [GlobeNewswire](#)
- In the United States, the EV aftermarket alone is forecast to jump from US\$23.5B in 2024 to about US\$99B by 2033, redefining where service networks, tire chains and parts distributors make money. [Yahoo Finance+1](#)
- Fresh 2025 data from North American general repair shops shows tire work is the single biggest EV service today, while complex high-voltage and battery jobs remain a small share—highlighting how EVs still pull core aftermarket business such as tires, alignment and chassis care. [aftermarketmatters.com](#)

INNOVATION & TECHNOLOGY NEWS

- The connected-vehicle market is expected to more than double from ~US\$87B in 2025 to over US\$205B by 2030, with data monetisation, predictive maintenance and service-linked subscriptions emerging as major new revenue streams for OEMs and aftermarket players.
- **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.

FROM JAPAN TO SCANDINAVIA TO THE MIDDLE EAST: WHAT GREAT SERVICE LEADERSHIP LOOKS LIKE EVERYWHERE



RALF ZIMMERMANN

Group Director –
After Sales & CX,
Jaidah Group

Ralf Zimmermann is Group Director – After Sales & CX at Jaidah Group (Doha, Qatar). He brings decades of global auto-industry experience — from senior aftersales roles at Toyota Motor Europe and regional leadership with Al-Futtaim Group — and is known as a “Kaizen evangelist and customer-service enthusiast” who transforms service operations by combining a lean mindset with strong frontline ownership.

Kaizen as a Mindset, Not a Poster

AutoPulse Team: You've spent years working with Kaizen and continuous improvement. When companies say, "We do Kaizen," what usually goes wrong?

Ralf: The first mistake is thinking Kaizen is about posters and training slides. It isn't. Kaizen is a mindset.

And mindset is mainly driven by how managers behave – especially how they ask questions.

If you want Kaizen to live, you need managers who constantly ask:

- Why do we do it this way?
- What went wrong here?
- How can we make it better next time?

But there is a trap. Asking questions can easily be misunderstood as criticism. If every question feels like "you did something wrong," people will defend themselves instead of opening up.

So the first and biggest asset in implementing a Kaizen culture is this:

The manager must earn the right to ask questions without giving the impression that he or she is criticising.

That doesn't happen overnight. It comes from full respect for everyone. People watch how you behave when things go wrong, how you react to mistakes, and how you treat junior staff. Over time, they decide:

- "When he asks a question, is he trying to blame me?"
- Or, "Is he trying to understand the situation and help us improve?"

If you don't earn that trust, people will simply protect themselves. Kaizen stops there

AutoPulse Team: You've worked a lot in the Middle East with teams from the Subcontinent and across Asia. Does that change how you approach Kaizen?.

Ralf: Yes, very much.

To do Kaizen, you must be ready to say:

"What I did yesterday was not good enough. I could have done better."

That sounds simple, but it is actually a very vulnerable statement. You admit that your past performance wasn't perfect.

In many cultures we work with in the Middle East – including a lot of colleagues from the Sub-Asian continent – this is not a natural behaviour. People are not always used to openly saying, "I could have done better." It can feel like a loss of face. It can feel risky.

So if you want Kaizen in that environment, you have to take the fear away. People need to feel empowered and brave enough to say:

- "The way I worked until yesterday was maybe not good enough."
- "I can see a better way now."
- "I have an idea for improvement."

And they must know that if they say this, it will not have negative consequences for them.

So for me, Kaizen is less about tools and more about psychological safety.

On one side:

- Managers earn the right to ask questions through respect and consistency.

On the other side:

- Employees feel safe to admit that there is room to improve and safe to suggest changes.

If you can create that environment, the tools will work. If you don't, the best tools in the world won't help.



Kaizen is a Japanese philosophy meaning "change for the better" (kai = change, zen = good). It proposes that small, ongoing improvements, when made by all employees, cumulatively lead to massive, transformative results over time, even if the process or system isn't currently "broken".

Leading Across Cultures: Japan, Scandinavia, and the Middle East

AutoPulse Team: You've worked in Brussels in a Japanese head-office environment, in Scandinavia, and now in the Middle East. What stays the same in leadership, and what changes completely?

Ralf: Let's start with what stays the same.

Across all these regions, there are some universal values that good leaders and good organisations share. I would mention:

- Transparency
- Respect for people
- Integrity
- Walk the talk – don't say one thing and do another
- Expecting people to do the right thing even if nobody is watching

Those values don't depend on geography. If you want a strong service organisation, you need it everywhere.

But the way you lead can be very different.

Take Brussels in a Japanese company environment, for example. Toyota is a very Japanese company at its core. You see it in daily behavior. If you sit in your open-space office as a senior person and there are Japanese employees around you, they will not leave before you.

Their culture does not allow them to leave the office before their leader or superior. They might be finished, but they will wait. It's not written on a wall, but it is a real rule in their minds.

Now go to Sweden. The behavior is different.

In Sweden, you debate, discuss, and inform a lot before you decide. You take time to get everyone on board. It might feel slow at the beginning, because you must talk to many people and listen to many opinions.



But once everyone has agreed to a task, you don't need to check constantly. You don't need daily reminders. People just walk away and do it. The commitment is strong. You can trust the process.

Then you come to the Middle East.

Here, if you give a task as a leader, nobody will usually tell you "no". Nobody will openly oppose you in the meeting. You think: "Great, everyone agrees." You walk away, and you expect the task to be done.

But later on, you may see that nothing happened – even though nobody said "no" to you.

So, in this environment, you have to lead differently. You can't just rely on the silence in the room.

You have to:

- Convince people of the task.
- Confirm that they understood and accept it.

And then check and follow up, with a structure that supports them along the way.



AutoPulse Team: That sounds like three different “leadership operating systems.” How do you summarize the lesson?

Ralf: The main point is: be a humble leader. Keep your core values the same – transparency, respect, integrity, and walking the talk. But understand the cultural differences around you and adjust your behavior and systems. In a Japanese context, you might need to watch signals carefully and be mindful of hierarchy. In a Scandinavian context, you need to invest time in discussion and alignment upfront, and then trust the system. In the Middle East, you need to combine strong communication with structured follow-up, because “no” is not always spoken out loud. If you ignore these differences, you will misread your teams. If you understand them, you can get the best out of them without fighting the culture.

Transformation, Digitisation, and Rebuilding Organisations

AutoPulse Team: Let’s talk about change. Everyone talks about EVs and disruption. In your view, what is really changing the service business today?

Ralf: The answer is both regional and global. From a regional perspective, in the Middle East and GCC countries, the transformation to EVs will probably be slower in the next 5–7 years than in regions like China, Europe, or maybe the US. That means the immediate impact on units in operation in after-sales will not be as dramatic as in those markets. What is already changing us today is digitisation – the way the customer journey moves between online and offline. Customers expect to:

- Look up information online.
- Book a service online.
- Maybe pay online.
- And then arrive at a physical site where the experience continues without any break.

The challenge is:

- What is your e-commerce solution for service booking and payment?
- What products or services can you build using telematics data?
- What real customer benefits can you generate from that data?
- And is your team ready to deliver a better experience to the customer who booked online?

Digitisation is not just about having a nice website. It is about making sure that if someone books online, they feel a benefit in their customer journey – not just that they filled out a form.

That means we must educate our service advisors and CRM teams differently. They must think about both worlds:

- The online expectation – convenience, clarity, speed.
- The offline reality – welcome, execution, communication.

We must design processes where online and offline meet customer expectations as one flow, not as two separate worlds.



AutoPulse Team: You also mentioned a deeper organisational transformation at Jaidah. What does that look like from the inside?

Ralf: If I look at the last four years in our company, the scale of change is big.

We reached a point where everyone in after-sales is working differently from four years ago:

- Technicians
- Service advisors
- Parts salesmen
- Inventory people
- Planning teams
- Finance colleagues

Everyone.

That is what I call real transformation. It is not writing a book of processes and then expecting people to follow it. It is changing how people actually work every day.

For that, there is one essential element: the “why”.

People must understand:

- Why are we doing this?
- What is the joint vision or joint target?
- Is this also my individual target?
- And very honestly: What is in it for me?

For example, if I say, “We want to reduce cost and increase productivity in the workshop,” and my only answer is headcount reduction, that will not create motivation or engagement.

If instead I say:

- We will redesign processes so that parts come to the technician, instead of the technician walking to the parts counter.
- The oil gets delivered to the work stall.
- Vehicles arrive at the technician in a better sequence.
- Then the technician saves time, his productivity increases, and this can have a positive impact on his incentive.
- In that case, he sees the benefit. He might even have been the one pointing out the obstacle during a Kaizen activity. And now he sees that we removed that obstacle and

made his work environment better. That is how process redesign and culture change connect.





AutoPulse Team: What about people who resist this kind of change?

Ralf: When you go through a real transformation, you will always have obstacles in the team.

Part of the job is to identify team members who:

- Are not aligned with the target.
- Don't believe in the process.
- Or simply don't share the same vision.

You must make sure that they do not disturb your transformation. That doesn't mean you fight them aggressively. But you cannot let them quietly block the change.

My experience is that if you are very clear about the "why", and you consistently move in that direction, something natural happens:

The people who cannot accept the why usually start to leave the organisation on their own initiative.

And I think that is a healthy process. The organisation evolves, and so do the people. The ones who stay are the ones who see themselves in the new way of working.

Productivity, Ownership, and the "My Customer" Mindset

AutoPulse Team: Let's talk about productivity in the workshop. You say it starts with transparency, not with IT systems. What do you mean?

Ralf: If you want to improve productivity, the starting point is very simple: transparency. First, you must define your terms clearly:

- What is productivity?
- What is workshop utilisation?
- What is technician efficiency?

You cannot assume everyone has the same definition. Get those definitions clear and share them with everyone.

Second, you start to measure solid KPIs around these definitions. Not vague numbers, but robust ones. Then you make these KPIs transparent to everyone – technicians, workshop managers, and team leaders.

And third, you announce the targets that go with those KPIs. People should know what "good" looks like.

When you do this, you will see that technicians, workshop managers, and team leaders try to do their best to improve. If these measures are also linked to remuneration – if better productivity and better utilisation have a positive impact on their income – the effect is even stronger.

So the formula is not complicated:

- Clear definitions.
- Transparent KPIs.

Linked to meaningful targets and, where possible, incentives.



AutoPulse Team: Many people think productivity is about buying new IT systems. You're saying it's more basic than that.

Ralf: Exactly.

It is not all about IT systems, and it is not all about big investments. Those can help, but they are not the foundation.

First, get your processes right:

- Make sure the technician gets all the support he needs to complete the job as quickly and correctly as possible.
- Make sure the service advisor's write-up is clear and complete, so there aren't constant feedback loops to clarify the real problem.
- Make sure everyone who can slow down productivity is easy to reach.

One thing we created, for example, is a control tower.

In this control tower, you find:

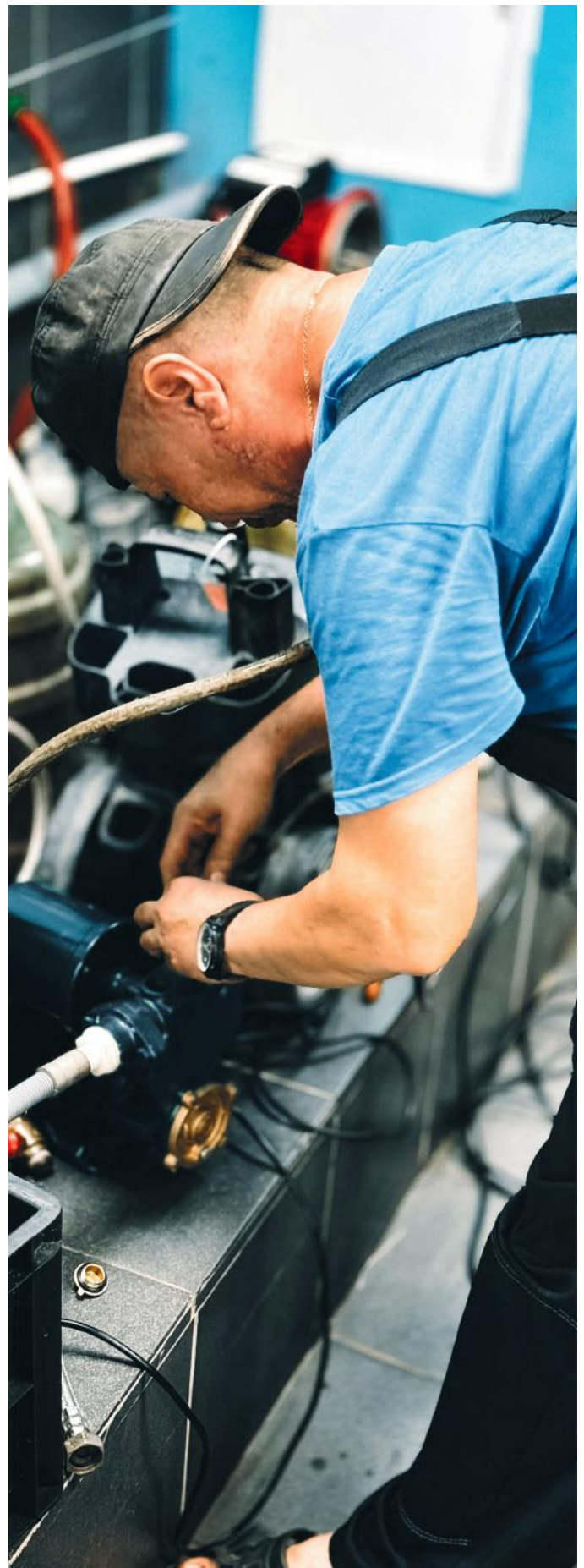
- All the parts people needed to order additional parts.
- All the warranty people who may have to take a quick decision on a job.
- The team leader.
- The workshop controller.

