

# AutoPulse

Community initiative by **GaragePlug**

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

**#AUTOSERVICE2.0**

AS A LEADER, YOU NEED TO ENSURE THAT YOUR TEAM IS NOT STRESSED. **TAKE THEIR STRESS**—IF THEY HAVE STRESS, IT SHOULD BE ON YOU, NOT ON THEM.



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## EXCLUSIVE CONVERSATION

WITH THE COO OF BAHWAN INTERNATIONAL

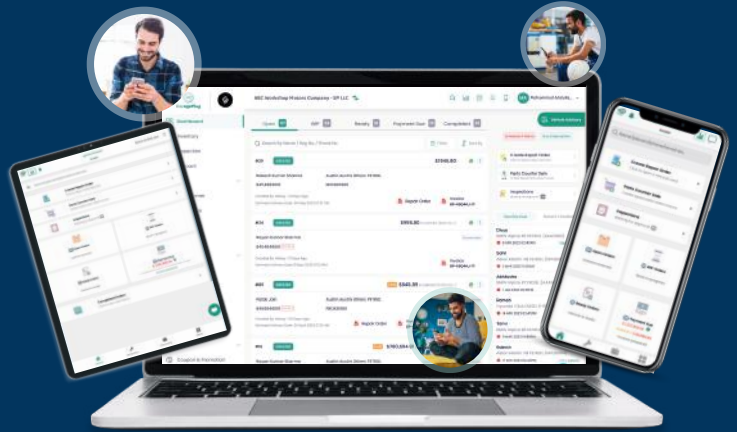
LEADERS UNDER PRESSURE | LEADING A LARGE COMPANY  
WITH MULTIPLE BUSINESS VERTICALS | GROWTH STRATEGIES

2025 FEB

# ABOUT THE AUTOPULSE INITIATIVE BY GARAGEPLUG

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

## HAPPY READING!

-TEAM AUTOPULSE + TEAM GARAGEPLUG



**Ashish S**

Community Evangelist



**Divya A**

Editorial Head



**Gunjan A**

Design Head



**Nandita C**

Community Relationship Head



**Jayesh R**

Editor-in-chief



# “THE AUTOPULSE COMMUNITY - REFLECTION”

## Networking Events

### Jeddah Dinner Event



### Riyadh Dinner Event



### Dubai Breakfast Event



### AutoPulse Vol.4 Launch Event



## Loved by the community!

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

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

**Russell Younghusband** • 1st  
Global Automotive Director at Getac | Driving technological change in ...  
Thanks again to the GaragePlug team for the invite and what was a worthwhile event. Industry Community programs such as AutoPulse require a lot of time and a continued commitment to provide interesting and thought provoking content, as well as a forum for peers from the industry to get together and debate common challenges and ...more  
...ne an outstanding not only professio but also easy to use for technicians, marketing department, and operational managers. The ability to make informed decisions based on i data is invaluable.

**Raed Al-Qadasi** • 1st  
Procurement Manager at Golden Petrol Co.  
So glad to meet you all 🌸 it was a nice event he hard work and dedication i a game-changing solution.

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

**Neha Azeem** • 2nd  
Director of Operations at Zee International  
It was a great pleasure to attend the network community initiative by Garageplug. Thank you for making it so productive.  
A fantastic initiative, bringing together peers to build meaningful connections.

**Majid Hussain** • 1st  
Business Head | Automotive aftermarket E...  
A big thank you to the GaragePlug team for a fantastic event! It was an honor to be part of it. I found the sessions highly interactive and productive.  
Shubhra Srivastava Nandita Chatterji

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

**Neha Azeem** • 2nd  
Director of Operations at Zee International  
It was a genuine pleasure meeting so many inspiring leaders during our gathering. The insights shared were enlightening and have left a lasting impression on me.  
Additionally, thank you so much for the thoughtful gift of the book. It means a lot to me, and I look forward to diving into it.

**Salman Bugshan** • 2nd  
Amfar  
2d • 📍  
A very insightful full experience and glad to have been part of the event.

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

**Mutaz Suleiman** • 2nd  
Building Billion Dollar Companies™ EIR at NFG | Driving Digital Change & In...  
3mo • 📍  
Yesterday, I had the pleasure of attending the AutoPulse, a community initiative by GaragePlug networking event by GaragePlug alongside my friend Hisham L. Al Eidi and the fantastic automotive community in Riyadh. It was a great ...more

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



# WHAT'S IN THIS MAGAZINE?

Featuring top auto aftermarket service industry leaders

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# AUTOPULSE RESEARCH - AI IN AUTOMOTIVE

## AI IN THE AUTOMOTIVE SERVICE

### AFTERMARKET: A STRATEGIC IMPERATIVE

The automotive service aftermarket is undergoing a seismic shift, driven by artificial intelligence (AI). As vehicles become increasingly complex with embedded software, digital diagnostics, and connected capabilities, aftermarket businesses must adapt to remain competitive. AI is not just an enabler—it is rapidly becoming a critical differentiator that enhances operational efficiency, predictive capabilities, and customer engagement. This article explores how AI is reshaping the aftermarket, from predictive maintenance to intelligent supply chains, and provides a roadmap for organizations looking to leverage AI effectively.

## 1. THE CHANGING LANDSCAPE OF THE AUTOMOTIVE AFTERMARKET

The global automotive aftermarket, valued at over \$400 billion, is projected to grow significantly due to:

- Increased vehicle complexity – Software-defined vehicles require sophisticated diagnostics.
- Shift toward predictive servicing – AI enables data-driven maintenance rather than reactive repairs.
- Evolving consumer expectations – Customers demand personalized, digital-first experiences.
- Supply chain disruptions – AI-driven logistics can mitigate parts shortages and delays.

For businesses in this space, integrating AI is no longer optional—it is necessary for survival and growth.

## 2. PREDICTIVE MAINTENANCE: A NEW STANDARD IN SERVICE

Traditional aftermarket service models rely on scheduled maintenance or reactive repairs when a vehicle breaks down. This approach leads to unnecessary part replacements, high downtime, and dissatisfied customers. AI-driven predictive maintenance is changing this by:

### How AI Predicts Failures Before They Happen

- Vehicle telematics & IoT sensors collect real-time performance data.
- AI algorithms analyze historical trends, detecting patterns that indicate wear or impending failure.
- Machine learning models create predictive alerts, prompting proactive servicing.

### Benefits to the Aftermarket Industry-

- ✓ Fewer emergency repairs – Reducing unscheduled breakdowns.
- ✓ Lower costs – Avoiding unnecessary part replacements.
- ✓ Better customer retention – Providing proactive service before failures occur.

OEMs and large fleet operators are already using AI-driven maintenance to optimize uptime and reduce repair costs. For the aftermarket, adopting similar AI-based tools is crucial to stay competitive.

## 3. AI-DRIVEN SUPPLY CHAIN OPTIMIZATION

The aftermarket supply chain is notoriously fragmented, complex, and unpredictable. With millions of SKUs across thousands of suppliers, businesses struggle with inventory management, forecasting demand, and ensuring timely parts availability.

### How AI Enhances Parts Logistics

- Demand Forecasting – AI predicts demand based on past sales, market trends, and even external factors like weather or geopolitical disruptions.
- Automated Inventory Management – AI dynamically adjusts stock levels, ensuring optimal availability.

# AUTOPULSE RESEARCH - AI IN AUTOMOTIVE

- Logistics Optimization – AI-driven routing minimizes transit time and reduces lead times for urgent parts.

## Impact on the Aftermarket Industry:

- ✓ Reduced overstock & stockouts – AI ensures precise inventory levels.
- ✓ Lower operational costs – Minimizing excess stock reduces overhead expenses.
- ✓ Faster delivery times – Ensuring timely access to critical vehicle parts.

Companies like Bosch, Continental, and ZF are already leveraging AI-powered logistics solutions to streamline aftermarket parts distribution.

## 4. AI-ENHANCED CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE: PERSONALIZATION AT SCALE

Modern consumers expect a seamless, personalized experience when servicing their vehicles. AI can deliver this by understanding customer behavior, service history, and preferences.

### Key AI Applications in Customer Engagement-

- ✓ AI-Powered CRM Systems – Analyzing service history to offer targeted maintenance suggestions.
- ✓ Intelligent Chatbots & Virtual Assistants – Handling inquiries, appointment bookings, and real-time service updates.
- ✓ Dynamic Pricing Models – AI adjusts pricing based on demand, market conditions, and customer profiles.

### Real-World Example

A global auto service provider implemented AI-powered appointment scheduling, reducing wait times by 40% and increasing repeat business by 25%.

**Key Takeaway:** Businesses that digitally engage customers with AI-driven recommendations will see increased customer loyalty and higher service revenue.

## 5. AUTONOMOUS DIAGNOSTICS AND REMOTE REPAIRS

AI-driven remote diagnostics and over-the-air (OTA) updates are redefining how vehicle servicing is performed. With connected vehicles becoming standard, AI can:

- ✓ Diagnose problems remotely before they escalate.
- ✓ Trigger software-based fixes via OTA updates, eliminating unnecessary workshop visits.
- ✓ Assist technicians by identifying faults and suggesting the best repair process.

### Industry Shift:

- Tesla leads with OTA software fixes, reducing service center visits.
- BMW and Mercedes-Benz use AI diagnostics to preemptively schedule repairs before drivers experience issues.
- For the aftermarket, leveraging remote diagnostic platforms will be crucial to staying relevant in a world where AI handles basic troubleshooting.





# AUTOPULSE RESEARCH - AI IN AUTOMOTIVE

AI is enhancing workshop efficiency by automating:

- ✓ Parts Inspection – AI-powered computer vision detects part defects faster and more accurately than manual checks.
- ✓ Automated Work Scheduling – AI assigns technicians based on their expertise, reducing idle time.
- ✓ Real-Time Performance Monitoring – AI dashboards track productivity, job completion rates, and efficiency metrics.

## Industry Results

- 20% reduction in defects with AI-based quality inspection.
- 30% faster job turnaround with AI-powered scheduling.

**The Future:** Workshops that embrace AI-driven automation will increase throughput, profitability, and service consistency.