That means everyone who can potentially impact productivity – by delaying a decision, not having information, or not sharing information – sits in one room.

If a technician has an issue, he walks into that room. Inside, he has all the possibilities to resolve the showstopper quickly. He doesn't need to run around the building looking for different people.

And all this does not really cost money. It doesn't require a huge new IT system. It is mostly about process and organisation.

AutoPulse Team: You also use a concept called "My Customer" inside aftersales. How does that change behaviour?





Ralf: We work with a simple but powerful concept:

“My Customer”.

The idea is that everyone takes full ownership of the customer they are dealing with.

It is not:

“I received an email from a customer. I forwarded it to another department, so now it’s not my problem.”

Instead, if a customer has spoken to me, then this is my customer. I am responsible for making sure their request or requirement is fulfilled until the very end, even if I am not the person doing the final technical step.

For example, if I am a service advisor and I am waiting for spare parts, my job is not to sit and hope. My job is to communicate proactively and richly with the customer, on the channel that the customer prefers. That is what “my customer” means in practice.

This mindset needs:

- The right processes, so ownership is clear.
- The right online and offline communication, so the customer does not fall into a gap.
- A strong focus on frontline people, their mindset, and their communication skills.

In my view, the best service organizations in the

world do three things consistently-

- 1.They define their values clearly.
- 2.They make sure everyone understands those values.
- 3.And then they walk the talk every day.

It is easier to teach skills than to change a mindset. So they are very careful in selecting people who are happy to deal with other human beings, not just machines.

Even for engineers – who sometimes choose engineering because they are not natural communicators – you have to help them understand what mindset is needed in a customer-facing environment.

If you get the values, the mindset, the ownership, and the basic processes right, then your tools and technology can really shine. If you don’t, no system will save you.

AutoPulse Team: Ralf, thanks for such a clear and grounded look at Kaizen, leadership across cultures, and what real transformation feels like in after-sales.

Ralf: Thank you. It was a pleasure to share these thoughts.

KAIZEN AT SCALE: HOW PETROMIN BUILT A CUSTOMER-FIRST CULTURE ACROSS 10,000 DAILY VISITS.



MR. SANJEEV AGGARWAL

Director -
Petromin Autocare and
Tristar

Sanjeev Aggarwal is Group Head – After-sales & Customer Experience at Petromin (Saudi Arabia), steering a network of hundreds of service outlets daily serving thousands of customers. A Toyota-trained operations leader committed to Kaizen and customer-first principles, he transformed legacy operations into a high-performance, multi-brand, EV-ready service ecosystem.

AutoPulse Team: You spent a big part of your career in Toyota. When you look at how you run operations today at Petromin, which Toyota principles are still shaping your thinking on a daily basis?

Sanjeev: If you work at Toyota long enough, the principles stop being “tools from training” and start becoming the way you think. For me, two ideas sit at the core of everything I do.

The first is Kaizen – continuous improvement. At Toyota, we were taught very clearly that there is no such thing as status quo. A process does not stay flat. It either improves or it declines. If you are not deliberately improving something, by definition, it is getting worse. That sounds simple, but once you accept it, you stop tolerating “that’s how we’ve always done it.”

The second is Genchi Genbutsu, or going to the real place of action, the gemba. At Toyota, this was not a slogan. It was a daily expectation. We were not allowed to sit in meeting rooms and argue from PowerPoint. If there was a problem with a dealer, you went there. You spoke to the staff. You watched the process. You saw the vehicle, the customer, the tools, and the layout. Only then could you discuss solutions with any seriousness.

Around these two ideas, Toyota built a very structured way of solving problems. We followed the Toyota Business Practice, which is an eight-step problem-solving method. You start with defining the problem, then clarifying it, breaking it down, analysing the root cause, and so on. It is disciplined and repeatable.

But there is a layer above all of this, and that is “customer first.” When you are in doubt, you apply the customer first principle. That is the decision filter. Do not hide behind internal comfort or excuses. Ask what is right for the customer, within the reality of the business, and move in that direction.

These principles are not locked inside Toyota.

I carried them with me to the Gulf market. And when I came to Petromin, they became very useful very quickly.

AutoPulse Team: When you joined Petromin, what was the first big mandate you were given, and how did you use that Toyota mindset to respond?

Sanjeev: My first task was very clear and very ambitious: build a strong customer mindset in the organisation and raise CSI from about 60 to over 90. You have to remember the context. Petromin has a network of around 700 locations, handling roughly 10,000 customers a day, with a long history of operations and habits. You cannot shift that by sending a memo. So I went back to the basics I knew.

First, we had to clarify the problem. “CSI 60” is a number, not a diagnosis. Where exactly are customers feeling pain? Is it the welcome, the speed, the quality, the communication, the pricing, the facility, or something else? You cannot throw generic solutions at a vague problem.

Second, we had to map the customer journey from inside-out and outside-in. We broke it down into steps: arrival, welcome, vehicle check, service explanation, waiting experience, delivery, payment, and follow-up. At each step, we asked: what should happen, what actually happens, and what does the customer feel?



In the early phase, I was working remotely, so I used what was possible at that time one-to-one and group video sessions with the teams. The aim was to put the customer's lens in front of them. Not blame, not drama. Just a clear view. Once I reached KSA, I did what I had always done at Toyota: go to the gemba.

We built a team of around 18–20 trainers, analysts, and auditors. I travelled with them to branches and stations. I made it a point to visit the field with them one by one, the same way my own managers had done for me. When people see their leader in the branch, in the bay, speaking to real customers, they understand that this is not a passing campaign. It is the way we will operate. The message was simple: welcoming facilities are not “cosmetic”, housekeeping is not “optional”, and customer care is not a script. All of it is part of one integrated customer experience.

AutoPulse Team: CSI is often just a report that sits in the head office. You turned it into a management tool. How did you design that system?

Sanjeev: We started from a basic truth: you cannot improve what you do not measure, and you cannot measure only what makes you feel good. So, yes, we tightened our CSI measurement, but with a different intention. We did not want a monthly slide deck to show top management. We wanted a daily mirror for branches and regions. The real turning point was how we handled low scores. Most organisations like to talk about “promoters”. We went the other way. We focused on customers who rated us between 1 and 4 out of 10.

If someone gives you a “9” or a “10”, there is satisfaction, maybe even loyalty. If someone gives you a “1”, in most cases, this customer is gone. They will not return unless something

changes.

So we created a clear matrix and process:

- Identify the low-rating customers quickly.
- Reach out, understand what happened, and try to resolve the issue.
- Track retention of these customers, not just whether we closed a complaint.

This was important. We did not want to only “fix” the bad experience in the moment. We wanted to know if we had genuinely won the customer back. Of course, any serious change has pushback. People ask whether such detail is necessary, whether it is practical at our volumes. This is where support from top management mattered. The purpose was clear: we were not doing this for a certificate or an internal score. We were doing it because in a network of our size, losing dissatisfied customers silently is very expensive. Once teams saw that customer voice was directly linked to standards, recognition, and improvement, it became part of daily work, not an extra task.



AutoPulse Team: Petromin Autocare grew from around 15 outlets when you took over to close to 50 today. Many others tried multi-brand models and struggled. What made this work?

Sanjeev: When I took charge, Petromin Autocare had about 15 outlets. Today, we are close to 45 and will soon touch 50. The growth itself is not the story. The story is that we built a replicable and sustainable model behind that growth. We focused on a few non-negotiable levers:

1. Coverage with purpose.

The Kingdom is large. You cannot expand randomly. We looked at geography, demand patterns, and existing Petromin touchpoints. Where will an Autocare outlet actually add value for customers and the network? That guided expansion.

2. Same-day delivery and faster turnaround.

Customers do not judge you only by technical quality. They judge you by how long they are without their car. Stagnation in bays, waiting for approvals, missing parts – these things quietly destroy trust and profitability. We attacked bottlenecks in process and layout to secure same-day delivery in more than 90% of cases.

3. Parts availability and integrity.

Multi-brand repair is impossible without a strong parts backbone. We worked on availability, but we refused to compromise on quality. We kept the model lean and agile, but we invested in the right tools, equipment, and people. The customer must know that parts are genuine and the work is done properly. That is non-negotiable.

4. Choice, but with guidance.

Over time, we started giving customers a choice of parts where appropriate, always with clear explanations. Choice without guidance creates confusion; guidance without choice creates resistance. The balance is key.

5. Live reputation through Google reviews.

We tied experience to Google reviews and targeted 10–15% of our customers to leave

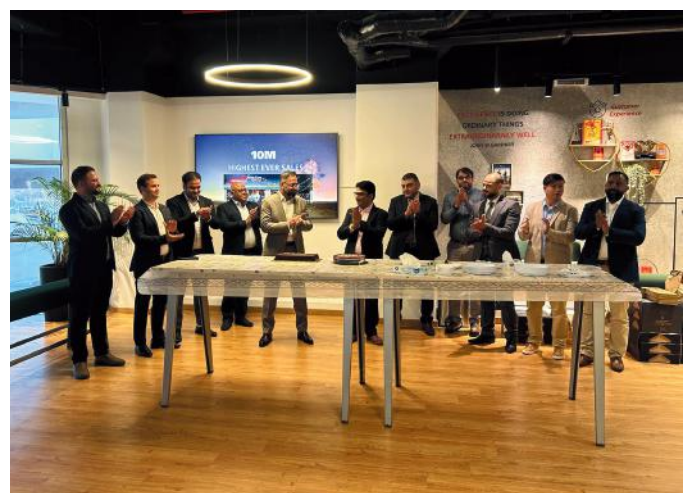
reviews. When teams know their performance is visible publicly, behavior changes. It keeps everyone sharp.

The result is that Petromin Autocare today is recognized as a leading multi-brand workshop network. This did not happen by accident. It is structure, discipline, and continuous adjustment

AutoPulse Team: You repeat that manpower is key and that management must be present in branches. How do you actually keep that discipline alive month after month?

Sanjeev: In our line of work, the customer does not meet the strategy document. The customer meets the advisor and the technician. So if you neglect manpower, you are neglecting the brand. We do a few simple but powerful things.

First, management visits are not ceremonial. Our leadership spends real time in branches and stations. These are working visits. We look at welcoming facilities, housekeeping, process adherence, and customer handling. It sends a clear signal that standards are real, not theoretical. Second, we run a strong housekeeping and Kaizen culture. A clean, organized outlet is a visible sign of discipline. We push store teams to identify and fix small problems themselves rather than waiting for big interventions.



Third, we have monthly Kaizen presentations by Regional Managers. Every RM shows what Kaizen activities were done, what impact they had on cost, efficiency, and customer experience. This creates rhythm. Improvement is not a quarterly event. It is a monthly, weekly, even daily habit.

This approach pays off in multiple areas:

- Cost optimisation through small, repeated gains.
- Agility in operations because teams are used to changing and improving.
- Stronger customer experience because front-line staff see quality as part of their identity, not extra work.

Housekeeping, engagement, and field visits – these may sound basic. But in a network of our size, doing the basics well every day is exactly what separates you from competitors

AutoPulse Team: Quick service can easily become chaotic if not managed well. How have you kept Petromin Express both fast and controlled?

Sanjeev: Petromin Express is our quick service oil change network, and it is a big part of the Petromin story. The challenge there is obvious: you must be very fast, but also very safe and very consistent.

We tackled this through digital tools tied to clear processes. We introduced electronic Vehicle Health Checks (e-VHC) to standardise how a car is inspected. This is not just a checklist; it is a structured way to ensure that key components are checked the same way in every station. We use systems like Autoline, which dealerships also use, and Oracle, to handle operations and data. The idea is to bring dealership-level structure into quick service without making it slow. We also deploy technicians as inspectors in Petromin Express stations. They carry tablets

with a simple inspection software. The workflow is clear:

- Inspect the car.
- Identify opportunities – work that is genuinely needed.
- Generate recommended jobs.

Then we track the entire funnel:

- How many inspections were done?
- What was the total value of identified opportunities
- How much of that did we convert into actual work?

Our incentive programmes are designed to reach the shop floor – technicians and front-line staff, not just managers. The more they serve customers well and build the business, the more they benefit.

Our KPIs cover the full picture:

- Customer feedback, CSI, and NPS on the quality side.
- Gross profit, customer counts, and sales on the commercial side.

The impact is concrete:

- Same-day delivery is now above 90%.
- Customer count per branch per day is strong.
- CSI remains at 94–95%.
- The operations are profitable.

In short, we have built a quick service model that is both high-speed and high-discipline.



AutoPulse Team: You have won multiple CX awards at Gulf, Saudi, and international levels. Why did you decide to go that route, and how did it influence the organisation?

Sanjeev: After we redesigned the customer journey and processes, we wanted to test ourselves against a serious external benchmark. Internal satisfaction is not enough. You need an outside view.

We chose the Gulf CX Awards as our first big platform. It is a challenging environment: large players from retail and other sectors, not just automotive, many of them in Dubai, and very mature in CX.

We did not go in expecting trophies. We went in to see where we stood. The result surprised even us. We won multiple gold awards in the same event and, more importantly, we were declared the overall winner of the competition.

For the team, that was a huge confidence boost. It told them that the hard work in branches, the changes in process, the focus on CSI and customer journey – all of that could stand up on a global stage.

From there, the mindset shifted. We went on to participate in international CX awards, Saudi CX awards, and other platforms, and it almost became a habit to win multiple awards each year. But for me, the awards are not just about recognition. They are a stress test. They force you to document your work, measure your results, and compare yourself with the best. That pressure keeps you honest.

AutoPulse Team: EV adoption in the region is still emerging, but Petromin seems well ahead with an EV-ready network. What was your approach?

Sanjeev: Petromin has always tried to be a first mover in scalable, future-oriented opportunities.

EVs are a clear part of the future of mobility, so we took them seriously early.

About two years ago, we decided to benchmark the EV ecosystem properly. We did not sit and guess. We went out and studied markets that were ahead of us:

- UK
- Norway
- Jordan
- Dubai

We looked at the full chain: infrastructure, workshop readiness, safety norms, training standards, business models, and customer expectations.

Based on that work, we built what is today the first and largest EV service network in the Kingdom, and likely one of the largest in the wider region:

- 12 EV-ready workshops.
- A partnership with the IMI Institute.
- IMI-certified technicians, capable of performing Level 1 and Level 2 EV repairs.
- Full safety tools and diagnostic tools specific to EVs.
- Technicians trained in the UK to ensure alignment with global best practices.

We also moved early on charging infrastructure. Around four years ago, we installed AC chargers at more than 100 locations across the network.

So while EV volumes are still building, the infrastructure and skills are already in place. We support OEMs as well. For example, we are the authorised service provider for Volvo in the Kingdom for EV servicing. Looking ahead, more focus will go into things like battery handling and OEM-specific requirements. But the base is ready. We did not wait for the EV wave to arrive and then start thinking. We are already operating in that future.

AutoPulse Team: You mentioned dashboards, predictive models, and cross-company synchronisation. How does data actually shape your decisions today?

Sanjeev: Because Petromin touches every aspect of mobility, we sit on a wide and deep data set. It would be a waste to treat that just as historical reporting. We are using data in a few key ways.

First, we are constantly working on customer retention. We look at visit patterns, spending behavior, feedback, and other signals to understand which customers are at risk of dropping off and how we can re-engage them.

Second, we are building predictive “look-alike” models. If a certain segment of customers behaves in a certain way, we identify similar customers and plan offers or communication accordingly. The idea is to move from reactive to proactive.

Third, we use data across multiple Petromin entities in a synchronized manner. Since we operate in oil, quick service, multi-brand repair, EV, and more, there is a lot of insight that can be shared to improve decision-making.

Data for us is not decoration. It must translate into better timing, better relevance, and better operations on the ground. If a dashboard does not change how a branch manager or advisor behaves tomorrow morning, it is not useful.

AutoPulse Team: To close, a quick round of short, sharp questions.

Q: The first metrics you check every morning?

Sanjeev: Very simple: customer count, sales, CSI, and branch-wise situations. I want to know how many customers we served, how well we did it, and where any issues are appearing across the network.

Q: One myth about Gulf customers you want to correct?

Sanjeev: There is a myth that customer expectations in the Gulf are lower or more relaxed. I do not agree.

From my experience across markets, customer expectations are fundamentally the same everywhere. You adjust for culture and local context, of course. But the basics do not change:

- Charge a fair price.
- Fix it right the first time.
- Respect the customer’s time and pocket.

If you get these wrong, it does not matter which country you are in.

Q: The hardest part of scaling culture fast in a large network?

Sanjeev: Culture is built by daily behaviour, not by posters. The hard part is keeping everyone aligned as you grow – branches, regions, front-line teams, back office. That is why I keep coming back to field visits, engagement, and simple, clear principles. Without that, culture becomes a slogan.

Q: A five-word message you would be happy to see on a billboard outside every Petromin outlet?

Sanjeev: Something that reflects what we want to stand for:

“Trusted experts. Genuine parts. Quick care.”

If customers feel that we have expert people, genuine parts, and quick, reliable service at fair value, then we are doing our job.

AutoPulse Team:

This conversation shows how principles like Kaizen, customer first, and Genchi Genbutsu can move from theory to daily practice across hundreds of locations. Petromin’s journey under Mr. Aggarwal is a concrete example of disciplined transformation in the Gulf’s mobility landscape.

REBUILDING SERVICE RETAIL THE RIGHT WAY: SEAN HARRISON'S PLAYBOOK FOR SUSTAINABLE GROWTH AT HI-Q.



SEAN HARRISON

Managing Director,
Hi-Q South Africa

Sean Harrison — a dynamic leader in automotive retail and service, currently steering Hi-Q Automotive in South Africa. With deep passion for vehicle servicing and customer experience, Sean champions a modern, customer-first ethos while driving growth and network expansion for the brand.

AutoPulse Team: You often say your leadership style is forged at the store level, not the boardroom level. Translate that into the instincts you still use today.

Sean: My career started at the store. When you run the daily P&L, it turns you into a ruthless prioritiser. You learn quickly that cashflow discipline, turnaround speed, and customer trust are the only three levers that matter on a Monday morning at 8:30. Everything else is overhead. That never left me.

When I look at network initiatives now, I ask a very simple question: Will this survive a busy reception line and a full fitting bay? If the answer is no, it won't scale, and it will quietly die. That practical filter is still my operating system.

AutoPulse Team: So your default is “simple wins at the counter.”

Sean: Simple, repeatable, accountable. That's it. If an SOP can't be taught to a new advisor and executed under time pressure, it isn't an SOP- it's a wish.

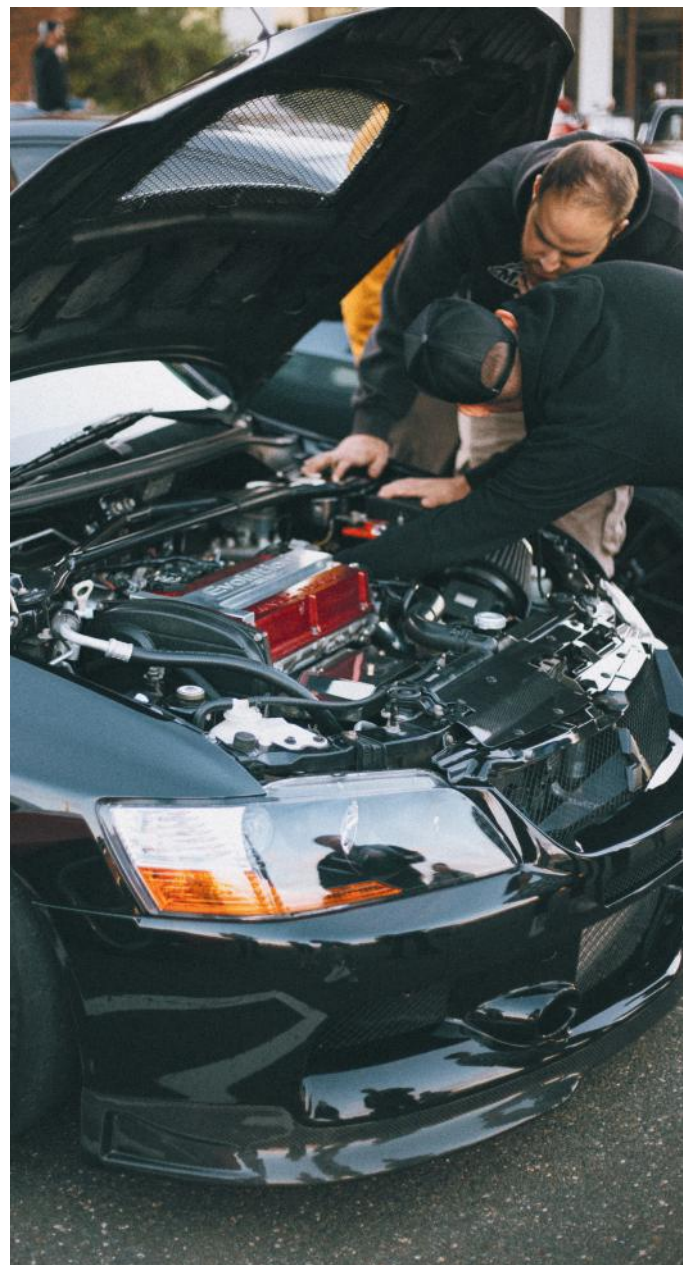
AutoPulse Team: You've said the “front-of-house moment” is where networks lose the plot. What is the non-negotiable choreography you want in those first three minutes?

Sean: The first three minutes determine whether the rest of the process is friction or flow. We standardise four things: the way the customer is greeted, how the vehicle is triaged, how the inspection is positioned, and how pricing is framed before any work starts.

It sounds minor, but that is where inconsistency shouts the loudest-check-in flow, quoting discipline, and advisor confidence. If we protect those moments, the back-of-house has a fighting chance.

AutoPulse Team: How do you standardize without suffocating franchisee autonomy?

Sean: By being very clear about non-negotiables-safety standards, inspection flow, quoting steps-and very relaxed about everything else. We set the rails, not the train. Franchisees bring their personality, their local knowledge, and their team culture. The rails keep the customer experience coherent nationwide. That's the balance that sustains a franchise brand.

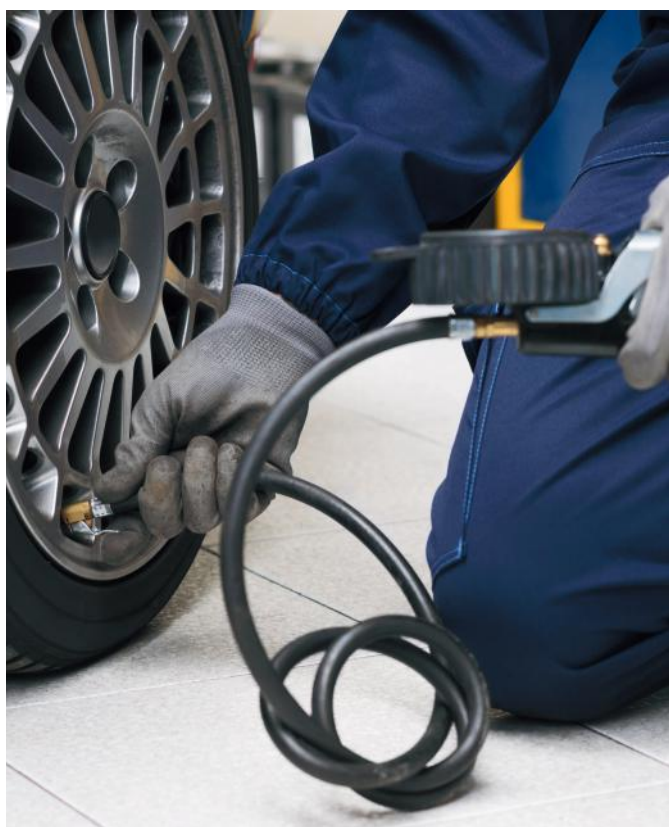


AutoPulse Team: If tyres are your core, why expand into broader auto care?

Sean: Because the customer told us to. People increasingly want fewer stops and faster resolution - “Since I’m here for tyres, can you also look at brakes, suspension, the warning light?” If we say no, we force them to duplicate errands and re-tell their vehicle story elsewhere. That’s not competitive, that’s inconvenient. Broadening our offering is a direct response to evolving expectations, not an attempt to be everything to everyone. Done right, it’s still our discipline-speed, clarity, safety-just applied to more jobs.

AutoPulse Team: Some tyre networks fear that expansion dilutes brand focus.

Sean: Only if you expand without standards. We’re not abandoning tyre leadership; we’re extending the same “do it right, do it once” discipline to adjacent services. That’s how the brand stays relevant over the long term.



AutoPulse Team: Where do you see operational leakage most often?

Sean: The patterns are universal: mishandled inbound leads, reception bottlenecks at peak hours, inconsistent diagnostics, under-utilised bays, and weak after-sales communication. In any single store, those look like “bad days.” Across a network, they compound into lost revenue and eroded trust. The key is treating them as patterns we can expose and fix at scale through coaching, standard work, and better tooling-rather than nagging individual stores.

AutoPulse Team: What does “expose and fix at scale” look like in practice?

Sean: It means measuring the same thing everywhere, using simple visuals, and coaching those numbers. If an outlet’s bay utilisation is consistently 20 points below the median, you don’t need a speech, you need a plan: change the booking cadence, tighten triage, re-train advisors. Numbers don’t shame people; they focus them.

AutoPulse Team: List the standards you refuse to compromise even on the busiest day.

Sean: Structured check-in. Consistent multi-point inspections. Quoting discipline. Tyre-fitment safety protocols. Housekeeping, you could show a customer. Those are not admin-they’re brand protectors. When they slip, trust slips, and trust is the only currency that keeps customers from shopping you purely on price.





AutoPulse Team: What’s actually hard about modernising a franchise network?

Sean: Not the software - the adoption. Many of our best franchisees grew up in manual environments. They win because they’re disciplined and close to the customer, not because they love systems. If you drop new tech without making their day easier, they will quietly revert to old habits.

Our biggest strides come from incremental wins: “This feature saves you ten minutes per invoice” or “This calendar prevents double-booking.” Stack enough of those, and resistance dissolves.

AutoPulse Team: So you sell modernisation as time returned, not as compliance.

Sean: Exactly. No one wakes up excited to “adopt a platform.” They wake up excited to get home earlier, hit targets with less stress, and hear customers say “thanks.” If the tool does that, adoption follows.