## 7. DATA SHARING, PARTNERSHIPS & COMPLIANCE CHALLENGES

AI thrives on data, but accessing and managing data responsibly is a major challenge in the aftermarket. Key Issues:

- ✓ Lack of Open Data Sharing – Many OEMs control vehicle data, limiting access for independent service providers.
- ✓ Regulatory Compliance – Different privacy laws (GDPR, CCPA, etc.) restrict how AI can use customer data.
- ✓ Cybersecurity Risks – AI systems require strong data protection measures to prevent breaches.

### Strategic Response:

- Forge partnerships with OEMs, insurers, and telematics providers for data access.
- Implement secure AI models that protect customer and vehicle data.
- Stay ahead of evolving regulatory frameworks to ensure compliance.

Companies that build trusted, data-driven ecosystems will be the ones that benefit the most from AI-powered innovation.

## 8. THE AI-ENABLED WORKFORCE: UPSKILLING FOR THE FUTURE

AI automation will reshape the workforce in the automotive service aftermarket.

### What's Changing?

- ✓ Technicians will need AI & software expertise.
- ✓ Workshops will require data analysts to manage AI-driven insights.
- ✓ Service advisors will rely on AI-enhanced customer tools.

### Action Plan for Businesses:

- ✓ Invest in AI training programs for technicians & service advisors.
- ✓ Develop in-house AI innovation teams to experiment with AI tools.
- ✓ Partner with educational institutions to build AI-ready talent pipelines.

## CONCLUSION: THE FUTURE OF AI IN THE AFTERMARKET

### What's Next?

The winners in the AI-powered aftermarket will be those who:

- ✓ Invest early in AI-driven tools & automation.
- ✓ Build strong data partnerships & compliance frameworks.
- ✓ Upskill their workforce to handle AI-driven operations.

AI isn't the future—it's the present. The organizations that embrace it now will lead the automotive service aftermarket tomorrow.

# BUSINESS REINVENTED: **SHIFT INC 2.0**

## THE AUTOSERVICE2.0 STRATEGY



### MR IJAZ ALI

Workshop Manager (KSA) |  
Automotive Engineer  
Shift Inc.



A seasoned automotive aftersales and workshop operations leader with extensive experience managing large-scale service infrastructures across KSA. As Workshop Manager at SHIFT Inc., he oversees 12,000+ multibrand vehicles, optimizes service efficiency, and drives strategic innovations in workshop management, cost optimization, and customer satisfaction.



**AutoPulse Team:** Let's jump right in by talking about SHIFT Inc 2.0. You mentioned your brand's Version 2.0 is all about building the leading unified and integrated mobility platform for shifting people and products. Could you give us a quick overview of that vision and mission?

**Ijaz:** Absolutely. Our vision is: "To build the leading unified & integrated mobility platform for shifting people and products." We also have a mission statement that guides our day-to-day actions: "Driving quality with innovation in developing sustainable solutions that positively impact the economy, the society, and the environment we live in."

For us, SHIFT Inc 2.0 means expanding our current services in a more cohesive manner. We're not just focusing on one aspect of transportation or logistics; we aim to unify multiple mobility services under one umbrella. The idea is to integrate car rental, carsharing, e-Chauffeur services, group transportation, operating lease, last mile deliveries, linehaul & cross-border solutions, car trading, and fleet aftersales services in a single platform. By doing so, we'll be able to serve people and businesses more effectively and sustainably.

**AutoPulse Team:** That's a comprehensive vision. Before we dive into the specifics of your roadmap for SHIFT Inc 2.0, I'd love to hear what inspired this evolution.

**Ijaz:** What inspired us was seeing an opportunity to automate the transport and logistics industry's services to drive greater efficiency, higher control, lean operations, and competitive pricing. We realized that many businesses and individuals struggle to access different mobility solutions in a streamlined manner.

There's usually some degree of fragmentation, where you have to deal with multiple vendors or platforms to meet different needs. We thought, "Why not create a single, integrated solution to streamline all these mobility requirements?"

## Building the Roadmap to Shift Inc. 2.0

**AutoPulse Team:** Let's talk about the roadmap. Transitioning to SHIFT Inc 2.0 sounds ambitious.

**How are you planning to achieve it? What steps or phases do you envision for this transformation?**

**Ijaz:** Building a solid roadmap means paying attention to several factors simultaneously. We're working on five core areas:

1. **Innovation:** We plan to integrate digital tools and cutting-edge technologies to remain at the forefront of the mobility industry. This includes investing in software platforms that allow for automated vehicle scheduling, real-time tracking, and advanced analytics.
2. **Strategic Partnerships:** Collaborations are key. We want to partner with technology firms, automotive service providers, and logistics experts to fortify our service offerings. By having the right partners, we can share expertise, reduce costs, and scale more effectively.
3. **Customer-Centric Strategies:** Everything we do must address the real needs of our customers, whether they are individual riders, businesses needing transport solutions, or large corporate entities with extensive fleets.
4. **Scalability:** The next iteration of our platform has to scale quickly to different regions and new services. We'll rely on a robust digital infrastructure and strategic investments.
5. **Seamless Integration:** Our goal is to unify everything under one digital ecosystem. Customers should be able to choose from our various services—from carsharing to linehaul—without having to juggle multiple apps or points of contact.

Executing on these areas will involve detailed project timelines, resource allocation, continuous feedback loops, and ongoing improvements based on data. We want to ensure we're always refining the platform and not getting stuck on a rigid model.

**AutoPulse Team:** That’s a well-structured approach. As part of your roadmap, I know you mentioned collaborating with market experts, especially for your fleet’s repair and maintenance. Could you elaborate on that and how it factors into SHIFT Inc 2.0?

**Ijaz:** Of course. When we talk about building the leading integrated mobility platform, operational excellence is fundamental. In terms of aftersales services and maintenance, we have a few strategic choices:

- **Collaboration with Market Experts:** It’s not feasible to invest heavily in workshop infrastructure, equipment, and manpower across every region. Instead, we partner with well-established, reputable automotive repair and maintenance providers. We evaluate potential partners based on their market presence, geofencing abilities, spare parts availability, historic track record, and customer feedback.
- **Operational Strength:** We also provide multiple service centre locations for our valued clients, aiming to minimize their downtime. For major clients, we’ve introduced mobile workshops that travel to their premises, especially during off-peak times or vehicle downtime, to conduct periodic maintenance or repairs. This reduces downtime significantly and increases client satisfaction.

So for SHIFT Inc 2.0, we see a “hybrid mode” of fleet repair and maintenance. We’ll have our own main workshops in major cities, where we can handle significant repairs and specialized jobs. In smaller or remote areas, we’ll continue collaborating with local experts, ensuring that all our fleet gets the best possible care, no matter where it is.



## Current Services and Areas for Improvement

**AutoPulse Team:** Let’s pivot to what SHIFT Inc is doing now and then compare that with where you’d like to be in the next stage. Could you summarize your current portfolio of services?

**Ijaz:** Currently, we offer:

1. Car Rental
2. Carsharing
3. E-Chauffeur Services
4. Group Transportation
5. Operating Lease
6. Last Mile Delivery
7. Linehaul & Cross-Border Services
8. Car Trading
9. Fleet Aftersales Service

We’re operating all these services under one umbrella—essentially a “smart transportation solution integrated mobility platform” for shifting people and products. To keep these services running smoothly, our strategy includes partnering with automotive experts to handle repairs and maintenance for our fleet.

We share our fleet list with these specialists so they can accommodate our vehicles, whether it’s on-demand or contractual services.

**AutoPulse Team:** That’s quite a range of offerings. Where do you see the main areas that need improvement as you work toward SHIFT Inc 2.0?

**Ijaz:** One area of improvement is to further centralize and unify our fleet repair and maintenance processes. Currently, we rely heavily on third-party workshops, which is effective, but we also see an opportunity to establish our own major workshops in key cities.

This would allow us to have greater quality control, faster turnaround, and potentially convert maintenance operations from a cost center to a profit center over time.

Another improvement is to gain deeper client loyalty and confidence by handling more complex repairs in-house. While collaboration with market experts will remain crucial in remote regions, having our own state-of-the-art facilities in major hubs enhances trust and reliability.

Additionally, we plan to expand our B2B and B2C segments. With SHIFT Inc 2.0, we'd like to serve not only our own fleet but also external clients who could benefit from comprehensive maintenance solutions. Eventually, we might even have a separate Commercial Registration (CR) under our company's umbrella to offer fleet repair, maintenance, and accidental repair services to a broader market.

## The Future of Service Centers and Next-Gen Workshops

**AutoPulse Team:** Moving on to something that fascinates a lot of our listeners—service centres of the future.

**We'd love to hear your take on the trends that will shape next-gen workshops. How do you see them evolving?**

**Ijaz:** We believe the future of service centres includes multiple innovations and customer-centric features:

1. **Mobile Workshops:** These will become increasingly relevant. By having fully outfitted mobile units that can perform a broad range of maintenance and repair tasks on-site, we reduce downtime for businesses. Companies relying on fleets for daily operations will particularly appreciate this, as on-site services save both time and money.
2. **Automation and Remote Diagnosis:** We foresee service centers adopting real-time data analytics. Technicians might remotely assess issues, guided by sensors and connected devices in the vehicles. This connectivity allows them to see detailed diagnostics and even use augmented reality (AR) systems that guide them through complex repairs.

- **Seamless Customer Experience:** Transparency and communication are key. Customers want to track the status of their vehicles, see real-time updates, and even get cost estimates upfront. We anticipate more apps or web portals that let customers check progress, book appointments, pay online, and leave reviews without any hassle.
- **Personalized Services:** Using big data, workshops can develop individualized maintenance schedules. For instance, a high-mileage vehicle might need more frequent check-ups. Personalized recommendations based on wear-and-tear patterns will make the repair process more efficient and cost-effective.

**Training and Skill Enhancement:** As vehicles become more technologically advanced, so must the technicians. We see a need for ongoing training, possibly delivered through virtual or hybrid setups, so mechanics stay updated with the latest diagnostic tools and repair procedures.