AutoPulse Team: Name the skill gaps that persist even in strong outlets.

Sean: Technically, fault-finding even with great equipment remains the hardest. Electronically controlled systems multiply the paths to a symptom. Behaviourally, the hardest is still clear customer communication: setting expectations without jargon, phoning when you said you would, and explaining quotes with confidence. Training builds capability; culture builds consistency. We work on both every day.

AutoPulse Team: How do you define “Hi-Q culture” in terms people can act on?

Sean: We anchor on three behaviours: transparency, turnaround speed, and ownership of customer resolution. You live those three, and 80% of the cultural job is done. We’ve learned culture tends to fade in low-volume outlets; teams get rusty. Our support teams spend disproportionate time there-realigning standards, energising the floor, and rebuilding rhythm. The network rises together or not at all.

AutoPulse Team: Head office often pushes for volume; franchisees defend margin. Who's right?

Sean: Both-and that's the point. We start with data but end with judgment. Sometimes volume is strategically important: market visibility, supplier thresholds, customer acquisition. Other times, protecting margin is smarter in a given micro-market or season. The job is to pick the right lever at the right time. When a hard call is needed, I communicate early, share the context, and involve the franchisee in how we execute, not whether we execute.

AutoPulse Team: How has your leadership changed as Hi-Q evolves from a tyre brand to a broader automotive service brand?

Sean: I spend less time writing procedures and more time removing friction. Younger franchise owners expect transparency and collaboration; they don't want top-down instruction for its own sake. My job is to align strategy, equip them with tools and training, and then get out of the way. When an outlet wins, give them the credit; when an outlet struggles, take the responsibility to help them fix it. That's how you sustain a network.

AutoPulse Team: Name the leadership quality the next decade will punish you for not having.

Sean: Resilience anchored in data discipline. Margins will stay tight, expectations will rise, and technology will accelerate. If you can't remain calm, interpret data correctly, and make decisions based on insight rather than irritation, the network will feel every wobble. Consistency in the small things will separate the good from the exceptional.

AutoPulse Team: Walk us through the practical blueprint for broadening the offer without breaking the machine.

Sean: Phase one is standard-offer design. Don't launch twenty services; launch five that are adjacent to tyre work - brakes, alignment and suspension, batteries, oil service, and safety checks. For each, codify the inspection steps, quoting rules, parts list, and bay time assumptions. If those aren't standard, the numbers become fiction.

Phase two is front-of-house enablement. The advisor must know how to position the inspection, secure consent, and frame pricing without drama. You can have the best technicians in the world; if the advisory moment breaks, the job never happens.

Phase three is technician enablement. Tools, training, and time standards. Technicians need clarity on how a job should flow and how quality is checked. If you want consistency, you must reduce interpretation.

Phase four is after-sales rhythm. Proactive follow-ups, service reminders, tyre rotation nudges, and safety notices. If after-sales is ad hoc, repeat business becomes accidental.

Phase five is measurement and coaching. A service only becomes "in the network" when we can see its volume, conversion, bay time, and margin by outlet. You can't coach what you can't see, and you can't scale what you can't coach.

That's the blueprint, and we run it in loops-design, enable, measure, coach, refine. You resist the temptation to "roll out everything everywhere" because speed without standards is just chaos. (The patterns behind this blueprint are the same ones we use internally to enforce a uniform experience and surface leakage across stores.)

AutoPulse Team: What do you want on a single page when you review the network weekly?

Sean: Five buckets:

1. Volume and capacity: vehicles in, jobs completed, bay utilisation.
2. Speed: time from check-in to job start, job start to completion, completion to delivery.
3. Quality: comeback rate for the same concern, safety deviations, and repeat adjustments.
4. Commercials: labour/parts mix, average invoice value, per-service margin.
5. Customer: NPS or review trends, complaint types, and time to resolution.

If those five tell a coherent story, you don't need a hundred charts. If they don't, no dashboard in the world will save you. (This philosophy comes straight out of our emphasis on seeing patterns network-wide, not diagnosing one outlet at a time.)

AutoPulse Team: Give us your playbook for getting stores to adopt new processes and tools.

Sean: Three moves.

Make the day easier. Start with features that remove pain-calendar discipline, templated quotes, automated follow-ups. Lead with relief, not requirements.

Coach to one screen. Don't drown teams in options. Decide what "good" looks like and teach it on a single page or dashboard. Ambiguity is the enemy.

Show them their own numbers. People don't argue with their data. When teams see their bay utilisation climb after changing booking rhythm, you don't need another memo; you've got buy-in. These moves look small. They compound. That's how you move a network.

AutoPulse Team: What behaviours do you reward in advisors and technicians?

Sean: For advisors: clarity, consistency, and a bias for phoning the customer before the customer phones you. For technicians: methodical inspections, zero compromise on torque and safety, and the discipline to log what you did so we can stand behind it.

We promote people who make the store calmer during peak hours. Calm isn't passive; it's evidence of mastery.

AutoPulse Team: And when someone wants to become a senior?

Sean: We look for ownership. Not "I did my part," but "The customer left happy and safely." Seniority is not a badge; it's a reflex.

AutoPulse Team: What is unique about operating in South Africa that an outsider might miss?

Sean: Distance and diversity. Markets vary sharply by area. A templated campaign that works in one city can underperform somewhere else because commuting patterns, car parc, and even the rhythm of paydays are different. That's why our standards are national, but our coaching is local. You need central rails and local instincts. The stores that respect both win. (This is the same "rails vs. train" logic we apply to standardising the first three minutes without suffocating franchisee strengths.)

AutoPulse Team: Predict the shifts we'll see in your network over the next two years.

Sean: The offer will broaden in a disciplined way—more brake and suspension work, stronger diagnostics, tighter after-sales rhythms. We'll continue to simplify the advisor's screen and the technician's job card. What won't change is our bias for speed with safety and our insistence on clean, repeatable standards. That's the core. Without it, you just become noise in a crowded market.

AutoPulse Team: Predict the shifts we'll see in your network over the next two years.

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AutoPulse Team: If every Hi-Q franchisee read one paragraph from this interview, what would you want it to be?

Sean: This: Protect the first three minutes, coach to the numbers, and never compromise the safety protocols. If you do those three things relentlessly, you'll feel it in your cash flow, your reviews, and your team morale. Everything else is a multiplier, not a substitute.

Closing Rapid-Fire

AutoPulse Team: One metric you'd defend if you could only keep one?

Sean: Bay utilisation. If capacity is underused, everything downstream is distorted.

AutoPulse Team: One habit that improves a store in a week?

Sean: Proactive callbacks with clear next steps. It defuses complaints before they form.

AutoPulse Team: One behaviour you won't tolerate?

Sean: Shortcuts on tyre-fitment safety. Non-negotiable

AutoPulse Team: One sentence that captures your leadership thesis?

Sean: Make it simple, make it visible, make it repeatable-and then keep showing up to coach it.

Epilogue: Notes for Operators

Sean Harrison's answers aren't the language of a transformation office. They're the language of an operator who's kept Monday morning moving and is now trying to keep a hundred Monday mornings moving at once.

If you're building a network, save these anchors:

- Standardize the first three minutes; everything else benefits.
- Treat leakage as a pattern and fix it at scale.
- Sell modernization as time returned, not compliance.
- Coach to one screen; decide what "good" looks like.
- Measure five buckets; coach to deltas, not narratives.
- Rails national, instincts local.
- Speed with safety, always.

None of that is trendy. All of it compounds. That's why it works in the real world-and why Hi-Q's move from tyre specialist to broader service brand is less a leap and more a method.



BUILDING TAMIMI 2.0: THE DIGITAL BLUEPRINT BEHIND A 9-TO-40 OUTLET EXPANSION



MOHAMAD MANSOUR

IT Manager,
Tamimi KSA

Mohamad A. Mansour is IT Manager at Tamimi Commercial Company, based in Al Khobar, Saudi Arabia. With responsibility for digital infrastructure and systems support, he plays a key role in enabling the company's operations across procurement, logistics, and commercial functions — making sure technology underpins the large-scale supply and distribution business.

AutoPulse Team: How would you describe your role now, in practical terms? What are you actually accountable for?

Mansour: Strip away the titles, and my job is to make sure the business can see itself clearly and run itself intelligently.

There are four main responsibilities:

First, architecture. Deciding which platforms we use, how they integrate, and how they will hold up when we move from nine outlets to forty. If we choose the wrong backbone, everything we build on top becomes fragile.

Second, data. Ensuring the right data is captured, at the right stages, in a consistent format. That means fewer free-form notes and more structured fields. If the data is unreliable, every report and every “insight” is just noise.

Third, execution in systems. Management might say, “We need better turnaround times,” or “We need more visibility on parts usage.” My job is to embed those goals into the software through workflows, alerts, and dashboards - so they don’t stay as slogans.

Fourth, change management. Technology fails when people revert to old habits. You have to train, retrain, and sometimes redesign the process so that the easiest way to do the job is also the right way.

If all of that works, IT stops being a complaint inbox and becomes a strategic engine.

AutoPulse Team: Let’s talk about scale. How big is Tamimi’s service network today, and where are you trying to take it?

Mansour: SRight now, we operate nine active outlets across the Kingdom. That gives us presence in key areas, but it’s only the first stage.

The plan is to grow that to around forty outlets by the end of 2026. That’s more than a four-times increase in footprint.

For IT, that target changes everything. It forces you to ask hard questions:

- Can our systems support four times the branches without collapsing under complexity?
- Can we deploy a process change or a marketing campaign across the whole network consistently?
- Can leadership see real-time performance from any outlet without physically being there?

If the answer is no, then we’re not ready for forty, no matter how good our real estate or HR plans are. Technology has to be ready for that load before the doors open.

AutoPulse Team: What services do you currently offer across the network, and how standardized are they?

Mansour: We offer a focused set of core services that almost every car owner needs:

- Periodic maintenance
- Tyre and battery services
- Oil and filter change

On top of that, there are additional services, but these three pillars define most of our daily workload.

All of these are standardised across the network. That means:

- The same definitions of the service
- The same basic process steps
- The same quality benchmarks and customer touchpoints

If you visit one branch for periodic maintenance, you should recognise the process in another branch. From an IT point of view, standardisation is invaluable. It lets us:

- Model one clear workflow in the system
- Build one set of KPIs that applies everywhere
- Train staff consistently instead of reinventing their work every time they move branches

If each workshop runs its own version of how to change oil or handle an inspection, you

don't have a network. You have nine separate businesses with the same logo. Standardisation is what turns it into a single, scalable operation.

AutoPulse Team: Underneath all of this, what does your current technology backbone look like?

Mansour: The core stack today is a point-of-sale system integrated with our ERP.

The basic flow is:

1. A job is created in the POS when the customer arrives.
2. Labour and parts are attached to that job.
3. Once the work is completed, the job is closed and billed.
4. That information flows into the ERP for accounting, inventory, and reporting.

When that chain is clean, you get:

- Accurate revenue and cost per job
- Real-time view of parts consumption and stock levels
- Clear financial performance by outlet and by service type

When that chain is broken - manual workarounds, late entries, side spreadsheets - you start seeing:

- Inventory mismatches
- Suspicious margin drops
- Endless reconciliation work between operations and finance

So before talking about "advanced features," we make sure this backbone is stable, integrated, and enforced. You can't layer serious analytics or AI on top of broken basics.

AutoPulse Team: What are the biggest operational and systems challenges across your outlets right now?

Mansour: Three stand out.

First, performance inconsistency. Some branches make the systems look good. Others expose every weakness. The difference is not the software; it's discipline and management. How

accurately job details are entered, how strictly processes are followed, and how seriously the reports are used - that's where the gap sits.

Second, operations - IT misalignment. It's still common for people to see IT as the "fix the printer" department. That mentality limits what you can do. In reality, every operational decision has a systems implication, and every systems decision has an operational consequence. Bridging that mindset gap is a constant task.

Third, distributed data. Even with integrated systems, you still find important details trapped in emails, personal notes, and spreadsheets. Consolidating that into one governed, centralised view is not glamorous, but it's essential. If data is scattered, leadership is effectively blind in certain areas.

These aren't one-time problems. They require constant pressure and periodic redesign.





AutoPulse Team: What are your main focus areas over the next couple of years as IT Manager?

Mansour: I'm focused on four fronts.

One, expansion support. We're designing infrastructure and systems with forty outlets in mind, not nine. That means thinking cloud-first, connection-first, standard-first.

Two, operational efficiency. We still have too many manual steps-duplicate entries, unnecessary handovers, and checks that could be automated. The goal is to reduce non-value-adding tasks so people can focus on work that actually needs human judgment.

Three, customer experience. This is not a slogan. It translates into very concrete things: accurate estimates, predictable turnaround times, clear updates, and clean invoices. All of that has to be supported by the system, not left to individual heroics.

Four, sustainability and compliance. As regulations evolve and expectations around environmental impact rise, we need systems that can track waste, energy use, and compliance events in measurable terms. If you can't measure, you can't manage.

Every project I take seriously has to hit at least one of these four.

AutoPulse Team: You've used the phrase "Tamimi 2.0" to describe your vision. What does that future state look like?

Mansour: "Tamimi 2.0" is my shorthand for a fully digital, fully connected network.

In that state:

- There is no paper in the core workflow. Job cards, inspections, approvals, and internal notes are all digital.
- There is no duplication of entry. Information is entered once - at the right point in the process - and then reused for billing, reporting, and analysis.
- All outlets run on a central, cloud-based platform, instead of fragmented local setups.
- Management has real-time dashboards, not stitched-together monthly PDFs.

The workshop itself becomes a node in a connected system. The physical bays and tools are still there, but they're controlled and informed by a single digital brain.

That's what turns nine outlets into forty without chaos: one coherent system, not forty interpretations.

AutoPulse Team: If we zoom into one branch in that “2.0 world,” what does a normal day look like?

Mansour: It starts before the first car arrives. The system already knows the booking schedule. It projects expected walk-ins based on historical patterns. Bay allocation is pre-planned. Technicians start the day with a clear digital view of the jobs assigned to them.

When a customer checks in:

- The advisor pulls up full history in seconds: previous jobs, deferred recommendations, mileage patterns.
- The system suggests likely service needs based on the vehicle’s age and past work.
- The estimate is built from accurate labour times and up-to-date parts pricing, not guesswork.

In the workshop:

- Technicians receive digital job cards on their terminals or tablets, with clear concerns, attached photos if needed, and prior findings.
- For complex issues, AI-powered diagnostics assist them by mapping fault codes and symptoms to probable causes, based on data from the entire network.
- Connected equipment logs results automatically into the system rather than printing a slip that gets stapled to a file.

Parts:

- Inventory levels are tracked live. The system knows if a promised job is at risk because a part is low, and it raises that flag before the customer is promised an unrealistic time.
- Reordering uses consumption data instead of just intuition.

Customer communication:

- Status updates are triggered automatically at key points-vehicle in bay, additional work recommended, job completed.

- Approval for any extra work is captured digitally, with a clear record of what was explained and accepted.

At the end of the day, the manager sees:

- How many jobs were completed
- Which services dominated
- Bay utilisation, technician productivity
- Repeat jobs and complaints

Nothing in that picture is science fiction. It’s just a coherent implementation of tools that already exist-if the underlying data and processes are in order.

AutoPulse Team: You mentioned GaragePlug specifically. How do you see it fitting into the next couple of years of your roadmap?

Mansour: GaragePlug is a key part of how we move from today’s environment to the “Tamimi 2.0” version. Practically, our roadmap includes three concrete steps around it:

First, deploying GaragePlug’s AI features to support front-line teams - service advisors and technicians - so they get smarter recommendations, more consistent job handling, and less manual effort in communication and documentation.

Second, completing and hardening the SAP ↔ GaragePlug integration. That gives us one clean, continuous data flow: jobs opened and executed in GaragePlug, financial and inventory impact reflected accurately in SAP, and unified reporting across both.

Third, building digital dashboards on top of this integrated stack, so leadership can monitor branch performance, utilisation, revenue, and quality trends in real time.

Those are not theoretical projects. They are specific, executable steps that tie technology back to operational and financial results.

AutoPulse Team: What do you see as the must-have features for any next-generation workshop platform or environment?

Mansour: For me, a next-gen workshop must have at least these capabilities:

- AI-powered diagnostics and predictive maintenance – using accumulated data to guide technicians, anticipate failures, and recommend work before problems surface.
- IoT-enabled equipment and smart inventory – tools and machines that report their status, and parts systems that monitor consumption and stock levels without manual checks.
- Augmented Reality (AR) support for repairs and training – especially useful when you have to onboard new technicians quickly while maintaining standards.
- Cloud-based workshop management – no isolated on-premise silos; everything runs on a platform that is accessible, maintainable, and scalable from the centre.
- Connected vehicle integration and OTA updates – the ability to interface with modern vehicles that are as much software as hardware.
- AI-driven customer experience engines – automated, personalised communication and follow-up that doesn't rely on each advisor crafting everything from scratch.
- Compliance and data security by design – as the volume and sensitivity of data grow, security and compliance cannot be bolted on later.

If a platform can't support that trajectory, it's already behind.

AutoPulse Team: Is there any technology trend you think is underrated but critical for future success?

Mansour: One that doesn't get enough attention is a complete vehicle service history beyond your own network.

Right now, most service providers only see what they personally did to a car. But vehicles cross cities and borders. They get serviced in multiple networks.

If we can securely gather and use information and history for a car that was serviced in other workshops or even in other countries – within proper privacy and consent frameworks – we gain a much clearer view of the vehicle's true condition.

That improves diagnostics, makes recommendations more precise, and builds trust with the customer because we're not speaking from a narrow slice of history.

It's not simple. It requires standards, agreements, and robust data handling. But strategically, it's powerful.



AutoPulse Team: Electric vehicles change the equation in workshops. How will EVs impact IT's role in auto service?

Mansour: EVs remove many traditional service items-no oil changes, fewer moving parts, no exhaust systems. But they make the IT side far more important.

Key areas:

- Battery diagnostics – understanding state of health, charge cycles, degradation, and safety.
- High-voltage system monitoring – making sure everything is stable, safe, and properly isolated.
- Software updates and firmware management – coordinating and tracking over-the-air updates, handling failures, ensuring compatibility.
- Telematics and data-driven tuning – analysing live data streams for performance, faults, and usage patterns.

That turns the workshop into a kind of digital command center. IT teams need to manage real-time data flows, remote diagnostics, secure connections, and complex update processes. In other words, with EVs, if your IT is weak, your after-sales business will be weak. They can't be separated.

AutoPulse Team: If you look five years ahead, how will you judge whether your IT roadmap was successful?

Mansour: I'll look for three things.

First, network consistency. Any customer walking into any outlet should experience the same clarity, the same basic process, and comparable quality. If the systems are strong, the experience becomes predictable.

Second, decision quality. If leadership can manage the business through live dashboards and reliable reports instead of guesses and anecdotes, then IT is doing its job. Branch visits

then become about coaching and strategy, not about discovering what is going on.

Third, future readiness. If we are able to adopt EV-related capabilities, new integrations, AI enhancements, and regulatory changes without rebuilding everything from scratch, that means we built the foundations correctly.

If those three are visible, then the roadmap worked. IT won't be something people notice every day. It will simply be the way the business operates.



INSIDE THE MIND OF A MOBILITY TRANSFORMER

A CONVERSATION WITH KALYANA SIVAGNANAM (SHIVI), GROUP CEO, PETROMIN CORPORATION



KALYANA SIVAGNANAM (SHIVI)

Group CEO, Petromin
Corporation

Kalyana Sivagnanam, Group CEO of Petromin Corporation, is a globally recognized automotive and mobility executive with extensive leadership experience at Nissan and Ford, overseeing operations across multiple regions. At Petromin, he leads a diversified portfolio spanning lubricants, quick service, EV infrastructure, digital retail platforms, and mobility solutions, driving strategic transformation and disciplined growth.

From Paints to Powerhouses: Charting an Unconventional Career

AutoPulse Team: Shivi, thank you for joining us. To set the context, how did your journey begin?

Shivi: My early career was quite linear. I started at Asian Paints—one of India’s most prestigious employers at the time. Entry was competitive, but once you were in, the path ahead felt secure. I was ambitious, and within three years, I was among the top-rated performers nationally. Then something quintessentially Indian happened: my boss moved—and I moved with him. First to EID Parry under MM Murugappan, where we helped establish a joint venture with Sony, then to Aristocrat/VIP Luggage.

Eventually, I entered the automotive industry, breaking my own rule of never joining a competing sector. But automotive is different. I have always loved cars and racing. This industry pulls you in—and keeps you there.

Over the last 22–23 years, I have worked with two Fortune 50 giants—Ford and Nissan. When I joined Ford, it owned brands such as Jaguar, Land Rover, Volvo, Aston Martin, and Hertz. It was a remarkable leadership academy. I haven’t looked back since.



AutoPulse Team: Your journey has been richly international. How did those global roles shape your perspective?

Shivi: My family migrated to the UK decades ago, so even when I worked for multinationals, I was often given responsibility for India and neighboring regions.

I joined GRUNDIG GmbH, a Philips subsidiary in the Netherlands, to launch Grundig across India and Southeast Asia. Later, at Johnson Controls, I was part of the core team that launched Amaron with Amara Raja Batteries—today a market leader in India. That was my real entry into automotive.

Ford then headhunted me. Of my 16 years there, I spent 14 in London, helping establish Ford’s Africa and the Middle East region.

Nissan later approached me for a similar mandate. I oversaw commercial operations across 84 countries—from Turkey and the CIS to the Middle East, Africa, and parts of South Asia—while based in Dubai, working closely with Yokohama HQ. Managing such breadth forces you to understand different cultures, market structures, and dealer expectations in a very granular way.

AutoPulse Team: You’ve operated inside American, Japanese, and regional management cultures. What did you learn?

Shivi: The leadership styles are distinct.

- American companies like Ford are results-driven, decisive, and shaped by strong leadership personalities.
- Japanese organisations such as Nissan and Toyota are consensus-oriented.

Alignment takes time, but execution becomes very strong once decided.

- Indian management often sits somewhere between the two.

I never found the differences difficult, because I don't see leadership as a fixed style. It's adaptive. For example, at Nissan, we redesigned distributor margins in Saudi Arabia. My team completed the design in six weeks, but the rollout took nearly a year because every stakeholder had to be heard. At Ford, the same decision might have been implemented far faster.

When you work with people from 70 nationalities, as I did at Nissan, there is no single leadership playbook. Ideas are easy. Execution across vastly different cultures is the real challenge. A CEO's true job is mobilising people to make ideas real.

The Petromin Chapter: A Crisis, a Hotel Room and a Reinvention

AutoPulse Team: How did your move to Petromin Corporation come about?

Shivi: I've now lived in Jeddah longer than I lived in Dubai. Joining Petromin—despite it being family-owned—was surprisingly seamless. The family is disciplined and very clear: this is a professionally run organization. The major shift is that the buck stops with me. There is no global HQ above, that sharpens accountability.

There's also a unique story behind my arrival. I landed in Jeddah on 12 February 2020 with two suitcases. The plan was simple: get my residence permit, find a home, move my

belongings, and start the job.

Three weeks later, the world shut down. Suddenly, I was stuck in a nearly closed hotel—just me, one other guest, and three staff members keeping the lights on. I had never even made tea before. Those 12–18 months were a test of mental resilience as much as professional leadership.

AutoPulse Team: And during that time, you were steering Petromin through one of the world's strictest lockdowns.

Shivi: Saudi Arabia's lockdown was stringent. For us, the decisions were high-stakes.

Petromin Express had around 3,000 expat technicians. If we sent them home, restarting operations would have been nearly impossible. We took a calculated risk: we kept everyone here and paid full salaries, even with zero revenue.

But we didn't sit still. With my colleague Shoaib, we restructured the company. While many competitors downsized, we saw an opportunity. Brands were being abandoned by their distributors.

We did the opposite:

- Retained our talent.
- Recruited high-quality people made redundant elsewhere.
- Signed multiple new brands during the lockdown.

When restrictions were lifted, we accelerated quickly. We expanded internationally—launching 1,000 garages with HPCL in India, moving into Malaysia, and growing our footprint in Saudi Arabia. The crisis became an accelerant.

Three Stakeholders. One Integrated Vision

AutoPulse Team: You emphasise balancing shareholders, customers, and teams. How do you approach that?

Shivi: I see my world as three interconnected stakeholders:

- Shareholders, who invest.
- Customers, who create value.
- Teams that execute.

A CEO must optimise outcomes across all three—not maximise any single stakeholder at the expense of the others. This begins with clarity about our customer: who they are, where we can add value, and what we should avoid. Focus is often more strategic than ambition.

We then align the organisation through disciplined execution. At Petromin, we redefined ourselves from a lubricant company to a mobility company, covering EVs, used-car digital platforms, fintech solutions, and more.

Operationally, we keep it simple. One focused review week per month.

- High-performing businesses review monthly.
- Underperforming ones get daily attention until resolved.

Our review decks are numbers only - no text, no pictures. It removes ambiguity and accelerates accountability.

Given the volatility of today's world, the five-year investment horizon is obsolete. If I cannot see a path to profitability in three years, I hesitate. The external environment changes too quickly.

Strategy in an Age Where Six-Month Plans Feel Ambitious

AutoPulse Team: How should CEOs rethink long-term strategy in this climate?

Shivi: When I joined Ford, five-year plans were standard. Today, a six-month plan can feel long-term.

The pace of disruption is extraordinary.

- BYD barely featured in discussions a few years ago; today it challenges Tesla.
- Nokia dominated with ~85% global share; Apple rewrote the rules.
- Kodak owned 80% of the film market; within five years the industry disappeared.

Between 2003 and 2008, film photography went from more than 90% of images to under 1%. That kind of compression will become normal. EV markets swing dramatically—from hype to “slowdown” narratives in a single cycle.

Leaders must therefore:

- Stay nimble.
- Stay informed.
- Decide quickly.
- Change continuously.



A great strategy is meaningless if the world shifts under your feet

At Petromin, we constantly ask:

“Does this still make sense today? Will it make sense tomorrow?”

There are no sacred cows.

Culture, Change and the Human Dimension

AutoPulse Team: Rapid direction changes can unsettle large workforces. How do you manage that?

Shivi: Human beings naturally resist disruption. That’s normal. The question isn’t whether resistance will occur—it will. The real question is how you manage it. The answer is:

- More communication.
- More explanation.
- Clear articulation of the “why.”

No organisation has a perfect change-management model. What matters is the journey. At Petromin, we’ve crossed the first critical threshold: the organisation now understands that change is essential for survival.

AutoPulse Team: Petromin’s attrition rates are remarkably low. How?

Shivi: Our 5–7% attrition rate is not accidental. It’s built on accessibility, communication, and consistency.