**AutoPulse Team:** Let's talk specifically about the mobile workshop concept, because that really speaks to the evolving demands of fleet-centric businesses.

**Ijaz:** The mobile workshop concept is a cornerstone of our approach. We already offer it in a limited capacity, primarily to serve large clients with significant fleets. These workshops are equipped with the essential tools and diagnostic equipment for tasks like oil changes, brake inspections, minor repairs, and routine maintenance. By bringing the workshop to the client's premises during off-peak hours or downtime, the vehicles spend minimal time off the road.

This approach is cost-effective for us because we don't need a large footprint in certain areas, and it saves time for the client. It's all about efficiency, convenience, and showing clients that we value their time. For SHIFT Inc 2.0, we plan to expand this service by adding more specialized tools and possibly advanced diagnostics. We might even incorporate remote support where a technician at our main hub can guide on-site staff.



## The Importance of Partnerships

**AutoPulse Team:** I want to switch gears to talk about partnerships. In such a complex ecosystem—spare parts suppliers, technology providers, training institutes—there are many potential collaborators. From your perspective, what is the single most important factor in building strong partnerships?

**Ijaz:** The single most important factor, I would say, is trust and transparency. Without trust, even the most promising partnerships fail. We build trust through:

- **Clear, Open Communication:** Whether it's sharing concerns, discussing forecasts, or giving feedback, all parties should feel comfortable communicating openly and honestly.
- **Reliability and Accountability:** If our partner promises to deliver a certain service or part on a specific schedule, they must honor that. We, in turn, must also meet our own commitments. This reliability fosters long-term cooperation.

For SHIFT Inc 2.0, partnerships aren't just about finding people who can do a specific job. It's about forging alliances that share our vision of unified mobility. For example, we might partner with a technology firm for advanced diagnostics, or with market experts who can handle maintenance in remote areas. But no matter who we partner with, the core requirement is mutual trust and a shared sense of accountability.

When both sides can count on each other, the partnership flourishes and becomes beneficial for everyone involved.

**AutoPulse Team:** That makes sense. What does a successful partnership look like for a service center, particularly in the automotive industry?

**Ijaz:** A successful partnership in our context is often a win-win scenario.

For instance, let's say we partner with a parts supplier who specializes in electric vehicle components. As we expand our fleet into electric or hybrid vehicles—because sustainability is a growing concern—that supplier consistently provides high-quality parts at a competitive price.

They benefit from our large and growing demand; we benefit from dependable parts. Meanwhile, our clients get better service. Everyone wins because the goals, timelines, and quality standards are clearly outlined from the start, and both parties remain accountable throughout the relationship.

## Customer Experience and the Future of Automotive Service

**AutoPulse Team:** Now, let's talk about the customer's perspective, which is ultimately the linchpin for success. How do you see improved customer experience shaping the future of automotive service?

**Ijaz:** The customer experience is everything. In a market that's becoming increasingly competitive, the level of service you deliver can make or break a company.

By improving customer experience, you achieve several things:

- **Personalized Service and Predictive Maintenance:** Using telematics and big data analytics, we can predict when a vehicle will likely need service. This proactive approach can prevent breakdowns, reduce costs, and extend vehicle life.
- **Seamless Digital Experience and Convenience:** In the age of smartphones, customers expect to book, pay, and track everything online. That means designing an intuitive app or web portal where they can schedule maintenance, view updates, approve quotes, or reschedule without ever making a phone call.

- **Transparency and Trust:** Being upfront about pricing, showing progress updates, and providing detailed service reports all contribute to increased trust. If a customer knows exactly what's happening with their vehicle, they're more likely to return for future services.
- **Time Savings and Convenience:** Whether through mobile workshops or efficient scheduling, we're focused on minimizing downtime for our customers. That alone can be a major differentiator. People want to save time, and if we can deliver that, we earn their loyalty.
- **Enhanced Communication and Customer Support:** Quick response times, proactive status updates, and readily available support channels make customers feel valued. If they can easily chat with a representative or get immediate answers, they're more likely to stick around.
- **Building Long-Term Relationships:** Ultimately, all these factors build long-term relationships. A customer who trusts your service is more likely to return, refer friends, and even expand their relationship with you by exploring other services offered in your platform.



## Tying It All Together SHIFT Inc 2.0 in Action

**AutoPulse Team:** Let's paint a picture for our listeners. Imagine you've successfully rolled out SHIFT Inc 2.0. A new client—maybe a medium-sized business—needs a mix of last-mile delivery and group transportation services. They also want to ensure their fleet remains fully operational with minimal downtime. How would SHIFT Inc 2.0 address their needs from start to finish?

**Ijaz:** Great question. Here's a hypothetical scenario:

- **Initial Consultation:** The client accesses our platform via a single application or web portal. They see the range of services: car rental, carsharing, e-Chauffeur, group transportation, last-mile, linehaul, cross-border, etc. They describe their specific needs—say they need a combination of delivery vans and shuttles for employees.
- **Customized Proposal:** We use our analytics tools to suggest an optimal mix of vehicles. We also integrate a maintenance schedule into their contract, emphasizing that we can handle periodic servicing either at their location via mobile workshops or through nearby partnered service centers.
- **Easy Onboarding:** After finalizing details, the client's drivers or operators receive training on using the SHIFT Inc 2.0 platform. We schedule regular check-ins and offer real-time tracking of all vehicles.
- **Seamless Operations:** As the client's fleet operates, any maintenance alerts go directly to our support system. If a van is due for an oil change, the system notifies both the client and our nearest mobile workshop or partnered service center. Because of this predictive maintenance, we can fix issues before they cause downtime.

- **Transparent Tracking:** The client can monitor vehicle locations, fuel usage, service status, and costs all within one dashboard. They can see which vehicles are in service, which are en route, and which have scheduled maintenance. If an urgent repair is needed, we quickly deploy a mobile unit or schedule a visit to the workshop.
- **Long-Term Planning:** Over time, the client might need more vehicles or fewer. They can scale up or down on our platform without having to switch providers. If they expand to new regions, our combination of major workshops in big cities and collaborations in remote areas ensures consistent service quality.
- **Workforce Training:** As vehicles and diagnostic tools become more sophisticated, technicians need continuous training. We'll partner with educational institutions and technology providers to offer up-to-date training programs. Some of it might be online, so employees can learn without having to interrupt their work schedules significantly.
- **Scalability and Integration:** Integrating multiple services into a single platform is no small feat from an IT perspective. We have to ensure seamless data flow across modules. Our approach is to develop a modular, cloud-based system that can be updated and scaled quickly as we add services.

Through this system, they get everything—vehicles, maintenance, real-time tracking, and cost optimization—in one place. That's the power of SHIFT Inc 2.0.

## Overcoming Challenges

**AutoPulse Team:** That paints a clear picture of the benefits. Still, every major transformation faces challenges—funding, acquiring new technology, training staff, etc. How does SHIFT Inc. plan to tackle the potential hurdles that might arise?

**Ijaz:** We recognize there will be challenges, such as:

- **Financial Investment:** Building or upgrading workshops, acquiring advanced diagnostic tools, and expanding mobile fleets require capital. We plan to address this through strategic partnerships, possibly exploring investor funding, and meticulously tracking ROI on every investment.



- **Maintaining Quality Standards:** When collaborating with third-party workshops in remote locations, we must ensure they adhere to our quality standards. This is handled through robust due diligence, regular audits, and continuous performance evaluations.

None of these challenges are insurmountable. With careful planning, stakeholder engagement, and a commitment to continuous improvement, we believe we can navigate them successfully.





## Long-Term Vision and Final Thoughts

**AutoPulse Team:** We've covered a lot of ground. As we near the end of our episode, I'd like to ask about the long-term vision.

**Where do you see SHIFT Inc. in, say, five or ten years? How much of that future depends on SHIFT Inc 2.0 being successful right now?**

**Ijaz:** In five to ten years, I see SHIFT Inc. being an integral part of how people and goods move around the region and potentially beyond. We want to be known not only as a mobility platform but also as a company that champions sustainability, efficiency, and customer-centric innovation. If SHIFT Inc 2.0 lays the right foundation, we'll be in a strong position to explore other areas—maybe electric or hydrogen fuel fleets, advanced logistics solutions, or even autonomous vehicle services if the market is ready.

In essence, SHIFT Inc 2.0 is our springboard. By getting this phase right—perfecting the integration of services, ensuring top-notch customer experiences, solidifying our partnerships, and having robust, versatile service centres—we can open the door to countless possibilities. It's not just about short-term profit; it's about building a mobility ecosystem that continuously adapts and improves.

**AutoPulse Team:** That's a perfect note to end on, Ijaz. Thank you so much for sharing your insights on how SHIFT Inc 2.0 aims to revolutionize the unified and integrated mobility platform space. It's been fascinating to hear how you plan to build the roadmap, develop next-gen service centers, form strong partnerships, and enhance the customer experience.

**Ijaz:** Thank you for having me. It's always a pleasure to talk about what we're doing. We want to drive quality through innovation and create solutions that truly benefit our economy, society, and environment. I look forward to coming back and sharing updates as we move forward.



# LEADING UNDER PRESSURE: INSIGHTS FROM THE C-SUITE

**A CANDID BUSINESS CHAT WITH MR PAULO FERNANDES- CHIEF OPERATING  
OFFICER- INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS**



## PAULO FERNANDES

COO, Bahwan International



As Chief Operating Officer at Bahwan International, Paulo has a proven track record of developing profitable business opportunities and fostering strong customer relationships.

His expertise in sales, after-sales service, and strategic management makes him a valuable voice in the industry.



## Mental Health & Leadership Attitude

**Autopulse Team: Let's begin with something many people wonder about: stepping into an executive role. Could you talk about the moment when you realized you were going to hold top-level leadership positions and how you navigated that initial phase?**

**Paulo:** There wasn't a single day where I stopped and thought, "Now I'm in the C-suite." My journey was gradual. I started with spare parts sales, then got into vehicle sales and went into aftersales, and on to higher management. Each step felt like I was taking on leadership, even before I had the official title. I believed in doing more than my job description from the very start. If my title said I was a manager, I'd think of myself as a general manager. If I was a senior GM, I'd act like a VP. That mindset of not being confined by my title gave me confidence when I eventually got a formal seat in the top echelon.