People ask tough questions; leadership must answer honestly. I don’t just speak to my direct reports —I speak across levels.

Trust comes from alignment between what you say and what you do. Personally, I’m transparent. If I’m disappointed, people see it. If I’m pleased, they see that too. Over time, you learn to respond thoughtfully rather than react impulsively.

Ultimately, if you give your job 100% with integrity, outcomes—good or bad—are easier to accept.

AutoPulse Team: Will Petromin diversify beyond automotive?

Shivi: Our expertise is in automotive and mobility. This sector is vast enough—retail, aftersales, software, EVs, digital marketplaces, fintech. We don’t chase trends outside our core.

The big shifts ahead include:

- Vehicles becoming connected devices, integrating functions currently handled by phones or laptops.
- Changing workforce expectations, with younger generations demanding balance and better working conditions.

Companies that align with both will thrive.

Across our group—from fuel stations to EV divisions—we are building an integrated mobility ecosystem. Our fuel stations see 2,000 customers a day; Petromin Express sees 11,000.

The natural vision is a one-stop platform meeting multiple mobility needs.

This requires navigating regulations, data protection, and legacy systems. AI is an enabler, but must be deployed responsibly. We work with specialists to ensure that.

A Final Word to Industry Leaders

AutoPulse Team: If you had to leave one message with industry leaders, what would it be?

Shivi: I wouldn't call it advice as there are lots of very talented people out there, but my experience suggests this:

- Be nimble.
- Move fast.
- Adapt to your customer's evolving needs.

If you look after your customers and your teams—and remain agile and honest—everything else tends to fall into place.

AutoPulse Team: Shivi, thank you for the clarity and depth you brought to today's conversation.

Shivi: Appreciate it. I enjoyed the discussion — thoughtful questions always make it meaningful.”

AutoPulse Team: Your perspective on leadership and mobility will stay with our audience.

Shivi: If it helps leaders move faster and sharper, it's time well spent.

AutoPulse Team: It's been a privilege having you on CEO's Talk.

Shivi: Likewise. Happy to return as the industry continues to evolve.”



RICHARD FLANAGAN ON BUILDING SERIOUS AUTO SERVICE WORKSHOPS



RICHARD FLANAGAN

General Manager,
HDX Auto Repairing,
Hassani Group

Richard Flanagan is a four-decade automotive veteran and current General Manager of Fleet & Maintenance at HDX Auto Repairing, Hassani Group. Beginning as an apprentice technician in the UK and progressing through major truck manufacturers and hydrogen-vehicle projects in the US and UK, he blends deep technical expertise with large-scale fleet leadership.

AutoPulse Team: Richard, before we get into systems and processes, I want to start with you. How did you first get into automotive, and how do you describe what you do today?

Richard: I started in this industry when I was about fourteen years old, on work experience and day release from school. At 16, I started my apprenticeship in the UK, and since then, I have never done anything else. My passion was and still is the automotive industry.

Over the years, that's taken different shapes, but the base is the same. Right now, I am the General Manager for HDX Auto Repairing. I am responsible for the fleet from what I call "cradle to grave" - purchasing new vehicles, allocating them, maintaining them, repairing them, bodywork, and then later deciding if a vehicle is repaired, replaced, or retired. On top of that, there's the new retail arm and car wash under HDX, so the workshop side has to function as a business, not just an in-house maintenance department.

What hasn't changed is that I'm still a mechanic at heart. I still come down onto the floor, I still get my hands dirty. Always looking for ways to improve the service to the customer, products that we can offer, etc.



AutoPulse Team: You say you "like to win." What does winning mean to you in a workshop context?

Richard: Winning for me is simple: the operation works efficiently. That means the fleet runs reliably, the workshop isn't messy - not just physically, but in terms of process and data - and customers or users leave with their problem genuinely fixed.

To get there, you need three things in place at the same time:

- The right people,
- The right tools
- The right process

I push my teams hard because I want them to be better than me. New technologies, New IT systems, and diagnostics will not make work easier or smoother. If you are not pushing to be better than before, you will go backwards. If I'm going to call something my workshop or my fleet, I want it to be right. That's what "winning" looks like.

AutoPulse Team: When you arrived at this current site, it was basically a warehouse. When you had the chance to build out the workshop, what were the main principles in your head?

Richard: The building was a blank slate. It had been a warehouse, and the project had been dragging a bit for a couple of years before I came in. I've seen plenty of workshops where cars are shoved in any which way, everything's dark, and there are corners where no one really knows what's going on. I didn't want that.

The principles were:

- It has to flow. The customer should experience a journey from start to finish. They can see the journey as soon as they arrive.

- It has to be visible. We reverse cars into the bays so anybody walking through can see what the technicians are working on. No one hiding behind a bonnet, no one hidden under shelves. When people know they're visible, they naturally work cleaner and sharper, and the customer can also see this.
- It has to be somewhere people enjoy walking into. Customers should be able to look around and see a proper workshop, not a dumping ground. Respect shown for their property. A car is one of the most expensive purchases for many people, and seeing that we respect their purchase means we respect our customer.

Those were the ideas. It wasn't about making it fancy; it was about making it honest and functional.

AutoPulse Team: When you walk into the workshop each morning, what are the few things you instinctively check to know where the day stands?

Richard: Every morning, I spend 10 to 15 minutes discussing the vehicles currently "work in progress" with my supervisors and the lead technician. This is vital to ensure we are all looking at the same repairs, issues, or delays. I then receive my daily GAP tracker. This is a model I created to enable everyone to see what the revenue, cost, and vehicle flow are on a day-to-day basis, measured against the budget for the month. How many vehicles have been received, how many are in progress, how many are waiting for parts, how many are waiting for QC or washing. That tells you where the pressure points are.

I then go through the waiting for parts category. If too many cars are stuck there, you know you'll have calls and delays lined up. If that's under control, my time can be allocated to other areas.

new business, expansion of the workshop etc.

Finally I look at who is on what. Technicians, especially. Because we clock time on jobs now, I can see efficiency numbers. So I know if the right people are dealing with the right type of jobs, and whether someone's struggling or flying. Those checks give me a pretty good read early in the day.

AutoPulse Team: You've dealt with everything from everyday fleet vehicles to an old Rolls-Royce that had been parked for nearly two decades. What's your philosophy for tackling complex or unusual jobs?

Richard: The main thing is not to panic and not to guess.

The owners Rolls-Royce is a good example. That car had been standing for close to twenty years. You can't just drop a battery in, turn the key, and hope for the best. You go step by step - fuel, brakes, cooling, electrics - and you respect the age and condition of each part. We followed a proper process, changed what had to be changed, made sure it was safe, and now it runs, the AC works amazing for a 45 year old car, and it's being used again. In a multi-brand workshop, every manufacturer has its own way of doing things. Diagnostics, wiring philosophy, typical failures - they're all different.



So the philosophy is:

- Understand the basics of how the systems work. You can never forget the basics.
- Diagnostic tools can be the solution to many issues, but sometimes you have to just listen to the car. A screwdriver to the ear is sometimes the best tool you have.
- Use the correct diagnostic tools,
- Take your time with inspection,
- And don't pretend you can shortcut experience.

If you stick to that, you can handle a lot of variety without turning every job into chaos

AutoPulse Team: On diagnostics specifically, you have mechanical faults, you have electrical faults. How do you think about diagnosis so that it's real accuracy and not guesswork?

Richard: You start by listening properly to the complaint, then you choose the right approach. If it's mechanical - like suspension knocks, vibrations, brake feel - we road test. You feel what the driver is feeling. If it's electrical, you lean more on scanning and step-by-step checks.

Take an example of a Pajero brake case we had. The driver said the pedal was very hard and he was scared to drive it. We told him to park it; we recovered the car. After inspecting and diagnosing properly, we found the brake booster had simply reached the end of its life.

So we went after the real cause, not the symptom.

Fix once and never chase a fault.

The pattern is:

- Don't jump straight to parts,
- Diagnose in a structured way,
- Confirm the fault before you talk about money.

That's how you avoid chasing your tail.

AutoPulse Team: You manage roughly a thousand vehicles for Hassani across many departments. How has your approach to data changed the way you look at breakdowns and maintenance?

Richard: Before, we used to try to do business intelligence manually. We were creating around forty job cards a day and then typing all of that into Excel - vehicle codes, categories, parts, pricing, gross margin - one by one. That was basically a full-time job, and you still weren't fully confident in the data.

Now the data is recorded while we work. We've built reports with the MIS and IT teams so we can see:

- What categories of work keep appearing,
- What we're spending on specific types of repairs,
- Which parts are moving and from which suppliers,
- And how often vehicles come back with trouble.

On breakdowns, you can see the effect of proper process. Earlier, we were getting around eight to ten breakdowns a month from the fleet. After tightening up QC, inspections, and data, that number dropped to around two to three. That's not an opinion; that's from the data.

So the way I think about it now is: if you don't have accurate data, you're just "feeling" your way through fleet management. With data, you can actually justify when to repair, when to replace, and where to spend the money.



AutoPulse Team: You've worked with technicians who've been in the trade for decades and some who were new to digital tools. What have you learned about bringing a team like that onto more structured, system-driven work?

Richard: When we started bringing in digital processes, a lot of technicians had basically never used a mouse or a keyboard properly, never mind a tablet. We didn't flip a switch and expect miracles. It took around eight weeks of ongoing training - showing them how to:

- Find their jobs,
- Clock on and clock off,
- Pause for a tea break,
- And then pick back up where they left off.

At the same time, we made it clear that this wasn't just for us to watch them - it was for them to see their own performance. Every month, I send them an efficiency report. They can see their own percentage, they can see their colleagues' numbers, and they start asking, "Why is he higher, why am I lower?" That kind of comparison, when it's based on real data, makes them help each other.

So the main lesson is:

- Don't assume people can't learn,
- Give them the time and repetition,
- And then give them feedback that's transparent, not hidden.

That combination has taken us from efficiency in the sixties to efficiency in the eighties across the workshop, which is a big shift.

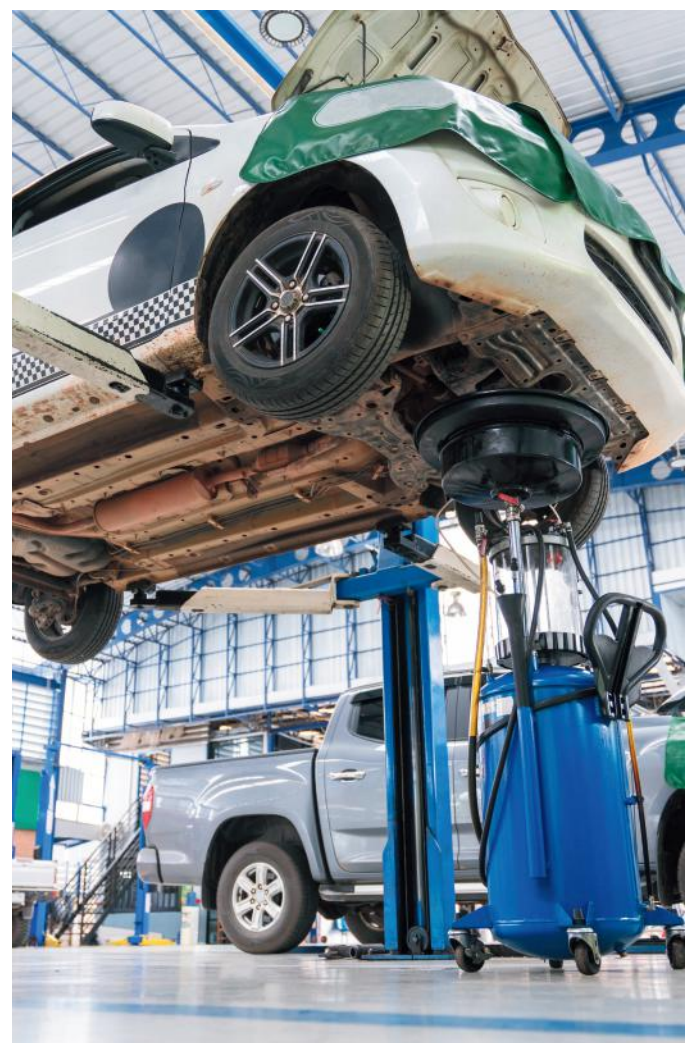
AutoPulse Team: When you look at who grows under you - supervisors, seniors - what signals tell you that someone is ready for more responsibility?

Richard: I look for passion first. Someone who actually cares if the job is done right.

Then I look at how they handle problems. When there's a vehicle that's been hanging around or a customer that's not happy, do they step in and try to solve it, or do they avoid it?

I also pay attention to how they deal with the tools and systems. Are they willing to use new methods - whether that's digital job control or modern diagnostics - or are they always trying to go around them?

We've got people who've been in automotive for more than twenty years, and they'll tell you that in the last six years they've probably learned more again. The ones who treat every issue as something to be understood and solved, not avoided, are the ones I see as future leaders.



AutoPulse Team: A lot of your work is fleet, but you also handle retail customers. What's your personal approach to building trust with vehicle owners?

Richard: First thing is, you don't hide anything. The customer owns the car; we're responsible for taking care of it while it's with us. So whatever we find, we fix properly, and we explain properly. On inspections, we have a detailed checklist - we even built our own "HDX inspection" format. We mark item by item, record the condition of parts, and there's the option to take photos.

Obviously, we can't ask the customer to come under the car, but we can show them.

When we prepare an estimate, it clearly shows:

- Which parts are needed?
- What is the repair cost?
- What they're going to pay if they approve it.