When I took my first real top role, the biggest "surprise" wasn't the workload—I expected that. What stood out was the number of people who suddenly wanted my directions. Everybody seemed to need approval or a decision. You realize quickly that your choices will affect a lot of people's well-being, not just your own. So that's when I knew I had to be extra cautious, more consultative, and approach every challenge with a collaborative spirit. If I made a mistake, it could affect teams and their families. That sense of responsibility anchored me.

**AutoPulse Team: You mentioned challenges. How exactly do you handle them at such a senior level, where the impact is so much bigger?**

**Paulo:** I don't see "challenges" as something negative. When a difficult situation arises, I look for an opportunity in it. As a big group, we have many verticals and a lot of complexity, and each challenge can create a domino effect.

If I see a problem, I don't freeze. Instead, I ask, "What is the potential for growth or improvement here?"

I try to remove the idea of "crisis mode." A big part of it is not letting pressure get to me personally. If I let that stress in, it's guaranteed to skew my decisions, making me jump to half-baked solutions.

To manage pressure, I do simple things: a walk around the office, a coffee break, or a short break where I casually talk to colleagues about anything but work. That brief reset helps me come back fresh. Once I'm calm, I can prioritize tasks methodically. There's always going to be multiple urgent items. But if you keep your head, you can order them sensibly and tackle them one by one. Trying to do everything at once with a stressed mindset usually leads to panic decisions.

**AutoPulse Team: Let's dig deeper into your mindset. You're talking about staying calm and focusing on opportunity. Do you have specific personal routines that keep you mentally fit?**

**Paulo:** Yes, I have a few. Every morning I try to wake up early. I go for a walk because it gives me time to gather my thoughts, reflect on issues from the day, or anticipate what's coming. During the walk, I might plan or simply let my mind relax so fresh ideas come naturally.

After that, I set aside around half an hour for quiet reflection. I Believe in the almighty, so I take a few moments to ask for clarity, strength to make the right decisions, long-term decisions that should benefit the masses and the right words when communicating. I prefer to be in the office prior to office time.

Those steps keep me grounded before I step into the office. Also, I like to keep my personal life simple. Overcomplicating your lifestyle can add stress. If you're drained or always mentally preoccupied with too many external distractions, you have less bandwidth to tackle big business issues. I also don't believe in skipping family time or weekends altogether.

Yes, in top management you work a lot, and sometimes you take work home. Still, I make sure there's quality time—especially on weekends—because that recharges my energy levels. When the new week starts, I'm ready to go over again.



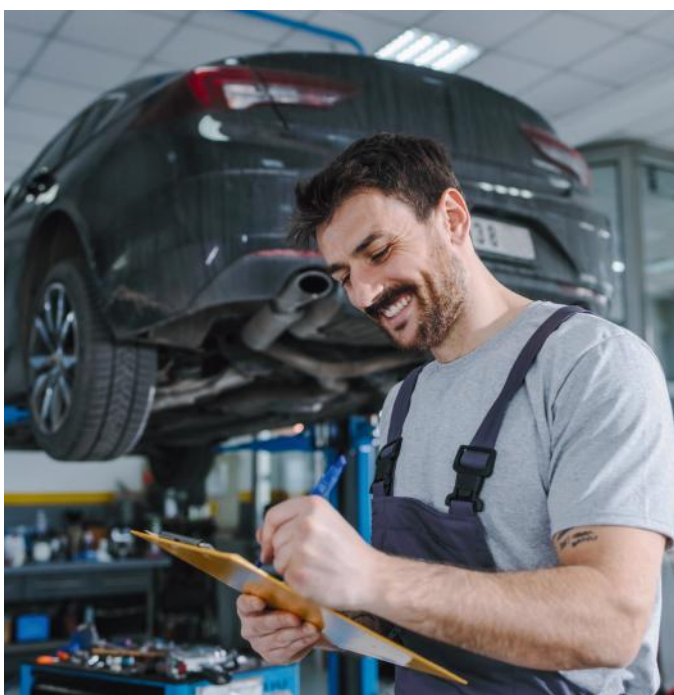
**AutoPulse Team:** You lead multiple verticals under a large organization. People in similar positions often say they feel inundated by requests and responsibilities. How do you handle overseeing different lines of business without feeling overwhelmed?

**Paulo:** The secret is delegating, empowering effectively and trusting your team. The difference between a manager and a leader is that a leader develops other leaders.

That means you build a strong layer of business heads or department heads under you. If they aren't strong, you'll get bogged down in day-to-day tasks. You can't possibly sign off on every detail for eight or nine different units. So you pick the right people, clarify their goals, and empower them.

I let them know: "You manage your vertical and take responsibility for divisions P&L. You make the decisions. I'll step in if something huge arises or if you're stuck." Because they know I trust them, they perform better. Also, it helps that we do monthly reviews. If any unit seems off track, I step in just enough to understand the challenges and provide solutions, not to micromanage.

By focusing on leadership development, I'm able to keep a holistic view. If I had to sign every piece of paper or answer every daily operational question, I would lose my ability to strategize and stay calm.



**AutoPulse Team:** You've highlighted your approach to delegation. But there's always the question of how you build a strong team in the first place. Any specific strategies for recruiting and cultivating top-performing teams?

**Paulo:** I have a very straightforward framework. When looking for people, I focus on three major qualities:

- **Trust:** I look for integrity. I want to see that person can be relied upon to make decisions for the organization's benefit. Someone might have great skills, but if I sense a lack of trustworthiness, I'm wary.
- **Hunger to grow:** This is the drive or ambition. No matter how talented someone is, if they lack that inner motivation to push boundaries, they'll plateau. I want people who actively look for ways to grow businesses.
- **Ethics:** Connected to trust. They must do the right thing consistently, even if no one is watching.

Our process usually has four interview rounds for a leadership position. HR handles initial screening for technical fit, then we have a conversation—sometimes two—where we look for authenticity. We don't come in with a checklist of questions to grill them. We prefer a natural conversation. We watch how they describe challenges, previous roles, achievements, and setbacks. We pay attention to whether they're overselling. Often, in half an hour of friendly interaction, you get a sense of whether the person is genuine, knowledgeable, and hungry to grow.

### AutoPulse Highlights

- ◆ Trust – Skills matter, but integrity is everything.
- ◆ Hunger to Grow – Drive beats talent. Look for ambition.
- ◆ Ethics – The right choice, even when no one's watching.

Paulo hires through conversation, not checklists—spotting authenticity, ambition, and alignment in just 30 minutes.

Once they join, we put them on probation, for six months, to see if they gel with the culture. We see if they truly hunger, how they manage challenges, their approach to tasks, and their ethics. If they do, we extend full trust, empower them, and let them spread their wings.

**AutoPulse Team: You've said you don't micromanage. Still, you must track performance. How do you ensure each business head meets their monthly goals, especially if you have so many verticals?**

**Paulo:** At the start of every year, we agree on budgets. These budgets are bottom-up. We break those down into monthly or quarterly goals, which we call KRAs or KPIs. Each unit has a business head who “owns” that P&L. Let's say we check data mid-month. If something looks off, that triggers a conversation.

Maybe I see an unusual spike in expenses or slower-than-expected sales. I'll ask, “What's happening? How can we fix it?” We brainstorm solutions together. I don't just say, “Go fix it, or else.” I tell them, “Let's see what top management can do to support you. Should we reduce overhead or run a marketing campaign? Are there supply chain issues?” That's a real collaboration.

If it's minor, the head might just fix it on their own. If it's more complex, I'll help escalate certain concerns to other stakeholders. This is how I keep a finger on the pulse without dominating every decision.

Monthly reviews are thorough but not about pressuring them; it's more about supporting them to meet the agreed-upon numbers.

**AutoPulse Team: Some leaders say they are extremely target-driven, and that can become stressful for their teams. How do you set ambitious goals without putting people under too much stress?**

**Paulo:** When I assign goals, they're not arbitrary. We look at historical performance, market conditions, capacity, and upcoming expansions. Then goals are realistic yet slightly challenging. The leader in question sets these goals, which are discussed and agreed upon with management, by this the sense of ownership is higher. People don't feel it's forced upon them. They might have rough patches. That's normal in business. When stress levels spike, I step in to remove bottlenecks. If there's a supply delay, for example, we can look for alternate suppliers. If a certain product line isn't delivering margin, maybe we readjust pricing or marketing. Rather than turning up the pressure, I see it as part of my job to absorb their stress. If something is beyond their control, I take responsibility. It encourages them to focus on solutions instead of worrying about blame.

**AutoPulse Team: You said you see part of your role as absorbing stress from your team. Could you talk more about that dynamic?**

**Paulo:** Sure. If I want my people to deliver results, I have to ensure they can think clearly, innovate, and serve customers well. If they're under constant threat or fear of failure, they'll make defensive decisions or freeze. I prefer an environment where they know that if something truly goes wrong, management is there to back them up—provided they did their due diligence and acted ethically. This is how you get people to make bold moves that pay off. There's a direct link between how safe they feel and how creative or dedicated they become.



One big example was during COVID. That was a period of intense uncertainty. Our teams were worried about pay cuts, job security, and personal health. Instead of turning up the pressure, we told everyone, “Let’s figure this out together.

What can we do to support the organization and each other? ”The team volunteered salary adjustments temporarily and some other benefits, and once things stabilized, we reimbursed them all. Morale soared, and the people on the ground did incredible work, even under lockdown conditions.



**AutoPulse Team:** Could you share any specific story from that COVID phase, where a high-pressure decision had to be made and how you guided the team?

**Paulo:** One notable instance was with a massive vehicle shipment to a market that was changing import regulations. This meant that if we didn’t move quickly, we could lose millions of dollars in value. We had to send a full shipload of vehicles—thousands of units—without any guarantee the final transaction would settle as normal. It was a big gamble. We had a small window to decide. I proposed a solution to the owners and the support to execute it.