The system sends that estimate out to them - message, email - so they see it in writing before saying yes. If there is any additional work once we open the car, we call and explain it, and only then proceed.

If you consistently handle it that way - transparent estimate, clear explanation, proper inspection - customers start to come back because of trust, not because you're the closest option.

AutoPulse Team: You mentioned QC is non-negotiable. How does that show up in the way you run both fleet and retail jobs?

Richard: For us, QC is a gate. Until QC is done, the job is not finished. Every job - whether it's commercial fleet or retail - has to pass a quality inspection before we can close it and invoice it. In the way we've set things up, you simply cannot close the job card without ticking that step, because it's built into the process.

It's not just a formality. We actually check the work that's been done. On the fleet side, you can see it in the breakdown numbers dropping. On the retail side, you see it in customer satisfaction and retention. Our customer retention is at 98% and that brings in new customers.

When workshops are busy, QC is usually the first thing people are tempted to "just skip this once." We don't do that. If you make that compromise normal, it will cost you more in the long term than you save in the short term.

AutoPulse Team: You've been in automotive since 1986. When you look at how workshops have changed from then to now, what has actually changed and what hasn't?

Richard: On what physically wears out on a vehicle - brakes, suspension, basic engine parts - not that much has changed. Mechanics are still mechanics. I'm still a mechanic. I'll still come down here and work on a car; that part feels familiar.



Where it's changed is the digital layer. There's more scanning, more electronics, more ways to read the vehicle. There are even drive-over systems now that can assess certain conditions as the car passes. The next step for workshops is going to be more use of that sort of technology and more integration of data.

I don't personally think EVs will completely take over in this region in the very near term. People here will still have petrol engines and mechanical systems for a long time. But the way we interact with those cars - the diagnostics, the data, the reporting - is definitely changing. The key is to keep the basics and then add the new tools on top, not the other way around.

AutoPulse Team: You work closely with IT, MIS, head office, technicians, and supervisors - quite a wide set of stakeholders. What kind of leadership do you think the industry needs more of?

Richard: Hands-on leadership.

You can't run this business properly if you're locked in a big office all day. You need to know what your technicians are actually doing and why, what your service advisors are saying and whom they are saying it to, and what your customers have been through before they reach you. If a customer comes in after a bad repair somewhere else, you need to understand that situation - what's been done, what hasn't been done - and guide both the team and the customer through fixing it properly.

So my approach is:

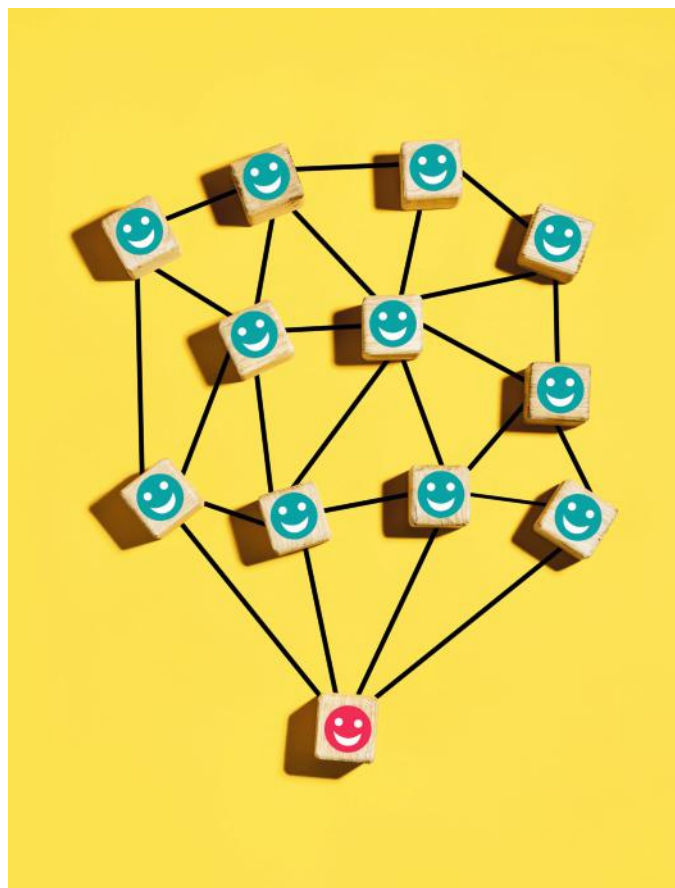
- Be present in the workshop,
- Be involved in the difficult cases,
- Use the data, but also use your own eyes and ears.

If more leaders in the industry did that, you'd see better standards by default, because people

on the floor behave differently when they know their manager understands their work in detail.

AutoPulse Team: If you could give one piece of advice to workshop managers and fleet leaders who are trying to modernise without losing control, what would you tell them?

Richard: Be involved, and don't forget the basics. You can bring in new systems, new tools, new dashboards, but if you forget how the work is actually done on the floor, you won't get the full benefit of any of it. Stay close to the jobs, close to the technicians, and close to the cars. Learn the new technology - even if you're not Gen Z - enough to understand what it's doing and what it isn't doing. Then use it to reinforce good habits, not replace them. If you mix old-school basics with new-school digital in a sensible way, you'll run a much stronger operation than if you chase one and ignore the other.



CONVERSATION WITH SYED M. HUSSAIN: BUILDING AUTO SERVICE 2.0 FOR THE KINGDOM



SYED M. HUSSAIN

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Syed M. Hussain is an IT Engineer by profession and a Digital Transformation & Business Solutions leader in the KSA automotive and service industry, currently serving as the Digital Transformation, IT & Business Solutions Lead at Aljomaih Tyres and Pitlane by Aljomaih. PG Certified from London, his career spans from hands-on technical engineering roles to leading enterprise-wide digital modernization and business technology programs across globally reputed organizations.

AutoPulse Team: Syed Hussain, thank you for joining us. Let's begin with your journey. How did you first enter the auto service industry?

Syed Hussain: My journey into the automotive service industry didn't begin with tools in hand or behind a front desk. It began with a strategic mandate to help reshape the way a business operated at its very core.

I entered through my work with Aljomaih Tyres and later with Pitlane, where I was asked to lead digital transformation initiatives and ensure that operations were aligned with the company's long-term vision. At first glance, this might sound like an IT project, but in reality, it was far more complex. What I was facing was not simply a matter of updating technology; it was a complete cultural and operational shift. The most challenging part of this work was integration. We needed to make sure that every business process and every requirement of the Garage Management System (GMS) was fully met. That meant bringing together systems and workflows that had never been designed to connect. Finance had one way of doing things. Inventory operated in another silo. Customer service followed a different playbook altogether. And technicians had their own rhythms and routines that had developed over the years.

The task was to bring all of this together into a cohesive ecosystem. It required enormous coordination, patience, and persistence. There were endless meetings, testing cycles, and retraining sessions. At times, it felt like trying to fit together puzzle pieces from different sets. But through that struggle, I gained something invaluable: a deep, hands-on understanding of the real challenges inside the auto service industry. I saw how much time was lost in silos, how difficult it was to get a single view of

operations, and how frustrated customers became when processes weren't seamless.

That experience taught me a powerful lesson: digitization alone is not enough. Simply replacing paper with screens doesn't solve the underlying fragmentation. What's required is a true connection. Every system, every team, and every customer touchpoint must be part of the same story.

That's why we started introducing AI, automation, and customer-facing digital platforms. They weren't just "nice to have" technologies; they were essential building blocks of a scalable, connected operational model. They enabled us to move from firefighting to foresight, from isolated processes to integrated ones, and from basic transactions to enriched customer experiences.

Looking back, I can say that this entry point shaped everything that came after. It showed me that the future of auto service lies not in doing the same things faster, but in reimagining the model itself, making it smarter, more connected, and truly customer-centric.



AutoPulse Team: Tell us about your current auto service business.

Syed Hussain: Today, we operate a network of 10 service outlets, and I like to think of each one as more than just a branch where vehicles are repaired. They are service ecosystems in their own right, interconnected hubs that address not only the immediate needs of customers but also anticipate the evolving demands of modern mobility.

Our outlets offer a comprehensive range of services: tyre sales with many brands, mechanical repairs, tire replacement, diagnostics, batteries, oil changes, preventive checks, and a host of value-added solutions that make the customer journey smoother. This breadth ensures that whether a customer walks in for something simple, like a tire swap, or for something complex, like advanced diagnostics, they find everything under one roof.

But scale and service breadth are only part of the story. The real differentiator for us lies in how we deliver these services. Our vision is not about being “just another workshop” in the market. It’s about redefining the standard of service delivery by embedding digital transformation at the heart of everything we do.

We’ve invested heavily in AI-enhanced operational systems. These systems don’t just automate routine tasks; they create a complete visibility layer across our business.

At any given time, I can see:

- which workshops are at peak load,
- which technicians are available and skilled for specific tasks,
- how inventory is moving across outlets, and
- how customers are interacting with our services.

This visibility allows us to make smarter

decisions in real time. It reduces downtime, avoids duplication of effort and ensures customers never face unnecessary delays. In many ways, it has transformed our mindset from being reactive to being proactively efficient. Another major element of our model is digital engagement platforms. In the old service model, a customer’s interaction with a workshop mandatory to visit the service center and then booking and paying for the service.

We’re changing that. Through apps, online portals, and digital communication tools, we stay connected with customers even outside their workshop visits. They receive service updates in real time, predictive alerts about upcoming maintenance, and even personalized offers based on their vehicle history. This means that service is no longer a one-off transaction; it’s a continuous dialogue.

For example, if a customer has just serviced their car with us, our new system GaragePlug can proactively alert them about service and even send reminders when it detects a pattern in their vehicle’s usage. It’s not about selling more services; it’s about building trust and loyalty by being relevant at the right time. When you step back and look at the whole picture, our 10 outlets are not simply branches scattered across the Kingdom. They’re nodes in a connected network that we are carefully designing to be future-ready. The integration of operations, digital engagement, and AI-driven visibility makes it possible for us to deliver both sustainable growth for the business and exceptional experiences for customers.

To me, this is where the industry is headed. Service centers that remain transactional will eventually lose relevance. But those that build connected ecosystems where physical outlets and digital platforms reinforce each other will not only survive but also set new benchmarks for

excellence. That's the journey we're on today.

AutoPulse Team: You've been calling this vision Auto Service 2.0. For your current business, what does that actually mean?

Syed Hussain: For us, Auto Service 2.0 is about how we transform our brand and operations to meet the future head-on. It's not a generic slogan; it's a roadmap for our growth and customer engagement strategy.

Today, with 10 service outlets and more in the near future, we have a strong foundation. Customers trust us, and we're already delivering a wide range of services supported by digital platforms. But the next chapter, Version 2.0, is where we aim to redefine ourselves.

Our vision is to build a fully connected, AI-driven, customer-centric ecosystem. That means several things in practice:

- **Scaling our network with intelligence:** Expansion for us is not just about adding more outlets. It's about ensuring every new outlet is part of a connected grid where data flows seamlessly from customer touchpoints to workshop operations to supply chain.
- **AI-powered personalization:** Imagine a customer who interacts with us online before they ever walk into a branch. Through predictive analytics, we'll already know their vehicle's needs, service history, and likely next requirements. Their experience with us feels uniquely tailored because it is proactive, not reactive service: Instead of waiting for breakdowns, our systems will alert customers before problems occur. They'll receive predictive maintenance reminders, real-time diagnostics, and even automatic booking suggestions. This changes the customer relationship from "fixing problems" to "preventing them."

- **Seamless omnichannel journeys:** Whether customers interact online, through mobile, or at a physical outlet, the experience will feel consistent, transparent, and intuitive. From booking to payment, every step is designed for efficiency and trust.

This transformation will not only elevate the way customers interact with our brand but will also set a new benchmark for operational excellence in the Kingdom. Customers will see us not as a workshop they visit when something goes wrong, but as a long-term partner in their vehicle ownership journey.

In short, Auto Service 2.0 for our business is about becoming predictive, proactive, and personalized. It's about using technology, data, and design thinking to create a model where customers feel cared for and where operations run seamlessly in the background.

Our goal is not just to compete in the market but to redefine the standard of what after-sales service can and should look like in this region.

AutoPulse Team: That's a powerful vision. Where would you say you stand today compared to that Version 2.0 roadmap?

Syed Hussain: If Auto Service 2.0 is the destination, then I'd say we're already on the highway, moving at a steady pace, but we're not yet at the finish line. Today, our network of 10 outlets gives us both reach and insight.

We're serving thousands of customers every month, and that interaction gives us valuable data about behaviors, preferences, and pain points. This is the fuel that will eventually power the intelligence layer of our Version 2.0 model.

Operationally, we have already made significant progress:

- Digital adoption is underway. Customers can already book services online, access transparent pricing, and receive updates through digital channels. This may seem basic, but in our region, not every workshop is even at this stage. It's a foundational step that puts us ahead.
- Training and culture shifts are in motion. A transformation like Auto Service 2.0 is not just about technology; it's about people. Our teams are being trained to adopt a data-first mindset, to treat every customer touchpoint as an opportunity to learn and improve.
- Infrastructure is being aligned. We've standardized key processes across outlets so that a customer in Riyadh gets the same experience as a customer in Jeddah. This consistency is critical because without it, scaling with intelligence is impossible.

At the same time, I want to be clear: there's still a gap between where we are and where we want to be. Today, much of our digital interaction still relies on customers initiating the journey. They come to us, they book with us. In Auto Service 2.0, we'll flip that dynamic. We'll reach out first, using AI-driven triggers to predict when a customer's vehicle needs attention and proactively offering solutions.