My logistics head and I discussed the pros and cons thoroughly for this shipment. The logistic team took on the challenge and loaded the full vessel “We could not wait forever, because the vessel can’t remain at the port indefinitely.

For a few anxious days, we waited for payment confirmation, all while at home, in partial lockdown. Ultimately, it worked out. We successfully delivered, and the organization was spared huge potential losses. It showed how trusting your data, trusting your team, and not folding under pressure can pay off.

**AutoPulse Team:** Speaking of team members, you gave an example of an analyst you moved into a brand-new role of accessorization. Could you go into more detail about that?

**Paulo:** Sure. We had a team member whose job was mostly numbers and data. He was an analyst who handled spreadsheets, PPT, reporting, and the like. After a while, I sensed he was itching for a challenge.

I had this idea to create a vehicle accessorization division—installing features like upgraded wheels, spoilers, interior mods, or even advanced modifications like ambulances or defence vehicles.

I pitched the idea: “Why not head this new initiative?” He was initially hesitant because he had no direct experience in such a role as his background was that of analytics. But he trusted that I saw some latent potential in him. He started with basic modifications, and eventually grew it into a specialized division.

Today, that division is a million-dirham monthly business, dealing with everything from, the armouring of vehicles to multi-application modification of vehicles.

He’s become an unmatched HOD, even though that was never his background. That’s the power of trusting people and giving them a shot to do more than their job title might suggest.

## AutoPulse Highlights

### Psychological Safety Fuels Innovation

Fear-based environments breed defensive decisions. But when teams feel secure—knowing management has their back—they take bold risks that drive real impact. Results come from clarity, not chaos. Leaders who create a safe space for their teams see higher creativity, better customer service, and stronger long-term outcomes.

-Paulo



**AutoPulse Team:** Let's talk about your personal time management. With so many travels—one day you're in the UAE, the next in Bahrain, or KSA—how do you plan your schedule so effectively?

**Paulo:** My trips are usually short. I fly to one place in the morning, conduct meetings and team reviews, and fly back the next evening. I optimize time utilization. I try to keep weekends for family if possible. I trust my teams, I only travel to handle strategic meetings or critical negotiations and reviews.

One tactic is to have strong local managers in each territory, so I don't have to be physically present to ensure daily operations. I go when there's a new business opportunity or an urgent matter to resolve.

Also, I plan visits around big events or expansions. That's how I managed to be back by the weekend. It's about discipline and clarity on why you're travelling, not travelling for the sake of travelling.



## Industry Trends & Strategies

**AutoPulse Team:** It's fascinating to see how that empowerment culture can unlock success. Now, let's move toward the automotive sector specifically.

**Are there any trends in the aftersales market that you think are particularly exciting right now?**

**Paulo:** The after sales industry is seeing changes in technology. Everyone's talking about AI, digital solutions, and EV maintenance. If you look at the Middle East, EV adoption is a bit slower compared to some other regions, but it's still happening. In three to five years, vehicles that were initially under warranty at dealers will be out in the market. Then you'll have an influx of EVs going to independent multi-brand service centers.

I see huge potential there. Independent workshops will need skilled technicians who can handle EV technology. That means you can't wait until the last minute. Start developing your EV capabilities right now. Also, AI-driven diagnosis is on the rise. Imagine a system that identifies probable causes of a mechanical or electronic issue in seconds and guides technicians. It increases efficiency and helps with better parts management.

**One major trend I see is the AutoPulse Community.** I'm truly impressed with what AutoPulse is doing—bringing people together, fostering knowledge-sharing, and creating real industry connections. The automotive sector has long operated in silos, but AutoPulse is changing that by enabling open dialogue and collaboration. By hosting podcasts, digital forums, and live events, it provides a space for experts and leaders to share insights and drive meaningful change. This isn't just networking; it's a movement that strengthens the entire industry. If we connect the right people and exchange real experiences, we can accelerate progress. I truly commend AutoPulse for being a catalyst for transformation in the automotive world.

**AutoPulse Team:** In the Middle East, dealership-based service centres have historically been strong, especially with so many high-end vehicles. Do you see a shift toward independent multi-brand centres?

**Paulo:** Yes, there is a definite shift. Customers are becoming more price-conscious. They want the same quality of service they'd get at a dealership, but without exorbitant costs. Multi-brand service centres have stepped up quality, branding, and trust. Also, regulations in some GCC countries protect the consumer's right to have their car serviced wherever they choose, without automatically voiding warranties. So that's an advantage for independent centres.



Dealers are trying to fight back by creating their own “lower cost” brand segments or sub-brands for out-of-warranty vehicles. But often, the overhead is still high, so the discount isn’t as big. Meanwhile, a well-run independent can genuinely beat those prices. That’s where the big opportunity is—serving the post-warranty segment or used-vehicle market with better value and comparable expertise.

**AutoPulse Team: Many independent service centers try to compete purely on price, but you’ve mentioned you don’t believe in that approach. What’s your strategy?**

**Paulo:** Competing on price alone is a never-ending race to the bottom. For me, it’s about customer connect and offering real value. Of course, we try to be lower-priced than a dealership, but we’re not the cheapest place in town. If you only aim to be the cheapest, you might compromise on parts quality or technician skill. So we position ourselves squarely between dealer prices and roadside garages.

Additionally, we emphasize personal touches. For instance, we have a practice where, after a service, the service manager might call the customer the next day to ask if everything went well. If the customer mentions a lingering noise, we’ll send someone over to check it, free of charge. It’s these gestures that build trust and repeat visits. Pricing must be fair, but it’s not the single driving factor. People are happy to pay a reasonable amount if they feel well taken care of.

### AutoPulse Highlights

Competing on price is a race to the bottom. We focus on trust, fair pricing, and personal touches—because customers return for value, not just a low bill.

**AutoPulse Team: That personal call from a manager is interesting. Is that something you do systematically?**

**Paulo:** We started it a few years ago. In the beginning, I personally called customers who visited one of our service centers the previous day.

I would say, “I’m Paulo, business head at Auto Fix, this call is just to thank you for choosing Auto Fix and take your sincere feedback. Was everything okay with your vehicle?” People were surprised to hear from someone at the top. Of course, as we grew, I couldn’t do that for every customer. Now, our workshop managers do it on a sample basis. But it remains a personal call. We don’t outsource it to a generic call centre.

That personal connection often reveals small issues that can be quickly fixed. It also makes customers feel important, more than just a bill-paying client. This approach significantly boosts retention.

**AutoPulse Team: That’s very hands-on. How can managers replicate such a personal approach at scale?**

**Paulo:** They can do it on a smaller sample basis. For instance, out of every 50 customers, pick 20 to personally call. It doesn’t take a lot of time if you divide it among your managers. Each manager calls 5 or 10 customers daily, simply to check in. Once you do it consistently, it becomes part of your culture. Customers start expecting a human conversation rather than a cold text. If a HOD or a general manager calls them, they realize they matter to the organization.

Some might not open up fully if they feel shy or don’t want to offend a senior person, but many will share genuine feedback. You’ll catch small issues early, like a squeaking noise that wasn’t fixed, or some dissatisfaction about waiting time. You then resolve it quickly, turning a potentially negative word-of-mouth into a positive testimonial.



### AutoPulse Team: Interesting, can you talk about your retention rate?

**Paulo:** Right now, we're seeing around 70% of our customers return, which is high compared to an industry average that might hover around 40–50%. It's a direct outcome of building trust and delivering consistent quality. If people feel they got good service and a fair price, they'll come back. If I or my managers ever come across a complaint, we fix it promptly.

That small additional effort ensures the customer doesn't leave feeling cheated or ignored. Once they know we make things right, they're very likely to stay loyal.

### AutoPulse Team: Let's shift to EV technology. How do you think multi-brand workshops should approach EV maintenance and training?

**Paulo:** We should start by training a core group of technicians. Even if the current volume of EVs is low, we know it's going to grow. Manufacturers like Tesla, Nissan, and others are pushing more models into the region. Plus, the used EV market will develop eventually. So get your staff certified in high-voltage systems, battery diagnostics, and software-based troubleshooting. You don't want to wait until you have 50 EVs lined up to figure it out. Additionally, investing in the right equipment is key. EVs have different service requirements. You might need specialized tools for battery removal or testing. The benefit is that if you're an early adopter of EV service capabilities, you become the go-to place for owners whose warranties have expired. That's a huge market. People still want convenience and cost savings, and if you can do it for them reliably, they'll flock to you.

### AutoPulse Team: On the subject of technology, what role do you see AI playing in aftersales?

AI can streamline diagnostics, parts procurement, and even customer communications. Imagine a scenario where a customer enters their vehicle details online, notes a strange sound and an AI system narrows it down to possible causes. By the time the car arrives at the workshop, the technician has a head start. It saves time, reduces labour hours, and leads to accurate parts ordering. We're seeing e-commerce solutions for parts, real-time ordering from warehouses, and AI-driven chatbots for appointments. The challenge is adopting these tools in a way that complements your team's expertise, not replaces it. The personal touch is still important.

## Step-by-step strategies to revive a bleeding business

### AutoPulse Team: Let's get philosophical for a moment. When a leader is under intense business pressure—like a company is bleeding money—how would you handle that scenario?

**Paulo:** First, face reality. Some leaders prefer to hide the extent of problems, hoping they'll vanish. That's a big mistake. If the company is bleeding, gather the data, see how big the gap is between revenue and costs, look at the market potential, and figure out what capacity we actually have. Then I meet with top stakeholders to present realistic expectations. You can't fix a major downturn in a week. You might need time to draw a proper recovery plan.

**Next step:** evaluate whether the team you have can get you out of that hole. don't believe in immediate mass firings. Instead, talk to the existing people. Explain the depth of the situation, say "We're in a tough spot. Are you ready to fight out of it with me?" Some folks will rise to the challenge, come up with solutions, and show hunger to turn it around. Others might not have that energy or skill.



### AutoPulse Highlights

EV adoption isn't a question of 'if' but 'when.' Train early, invest in the right tools, and position yourself as the go-to service center before the market catches up.