Another gap is the integration of data across systems. While we've digitized bookings, invoicing, and inventory, these systems are still partially siloed. The goal is to create a single, connected data layer that unifies all functions. Only then can AI truly deliver predictive insights at scale.

So, to answer your question: today, we're solidly at Version 1.5. We have a strong digital foundation, a culture moving in the right direction, and outlets that are standardized and scalable.

The next leap is the intelligence layer, the predictive, proactive, and personalized experience that will define our Version 2.0.

The encouraging part is that every step we've taken so far proves the model is possible. Customers are embracing digital. Teams are adapting to change. The market is ready. It's now about accelerating execution and building the connected ecosystem that will bring the vision fully to life.

AutoPulse Team: You've mentioned that part of your Version 2.0 journey is preparing for EVs. Can you walk us through what that means for your outlets and teams today?

Syed Hussain: Absolutely, EV-readiness is not a side project for us; it's central to the future-proofing of our business model.

We all know the global automotive industry is undergoing a seismic shift. Even though EV penetration in the Middle East is still relatively low, the momentum is undeniable. OEMs are investing billions, regulations are being reshaped, and customers are increasingly aware of sustainability. For me, the question has never been "Will EVs arrive?" The real question is "Will we be ready before they do?"

That's why we've set a clear milestone: by October/November, at least one of our outlets will be fully Tesla-certified.

This is not just about hanging a certificate on the wall. It means our technicians, tools, safety protocols, and infrastructure will all meet the rigorous global standards required to service EVs, starting with Tesla, one of the most demanding and advanced OEMs out there.

This move has three layers of impact:

- **Technical readiness.** Servicing EVs is fundamentally different from servicing internal combustion vehicles. You're dealing with high-voltage systems, battery management, regenerative braking things that require entirely new skill sets. Through this certification, our technicians will not just learn how to service EVs, but how to do it safely, efficiently, and in alignment with global benchmarks.
- **Customer trust.** Imagine being an EV owner today in Riyadh or Dubai. Where do you go for service? Your options are limited, and trust is fragile. By achieving Tesla certification, we're sending a clear message: our outlets are ready, reliable, and trustworthy for the next generation of vehicles. It's a competitive differentiator, but more importantly, it's about customer confidence.
- **Cultural transformation.** This is the part most people overlook. Preparing for EVs is not just about new tools; it's about a new mindset. We're training our technicians to think beyond mechanical fixes, to embrace diagnostics, software updates, and continuous learning. EVs evolve rapidly, so the culture must be one of agility and lifelong learning.

When people ask me, "Why prepare so early when EV volumes are still small?" My answer is simple: leadership is not about reacting when the wave hits, it's about being on the surfboard before the wave arrives.

This early readiness positions us as a partner of choice for OEMs, fleets, and forward-thinking customers. And it ensures that when EV adoption accelerates in the region, which it inevitably will, we won't be scrambling to catch up. We'll already be there, established, trusted, and ready to lead.

In fact, I often tell my teams: EV readiness is not an option; it's an insurance policy for the future of our business.

AutoPulse Team: Preparing for EVs clearly demands a new skill set. But even beyond EVs, how do you see technician training and workforce development evolving under your leadership?

Syed Hussain: That's a crucial point. EVs are just one part of the transformation. The bigger story is that the role of a technician itself is being redefined.

In the traditional workshop model, technicians were valued primarily for their mechanical expertise their ability to diagnose an engine problem by sound, or fix a gearbox with their hands. Those skills remain important, but they are no longer sufficient on their own. In Auto Service 2.0, technicians must also be digitally fluent, customer-aware, and adaptive learners.

Let me break that down.

- **Digital fluency** - Workshops today are powered by diagnostic software, cloud-based management systems, and connected tools. A technician who cannot interpret a dashboard of diagnostic data or understand an AI-generated repair suggestion will quickly fall behind. We are making it mandatory that every technician across our outlets undergo digital literacy training, not just once, but as a continuous program.
- **Customer-facing confidence** - In many markets, technicians remain in "back-office" roles. They fix cars but don't interact with customers. I see this as a missed opportunity. A technician who can explain what's happening with a vehicle in simple, transparent language builds trust far faster than any marketing campaign. We are training our workforce not just to repair vehicles, but to communicate value to become ambassadors of trust.

- Lifelong learning mindset. The vehicles of tomorrow will change every two to three years, not just in body design but in core technology. Battery chemistry, ADAS systems, connected vehicle software, everything is evolving rapidly. That means a technician who graduates from a training program today will need continuous refreshers to stay relevant. We're building this philosophy into our HR model: training is not a one-time cost, it's an ongoing investment.

When I speak to my teams, I remind them: we're not just training for skills, we're training for resilience. If a technician can learn how to service a Tesla today, they will be better positioned to service whatever comes next, whether that's a hydrogen vehicle, a new ADAS platform, or something we haven't even imagined yet.

One of the most powerful changes we've made is shifting the technician's identity from being "a pair of hands" to being a knowledge worker. This is subtle but transformative. It instills pride, it elevates the role in the eyes of the customer, and it ensures that our business has the intellectual horsepower to adapt, no matter how the industry evolves.

And let's be candid: the biggest bottleneck in our industry is not technology, it's talent. You can buy the latest diagnostic tool, but without well-trained people to use it, it's just an expensive box. For me, therefore, technician training is not an HR exercise. It is a core pillar of strategy as important as financial planning or digital transformation.

Ultimately, when I think about the next 5–10 years, I see workshops not just as garages but as learning organizations.

Every outlet should be a classroom, every technician a student, and a teacher, and every customer interaction an opportunity to demonstrate mastery. That's how we'll create sustainable differentiation in a crowded market.

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AutoPulse Team: You've spoken about operations, EV readiness, and training. But at the end of the day, everything comes down to the customer. In your view, how is customer experience changing, and what is your vision for shaping it under Auto Service 2.0?

Syed Hussain: You're absolutely right, all the technology, all the operational excellence, all the training programs are only meaningful if they translate into a better experience for the customer.

Let me be direct here: I believe Customer Experience (CX) is the single most important battleground of the next decade in auto service. We are no longer competing only on price, product, or location. We are competing on trust, transparency, and convenience.

When I think about Auto Service 2.0, I think of flipping the script. For decades, customers felt powerless when they walked into a workshop. They didn't understand the jargon, they didn't know if the diagnosis was accurate, and they often walked away feeling they had overpaid. This imbalance has damaged the reputation of the industry.

My vision is to restore balance and even tilt it in the customer's favor.



- **Transparency as a baseline.** For us, transparency is not a “value-add,” it’s the foundation. Customers must see what’s happening with their car in real time. Digital inspection reports, images, video walkthroughs, and live status updates are becoming standard practice across our outlets. A customer should never feel they are “handing over” their vehicle into a black box. They should feel they are co-pilots in the repair journey.
- **Convenience as a differentiator.** The customer of today doesn’t want to wait three hours in a reception lounge, sipping coffee while their car is serviced. They want flexibility. That means pick-up and drop-off, mobile servicing, digital payments, and remote approvals. Auto Service 2.0 must meet the customer where they are, not expect the customer to fit into the workshop’s processes.
- **Trust through consistency.** Trust is built not in a single transaction, but in repeatability. If a customer gets one experience in Outlet A and a completely different one in Outlet B, we lose credibility. That’s why we’ve invested heavily in standardized SOPs and digital monitoring systems. Every outlet, every advisor, every technician must deliver the same level of service. Consistency is not just operational efficiency; it is brand protection.
- **Personalization through data.** This is where digitalization becomes powerful. By capturing and analyzing customer data, we can anticipate needs before the customer even voices them. Imagine sending a reminder that their battery health is declining, or offering a promotion on tires just as they approach the end of life. That kind of proactive care transforms the

relationship from transactional to consultative.

Let me give you an example. Recently, a customer brought in their vehicle and was worried about being “overcharged.” Instead of a defensive approach, our advisor showed them a full breakdown of the diagnosis on-screen, with visuals, and explained the steps in simple local language. The customer’s immediate response was: “This is the first time I’ve felt in control at a workshop.” That is the future customers who walk away empowered, not intimidated.

If you ask me what Auto Service 2.0 means at its core, I’d say this: it’s when workshops stop being repair centers and start being trust centers. That’s the paradigm shift I want to drive.

AutoPulse Team: You’ve defined Auto Service 2.0 as an ecosystem built on trust, customer empowerment, and operational excellence. That naturally leads to technology. How do you see digital transformation and data shaping this new era for your business?



Here’s how I break it down:

- **Connected Operations.** Each outlet today has multiple touchpoints: job card creation, inspections, technician updates, parts requests, invoicing, follow-ups. If these run in silos, data is fragmented and leadership is blind. In our model, everything is connected through one central platform. That means if a technician updates a repair status, the advisor, parts team, and even customer see it in real time. The speed and clarity this creates cannot be overstated.
- **Business Intelligence (BI).** One of the most underused assets in the service industry is data. Workshops generate mountains of it every day labor hours, parts consumption, customer demographics, repeat visits, complaints. Auto Service 2.0 leverages BI dashboards to convert this into decision-ready insights. For example, I can see which outlet has the highest repeat job rate, or which technician is consistently outperforming in efficiency. This allows us to act not on gut feel, but on facts.
- **AI & Predictive Intelligence.** The next step is predictive power. Instead of waiting for a vehicle to fail, we want to predict failure before it happens. AI can help us analyze patterns across thousands of vehicles to flag early warnings. For customers, this means less downtime. For businesses, it means stronger loyalty because we are preventing pain, not just responding to it.
- **Customer Data Integration.** This is not just about cars; it’s about people. By centralizing customer profiles service history, preferences, past feedback we can personalize offers and communication. A fleet operator should receive very different engagement compared to a luxury car owner. Data enables this level of nuance.

- **Smart API Platforms.** Finally, technology must be open. Closed systems are a dead end. Auto Service 2.0 requires integration with ERPs, CRMs, financial tools, and OEM systems. For example, if a customer's warranty claim is logged, our system should sync instantly with the OEM's approval portal. If a part is ordered, it should update both the inventory and the finance system simultaneously. Integration eliminates friction.

I'll give you a concrete example. At one outlet, we noticed sudden dips in average invoice value. Without BI, we might have blamed "seasonality." With BI dashboards, we traced it to one advisor who was consistently skipping upsell opportunities during inspections. A simple training intervention corrected it, and the outlet recovered within weeks. That is the power of data intelligence. It shines a light on blind spots.

Let me emphasize: Digital transformation is not about chasing every shiny tool. It's about creating a fabric of intelligence where operations, customers, and leadership are always aligned. In my mind, Auto Service 2.0 will be won not by the workshops with the most outlets, but by those with the deepest intelligence. Size matters less than clarity.

AutoPulse Team: We've talked about technology, ecosystems, and customer expectations. But none of this works without people. How do you see the workforce fitting into Auto Service 2.0?

Syed Hussain: You're absolutely right. If technology is the backbone, then people are the heartbeat.

One of the misconceptions about digitalization is that it will replace people. In our business, the opposite is true. It empowers them. A technician with smart diagnostic tools is no longer

guessing he's confident, faster, and more accurate.

An advisor with a real-time CRM can have meaningful conversations with customers instead of flipping through paperwork.

But empowerment also requires investment. We are focused on three dimensions:

- **Skill Development.** The vehicles coming into workshops today are radically different from a decade ago: EVs, ADAS systems, hybrid drivetrains. Technicians must evolve from mechanical problem-solvers to technology integrators. We are investing in continuous training to keep their skills future-proof.
- **Culture of Ownership.** Auto Service 2.0 thrives when employees see themselves not just as workers, but as owners of the customer experience. That means giving them visibility into performance metrics, celebrating wins, and making them partners in the journey.
- **Attracting Next-Gen Talent.** This is an industry that historically struggled to attract young talent. But when you present auto service as a high-tech, AI-driven, customer-centric field, suddenly it becomes exciting again. I want the next generation to see a workshop not as a greasy backroom, but as a hub of innovation and impact.

At the end of the day, customers don't remember software versions or BI charts; they remember how they were treated, how quickly their car was fixed, and whether they felt cared for. That human touch cannot be replaced. Auto Service 2.0 is about marrying high-tech with high-touch.

AutoPulse Team: Syed Hussain, you've given us a powerful vision of where the industry is heading. If you had to summarize what is the legacy you want to leave behind as you build Auto Service 2.0?

Syed Hussain: For me, it comes down to one word: trust.

Customers should trust us because we are transparent. Employees should trust us because we invest in their growth. Partners should trust us because we deliver consistently. And leadership should trust that the business is built on data, not assumptions. The auto service industry is often seen as reactive cars break, people fix them. I want to change that perception. I want to build a system where we are proactive, predictive, and preventive.

That is Auto Service 2.0:

- An ecosystem where operations are connected,
- Decisions are data-driven,
- Customers are empowered, and
- People are inspired.

If we can achieve that, then we've not just fixed cars, we've transformed lives, businesses, and the very future of mobility.

Closing Note:

The conversation with Syed Hussain captures something rare in the auto service space: clarity of thought paired with operational depth. He doesn't just talk about buzzwords like digitalization or customer experience; he grounds them in the daily reality of technicians, advisors, and fleets. Auto Service 2.0, as he defines it, isn't an abstract future. It's already here, being built step by step in workshops, dashboards, and customer touchpoints. And under leaders like Syed Hussain, it's not just an aspiration, it's a movement.



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