Over time, you find out who's true with you. Then you set short milestones so you can see incremental progress. Of course, if someone is fundamentally misaligned or unethical, you let them go. But if they just need guidance, support them. Ensure you publicly appreciate & reward the team members who went beyond the boundaries to get the organisation out of the hole.

While all this is happening, keep a direct line to the board or owners. They need updates. If the owners are pushing unrealistic targets—like we want to jump from 20 million to 100 million in six months — push back gently but firmly. Show them the maths, the market realities, and what we can do step by step. If you're transparent, you earn their respect and get more leeway to execute the plan effectively.

**AutoPulse Team: Another angle: People talk about mental health among top executives, especially where stress can be extreme. How do you keep yourself mentally healthy in these rough periods?**

**Paulo:** Exactly the same way I do in calm times: daily walks, spiritual reflection, short breaks during the day, and ensuring I have at least some family time. My principle is that if I get lost in panic, it trickles down to the entire organization. As a leader, you set the tone. If they see you calm and methodical, they think, "It's tough, but we can handle it." If they see you frantic, they panic. When things get dire, I deliberately maintain open communication with top team members. A quick one-on-one chat where we bounce off frustrations or ideas helps. We vent a bit, but also keep it positive, ending with "Let's find solutions." That also fosters unity. No one feels alone in a crisis. Sure, there's some stress. But by dividing it among us and clarifying roles, we reduce individual burdens.



## Business Expansion Strategies

**AutoPulse Team: Let's talk about how you handle growth, too. We've covered crises, but how do you manage expansions or new market entries?**

**Paulo:** For any expansion, I look at synergy with existing verticals. If it's automotive-related, we see how it can leverage current infrastructure. For example, if we launch a new multi-brand service centre in another country, we bring certain best practices from our existing centres, replicate them, but also adapt to local regulations or cultural preferences.

I also prefer incremental expansions, not going from zero to ten new locations in a month. We might set up one pilot, refine the business model, measure ROI, and then roll out more. Sometimes we identify a promising manager who has shown skill in turning around a smaller unit, and we'll task them with launching a bigger project.

That's how we keep the same DNA of trust and empowerment across expansions.

### AutoPulse Highlights

**Expansion isn't about speed—it's about synergy. We scale by refining one location at a time, ensuring trust, adaptability, and long-term sustainability over short-term spikes.**

**AutoPulse Team: For those who might be under the impression that short-term results matter more than anything, how do you balance short-term targets with long-term vision?**

**Paulo:** You do need short-term wins to keep the business afloat and show progress to stakeholders. But you don't sacrifice long-term sustainability for a quick monthly spike. For example, if you slash prices to hit a monthly target but lose money overall, that's not healthy.

If you compromise on part quality for immediate gains, you erode trust. So you have to weigh these.

If the goal is to hit certain monthly numbers, we strategize in a way that's consistent with brand and customer relationships.

That might mean running a promo, but explaining it clearly, maintaining decent margins, or cross-selling other services. The idea is never to burn your brand equity for a short-term fix. People at the top often want everything yesterday, but it's our job to convey realistic timelines and keep the ship steady.



**EV adoption isn't a question of 'if' but 'when.' Train early, invest in the right tools, and position yourself as the go-to service center before the market catches up.**

**AutoPulse Team: You manage multiple automotive verticals, including multi-brand service centres, parts distribution, and so forth. How do you coordinate them all without losing focus?**

**Paulo:** A big tool is consistent communication. Each vertical has a head who updates me regularly, but they also coordinate among themselves. For example, if the aftersales vertical needs certain parts, they contact the parts vertically.

If the parts vertical sees an opportunity to bundle something with tyre and battery distribution, they coordinate that with the relevant team. We also hold cross-vertical strategy sessions. That's where synergy emerges—like if the parts team finds a new supplier, the service centre can test those parts for quality.

Ultimately, I see synergy as beneficial if it cuts costs or improves service for the end customer. If it's synergy just for synergy's sake, it might complicate processes. So each vertical has autonomy, but we look for ways they can complement one another. Because we've built that trust-based culture, the heads genuinely want to collaborate, not just safeguard their own turf.

**AutoPulse Team: You've been consistently emphasizing trust, personal connections, and the importance of not letting pressure cascade downward. How do you protect that culture as the organization scales?**

**Paulo:** Culture starts at the top, so I try to set an example. If I see a manager hounding their subordinates in a negative way, I address it immediately. I remind them, "We absorb stress, not push it down."

We also celebrate people who embody our culture—like a service manager who goes out of his way to resolve a customer's complaint. Public recognition of these efforts signals that this is what we value, not just hitting numbers by any means.

As we grow, we also refine processes to ensure new hires or new business heads get inducted into this culture. We explain the rationale: "Here, we believe in fairness and accountability."

We don't encourage short-term wins that create long-term damage." If someone can't adapt, they might not be the right fit.

But we give them a chance to understand and align. When your top leaders and middle managers are all on board, the culture naturally filters through to frontline staff.



## Customer Psychology and Winning in the Market

**AutoPulse Team: A lot of automotive leaders mention that dealing with customers is like dealing with "hospital" dynamics. People come in because something's wrong with their car, so they're not exactly in a great mood. How do you see that?**

**Paulo:** It's true. Think about the experience at a hospital. You go because you're sick or worried.

Similarly, a customer enters a service center because their car isn't working properly or needs maintenance. They aren't overjoyed. But look at how some modern healthcare providers handle it: at-home testing, online consultation, quick follow-ups. They minimize inconvenience and anxiety. That's the same logic we can bring to the automotive space. Offer pick-up and drop-off services, streamline communication so the customer never has to wonder, "Is my car ready?" Let them track progress or get an automated update, but also include a personal phone call from a manager if needed. Even small gestures, like well-designed waiting lounges or complimentary refreshments, can ease the "hospital vibe." People respond to warmth and convenience.

### AutoPulse Highlights

"Service centres should ease the 'hospital vibe'—offering transparency, convenience, and warmth. Customers will pay for door-to-door service if it's priced fairly, but trust breaks when convenience feels like exploitation."

**AutoPulse Team: Do you feel automotive service centers should adopt door-to-door solutions or mobile repairs more broadly?**

**Paulo:** If you can manage the logistics, yes. But it shouldn't inflate the cost to a ridiculous degree. Customers will pay a premium for convenience, but not an outrageous markup. That's the balance of "value for money." If it costs me a fraction to send a van with a technician, I can't charge thousands extra.

I might charge something fair and let the customer see that the convenience is worth it. This approach ties back to trust: if the customer feels you're gouging them, that trust breaks. If you do it fairly, they'll think, "This is fantastic, I didn't have to drive anywhere, and it cost me just a little more."

**AutoPulse Team: We've talked about technology, EV readiness, building your teams, crisis management, expansions, and customer care. If you had to narrow down a few key principles that guide your entire leadership style, what would they be?**

**Paulo:**

- **Keep it simple & Personal touch:** Whether it's colleagues, direct reports, or customers, genuine human interaction fosters loyalty and clarity.
- **Empower, Delegate and trust your team:** Don't hold all the reins yourself; let them make decisions, and stand by them if they act ethically.
- **Value for money Products:** In the automotive service business, customers want fair prices, but also reliability and good treatment.
- **Calm is power:** In a storm, your composure as a leader reassures everyone else and helps you see opportunities hidden in challenges.

## Finishing Conversations

**AutoPulse Team: We've covered a lot of ground. Let's look at the future. Where do you see the auto aftermarket industry in the next five years, especially in regions like the GCC?**

**Paulo:** The short answer: is it's going to grow. People are holding onto cars longer, which increases the demand for after-sales services.

There's also the continuous introduction of EV and hybrid models. In about three to five years, we'll see more used EVs in circulation. Multi-brand centres that are ready will capture that market.

Also, the parts supply chain is evolving, with e-commerce making parts ordering quicker and more global.

**Ultimately, I predict consolidation. Smaller, less efficient shops might merge or shut down. Bigger or better-run multi-brand networks will thrive because they can offer standardized quality and better pricing.**

Customer expectations are also rising. They no longer want a dingy garage with poor communication. They want an experience akin to a dealership but cheaper.



**AutoPulse Team:** Let's finish with something personal. How do you hope people in your organization describe your leadership?

**Paulo:** I hope they describe me as supportive, calm, and empowering. Someone who genuinely values ethics and trust, who doesn't shy away from taking responsibility, and who always tries to see the best in people. I'd like them to say they feel safe to grow, experiment, and make honest mistakes in the pursuit of excellence. Ultimately, I care not just about the business's profitability but also the well-being of the teams involved.

I don't strive for people to think I'm perfect. Mistakes happen. What matters is addressing them swiftly and learning from them. If they remember me as the leader who put people first and ensured good results for the company, that would be the best legacy.

**AutoPulse Team:** Thank you for sharing these thoughts. It's refreshing to see how people-centric leadership can tie seamlessly into business growth and strategic advantage. We appreciate the time and candour.

**Paulo:** It was my pleasure. I hope these insights spark ideas or encouragement for anyone managing teams, especially in challenging or high-growth environments. As long as we stay true to the core principles—trust, empowerment, integrity, and calm focus—we can navigate both obstacles and opportunities in this dynamic automotive world.

**AutoPulse Team:** We'll end here. It's been a thoroughly engaging conversation. We look forward to seeing more success stories from your leadership journey.

**Paulo:** Thank you. I look forward to hearing about other leaders' journeys as well. We all have a lot to learn from each other. If we keep sharing experiences, the entire industry benefits.



# BUSINESS REINVENTED: ZEEZ 2.0

## THE AUTOSERVICE2.0 STRATEGY



### NEHLA AZEEZ

Operations Director,  
Zeez International



A dynamic leader driving operations at Zeez International, Nehla specializes in strategic growth, operational efficiency, and business development. With a strong background in sales, client relations, and brand positioning, she's passionate about creating impactful solutions in the automotive industry. A visionary shaping the future of mobility and service excellence.



**AutoPulse Team:** Nehla, thank you for joining us on AutoPulse. Let's begin with the question on everyone's mind: How did you get started in the automotive service industry? Was this a well-planned choice, or did circumstances lead you here?

**Nehla:** Thank you for having me! My involvement in the automotive world actually stems from my family history. We are a second-generation business that first got into automotive services through strong ties with British Petroleum and Hindustan Petroleum. That early petroleum-focused experience gave us insight into how vehicles are maintained, how fueling stations operate, and what customers typically expect. Over time, as we expanded into the UAE, we noticed a gap. People wanted premium car care services but didn't want to pay an exorbitant amount of money. We thought: "Why not provide high-quality, quick automotive solutions at affordable prices?" So, we established multiple outlets, building on the lessons learned from our older generation. My role, as Director of Operations, is to ensure that our business practices stay updated and our customers remain satisfied with the cost, speed, and overall quality of services.

**AutoPulse Team:** It sounds like your family's background laid a solid foundation for you. Could you talk more about the scope of ZeeZ International Group and how the automotive sector fits into the broader picture?

**Ijaz:** Absolutely. ZeeZ International Group is like an umbrella with multiple branches. We have interior design companies—Westbrook Interiors handles commercial projects, while Meter Square Interiors focuses on retail projects. These are turnkey projects where we manage everything from layout to final furnishings. We also operate medical centres and pharmacies, catering to different healthcare needs, and a logistics company that helps move goods efficiently within the region.

**Nehla:** But our key business—what we're known for most—remains the automotive division. We have over twenty car care outlets across the UAE, offering quick services. These include oil changes, car washes, detailing, and other fast turnaround jobs. We partner with major fuel stations like Adnoc and Total Energies, so when a driver stops for fuel, they can also access our services. That synergy between fueling stations and quick automotive outlets has proven quite effective. Customers appreciate the convenience, and our brand grows stronger with every satisfied driver.

## Deeper Insights into Business

**AutoPulse Team:** Nehla, could you describe the day-to-day operations at these car care outlets? What types of services do you find the most in-demand, and how do you maintain consistent quality?

**Nehla:** Our customers typically come for routine upkeep. For instance, an oil change is the most common service. We do a quick inspection to see if anything else needs attention—maybe tyre rotations, brake checks, or interior cleaning. Another high-demand area is car washes and detailing. People want a spotless vehicle, but they also value speed. We pride ourselves on getting these tasks done promptly without sacrificing the results.

To maintain consistency, we do centralized purchasing for essential supplies like oils, filters, cleaning agents, and detailing products. This way, all our outlets use the same quality of materials, and we can negotiate better deals with suppliers. We also have standardized training programs for our technicians and service advisors. New staff members learn the same procedures, from greeting a customer to final check-out. That uniform approach helps us deliver a reliable experience every single time.





**AutoPulse Team:** That's helpful. As you aim for "Version 2.0," which you've mentioned as a key concept, how do you envision your next stage of growth? Specifically, what are the major pillars of this plan?

**Nehla:** For me, Version 2.0 means systematically expanding and modernizing. I break it down into five main pillars:

- **Clear Goal-Setting and Vision:** We need to define what expansion means—whether it's new branches, new types of services, or perhaps advanced technology integration. We should ask ourselves: Where do we see the automotive business in five years?
- **Market and Customer Analysis:** The automotive world keeps shifting. New car models have advanced electronics, and customer service expectations rise each year. Understanding these trends—along with what customers truly want—guides everything else.
- **Technology Upgrades and Process Efficiency:** This includes automation, AI-based service tools, and overall workflow improvements. I foresee introducing AI-driven diagnostics for quicker, more accurate vehicle inspections.
- **Brand Strengthening and Digital Presence:** Marketing, social media engagement, search engine visibility—these help us stand out. If a customer can book services via an app or chatbot, that convenience builds loyalty.
- **Eco-Friendly and Sustainable Practices:** We want to reduce our environmental impact by using biodegradable cleaning agents, water-saving methods, and efficient waste management. This also resonates with customers who value greener solutions.



## CURRENT OPERATIONS AND POTENTIAL IMPROVEMENTS

**AutoPulse Team:** Let's talk about your current operations. You said you have over twenty outlets. Have you introduced any new processes recently to boost efficiency?

**Nehla:** We recently implemented central purchasing and better supply chain management for car care supplies. Before, each branch might have bought materials independently.

That sometimes led to inconsistencies in product quality or pricing. Now, with centralized orders, we ensure uniform standards, plus we save costs by ordering in bulk. This approach has made our operations smoother and given us a stronger negotiation position with suppliers.

Another area we're looking at is how we handle cross-selling opportunities. Right now, if someone comes in for an oil change, we don't always offer them our other services. That's a missed chance to provide more comprehensive car care while also boosting revenue.

So we're exploring ways to better communicate and bundle services. A simple example: pairing an oil change with a quick detailing package could be both beneficial for the customer and efficient for us.

**AutoPulse Team:** AI and new technology often come up in these discussions about modernization. How do you see AI fitting into your automotive service model?

**Nehla:** AI has a lot of potential. We're thinking about AI-powered service optimization—like an automated diagnostic system that can inspect a car's health in minutes, flagging any issues that might need attention. That cuts down on guesswork and allows our mechanics to act faster and with more certainty.

It also helps with preventive maintenance because AI can forecast when a part might need replacing, based on historical data of similar vehicles.

We might also look into an AI mechanic assistant. Imagine a technician scanning a specific engine part with a tool that's linked to a knowledge base. The system can identify the likely causes of a problem and guide the mechanic. This doesn't replace human skill, but it accelerates learning and reduces the chances of overlooking small issues. We believe this can be a real differentiator, especially in a competitive market like the UAE.

## NEXT-GEN SERVICE CENTER (AUTOSERVICE2.0)

**AutoPulse Team:** Mobile service units sound intriguing. Could you elaborate on how that plan might roll out?

**Nehla:** Sure. A mobile service unit is essentially a van fitted with the equipment and supplies needed for quick, on-site maintenance. If a customer has a tight schedule and can't visit one of our outlets, they book a time, and the mobile team arrives at their home or workplace. We can handle oil changes, minor mechanical checks, basic detailing, tire checks—almost any quick service. This reduces the hassle on the customer's end and sets us apart from competitors who rely solely on physical locations.

**AutoPulse Team:** You mentioned an interest in “futuristic but realistic” approaches. Beyond mobile units, do you see fully automated service centers on your horizon?

**Nehla:** Yes, I've thought a lot about fully automated service centers. With the right technology, a car could be guided through stations that perform checks, minor repairs, and washes with minimal human input. It's like a conveyor-belt system for cars, where each station handles a specific task. Of course, we'd still have technicians to handle complicated problems, but the routine stuff—like fluid top-ups or external cleaning—could be automated. This might seem far-fetched, but many industries have embraced automation lines, and automotive services could be next. It's about efficiency, consistency, and speed.



## ROADMAP FOR BUSINESS EXPANSION AND AI INTEGRATION

**AutoPulse Team:** Let's dive deeper into the roadmap. Could you give a concise outline of how ZeeZ International Group plans to transition from traditional processes to a Version 2.0 model that includes AI, automation, and possibly even eco-friendly initiatives?

**Nehla:** Certainly. My outline looks like this:

- **Assessment of Current Processes:** We do a thorough check of each service workflow—car wash, oil change, detailing—and note where the biggest bottlenecks are.
- **Technology Feasibility Study:** We identify which operations would benefit most from AI or automation. For example, an AI diagnostic tool for inspection might reduce waiting times.
- **Staff Training and Onboarding:** We involve our technicians and service advisors from the start. They need to know that technology is here to help, not replace them. We'll hold training sessions to make sure everyone is comfortable with the new tools.
- **Phased Implementation:** Rather than rolling out everything at once, we'll introduce changes in smaller phases—maybe pilot the AI system in one or two outlets, see how it goes, and then expand.
- **Continuous Feedback and Refinement:** We'll gather data from customers and staff on how the new processes are working, and then adjust accordingly.
- **Eco-Friendly Shift:** Parallel to tech upgrades, we'll explore biodegradable products for cleaning and adopt water-saving techniques, ensuring our expansions don't ignore environmental responsibilities.

**AutoPulse Team:** How do you plan to measure success during and after this transition? Are there specific metrics you focus on?

**Nehla:** Measurement is crucial for any project of this scope. Some key metrics include:

- **Turnaround Time:** How quickly can we complete a service, from the customer's arrival to checkout?
- **Customer Satisfaction Scores:** We'll monitor feedback, possibly via automated surveys or apps.
- **Repeat Customer Rate:** If customers see value in the new system, they're more likely to come back.
- **Cost Savings:** While we're investing in technology, we expect efficiency gains to reduce long-term costs.
- **Staff Engagement:** A big part of success is how our employees feel about the changes. We want them motivated, not overwhelmed.

If we see steady improvements in these metrics, we know we're on the right path. If something dips, we investigate and fix it quickly.

## EMBRACING DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION AND CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

**AutoPulse Team:** Digital transformation is a buzzword these days. What specific digital tools or platforms do you believe will enhance the customer experience for ZeeZ International Group?

**Nehla:** We're envisioning a comprehensive, user-friendly service app that covers everything. A customer could open the app, see available slots at nearby outlets, or request a mobile service unit. They could also get real-time notifications—like “Your car wash will start in five minutes” or “Your oil change is almost done.”



We also plan on integrating AI chatbots on our website and in the app, answering common queries —“Which oil type is best for my SUV?” or “Do you offer tire rotation?”—so customers don’t have to wait on hold. On top of that, we’d allow cashless and contactless payments, which many people prefer these days. Together, these digital offerings create a convenient ecosystem. It’s not just about mechanical efficiency; it’s about making the customer feel they’re in control.

## SUSTAINABILITY AND ECO-FRIENDLY INITIATIVES

**AutoPulse Team: Sustainability has become a big topic in every industry. How do you see it applying to automotive care, and what steps are you already taking?**

**Nehla:** Sustainability is crucial, and it’s something customers and employees both value. For example, we’re looking into biodegradable cleaning agents. Instead of standard chemical-heavy detergents, we want substances that clean effectively but break down easily, causing less harm to the environment.

Water conservation is also a priority. Traditional car washes can use a lot of water, so we’re trying high-pressure nozzles and water recycling systems. It might cost more initially, but long-term water savings are substantial. Also, disposing of used oil and other fluids responsibly is key. We partner with waste management firms who handle these materials in an eco-friendly way.

In the near future, we might even consider specialized services for electric and hybrid vehicles, ensuring we handle battery-related tasks carefully and with minimal environmental impact. Overall, we believe green initiatives are not just a marketing tactic; they’re part of being a responsible and forward-thinking business.

**AutoPulse Team: Electric and hybrid vehicles are on the rise. How do you see your outlets adapting to service that segment?**

**Nehla:** For hybrids, we can still handle oil changes —though they’re less frequent—and we can do standard tasks like tire checks, detailing, and so forth. For electric vehicles (EVs), we’ll likely provide specialized cleaning, battery diagnostics, and charging solutions in the future. We need to train staff on how to manage high-voltage components safely. That’s a learning curve, but it opens new opportunities.

We also plan to partner with EV charging providers to set up dedicated stations at or near our outlets. That way, a driver could drop off an EV for a quick diagnostic check, get it cleaned, and maybe top up the battery while waiting. It’s an exciting area, and we want to be among the first to embrace it in the region, making sure owners of hybrid and electric vehicles know they can rely on us for top-quality service.

## TACKLING CHALLENGES AND REALISTIC STRATEGIES

**AutoPulse Team: Every major upgrade comes with potential pitfalls. What challenges do you anticipate, and how do you plan to address them?**

**Nehla:** A primary challenge is staff adaptation. People get comfortable with what they know. Introducing AI tools or mobile service vans requires training and a change in mindset. We’re planning step-by-step training sessions and letting employees see the benefits firsthand. Another hurdle is initial investment costs—buying new tools, setting up digital platforms, or equipping vans. But we see these as investments that pay off through increased efficiency and customer retention.

There's also a learning curve for things like automated service stations. The technology might be complex, and if it malfunctions, it could lead to downtime. We'll likely start small—maybe fully automate certain tasks—and expand once we perfect the system. Finally, we must ensure that in our drive to modernize, we don't alienate our loyal customer base who might still prefer face-to-face interactions. Striking a balance between high-tech and a personal touch is crucial.

**AutoPulse Team:** Could you share a real-life example? Suppose a customer drives in for an oil change—how would a “Version 2.0” experience differ from the traditional one?

**Nehla:** Sure. In the traditional model, a customer just shows up, waits in line, and a service advisor physically checks their documents. They might get an approximate waiting time. Once the service is done, payment is handled at the counter.

In Version 2.0, that same customer could book online through a mobile app. As soon as they drive in, an RFID scanner or a plate-recognition system identifies their vehicle and brings up its service history on a digital dashboard. Our staff sees precisely which oil the car needs and whether it's due for any additional checks. If an AI-based inspection system is set up, it quickly checks key components for signs of wear. The total service time might be cut in half because we skip unnecessary steps. The customer might then pay digitally or use a contactless card. They get a notification on their phone: “Your car is ready. Thank you for choosing us!” It's far more streamlined and data-driven.



## UNORTHODOX IDEAS AND FUTURE POSSIBILITIES

**AutoPulse Team:** Nehla, we love discussing unorthodox ideas on AutoPulse. Are there any “brave” or offbeat strategies you’re considering for the future?

**Nehla:** Yes, I have a couple of ideas that might sound bold:

- **AI Mechanic Assistant with Remote Guidance:** Imagine a scenario where if a mechanic is stumped by a complex issue, the AI system not only provides suggestions but also connects to a remote expert who sees a live feed of the car. That expert can guide the onsite technician in real time. This merges human expertise with AI speed.
- **Driverless Car Pickups (Farther in the future):** If autonomous vehicles become common, we might have a setup where a self-driving car books its own appointment and drives to our center on its own. That's very futuristic, but nothing's impossible.

**AutoPulse Team:** Those definitely sound exciting. How would you ensure that employees stay motivated and ready to adopt these new approaches?

**Nehla:** It starts with transparent communication. We let our teams know why these changes are important—how they make the process smoother, reduce mundane tasks, and free them to do more specialized work. We also invest in regular training so that new tools aren't intimidating.

We believe in recognition and rewards. If a service advisor effectively uses the AI system to diagnose an issue more quickly, and the customer leaves satisfied, that employee could be recognized—perhaps with a small bonus or a public commendation. Over time, this positive reinforcement builds a culture where trying new things is appreciated, not feared.

## FINAL REFLECTIONS

**AutoPulse Team:** Before we wrap up, can you summarize your main advice for someone else in the automotive industry who wants to implement their own version of a “2.0” model?

**Nehla:** My advice would boil down to these points:

- **Set Clear Goals:** Without knowing exactly what you want—faster turnaround, better revenue, or new technology integration—it’s easy to get lost.
- **Study Your Market:** Keep an eye on trends, customer feedback, and competitor strategies. This ensures your plan addresses real needs, not assumptions.
- **Adopt the Right Tech at the Right Pace:** Don’t jump into every new gadget at once. Test small, refine, and then expand.
- **Involve Your Team Early:** They will be the ones using these systems daily. If they’re not on board, your plan could fail.
- **Never Forget Customer Experience:** The customer should benefit from every single update, whether it’s a simpler booking process or faster service time.

**AutoPulse Team:** Thank you, Nehla, for sharing your journey and these insights. Are there any final words you’d like to leave with our AutoPulse audience—particularly those keeping an eye on the rapid transformation of the automotive service sector?

**Nehla:** I would say be open to innovation, but remain grounded in what the customer wants. The car care industry is changing quickly—electric vehicles, AI diagnostics, mobile servicing—but the core principle remains the same: deliver reliable and efficient services. If we keep that as our beacon, we’ll stay relevant no matter how the technology evolves. Also, don’t shy away from exploring new possibilities like sustainable products or advanced automation. It might seem daunting, but with proper planning and team engagement, you can turn challenges into an exciting future.

I’m grateful for the chance to share these thoughts. This industry can only grow stronger if we keep learning from each other and pushing ourselves to deliver better results.

**AutoPulse Team:** Thank you so much, Nehla. It has been truly fascinating to hear about your family’s multi-generational roots in car care, your vision for introducing AI and mobile units, and your commitment to customer satisfaction and environmental responsibility.





# BUSINESS REINVENTED: CARS TAXI 2.0 (KABI) THE AUTOSERVICE2.0 STRATEGY



## VINAY

Senior Vice President,  
Car Taxi



A seasoned automotive fleet management expert and mechanical engineer with deep expertise in car rental, fleet operations, and EV transformation. As Senior Vice President at CARS TAXI COMPANY, he spearheads fleet lifecycle management, vendor partnerships, and electrification strategies, driving innovation, efficiency, and sustainability in mobility.

## ENTERING THE AUTO SERVICE INDUSTRY

**AutoPulse Team:** Vinay, thank you for joining us on AutoPulse. Let's begin with the question everyone is curious about: How did you first become part of the automotive service industry? Did you always know you'd work with automobiles?

**Vinay:** Thanks for inviting me! My journey started in a remote village in the Palakkad district of Kerala. Automobiles were everywhere—bikes, cars, sometimes buses—and I became curious about how these machines actually worked. That's where it all began, really. This wasn't just a passing fancy; I found myself asking people about engines and gearboxes whenever I could.

When I began my B.Tech in Mechanical Engineering, I was already intrigued by anything on wheels. Back home, there was a workshop about 6 km from my house. On days when I didn't have a tight college schedule—or whenever we had an automotive elective or a practical session—I would head to that workshop in the evenings. I ended up basically assisting the mechanic there for free. In exchange, he taught me how to dismantle engines, overhaul gearboxes, and perform routine tasks like brake checks. He was my free teacher, and I was his free helping hand. We got along great, and I learned so much that simply can't be taught in a classroom.

Interestingly, when it came to deciding on a career, I wasn't sure if I wanted to do automotive full-time. After college, I even started working in a design engineering role at a medical equipment firm in Bangalore. But life had other plans.

I travelled to the Middle East to visit my uncle, and that's where Al Habtoor's Diamond Lease opportunity showed up. They needed someone to help set up a new workshop for their fleet division. Even though I'd told myself I wouldn't make my hobby into my full career, I simply couldn't resist when that chance came along. So that's how I fully stepped into the automotive service world.

**AutoPulse Team:** It sounds like your first major role in the Middle East was with Diamond Lease. Could you briefly talk about that experience and how it shaped your future in automotive services?

**Vinay:** Diamond Lease managed a fleet of **14,000+ vehicles**, mainly Mitsubishi and other Japanese brands. They had two big segments: **leasing** (long-term, a year or more) and **rental** (short-term, like daily or weekly). My task was to develop a strategy for maintaining these vehicles effectively—each segment came with a unique mileage cap and usage profile. For example, a lease vehicle might be kept for up to **300,000 km over three years**, while a rental vehicle might only be in the fleet for **18 months and up to 60,000 km**.

It was an eye-opening role. I started as a purely technical person who loved diagnosing mechanical failures and scheduling preventive maintenance. However because the workshop branch in Abu Dhabi was somewhat remote, I had to handle operations too when some staff got laid off.

That's how I discovered the importance of bridging **technical insights with business operations**—it's not enough to just be a great mechanic; you have to understand how your workshop's activities feed into financial and operational metrics. Around that time, Diamond Lease decided to implement **Oracle E-Business Suite (EBS)** to replace their basic fleet software.

Since I had exposure to both workshops and operations, I was made a champion user for system testing. This forced me to see how a repair order translates into a **P&L entry**, how GL (general ledger) accounts work, and how crucial real-time data can be in decision-making. My entire perspective evolved.

I learned about **ERP systems**, did advanced Excel courses, picked up VBA macros, and started automating processes. That's where I truly began to see myself as someone who could merge technical expertise with higher-level management strategies.

## DEEPER INSIGHTS FROM VINAY'S CAREER

**AutoPulse Team:** Vinay, let's shift back momentarily to your personal experiences across various automotive organizations—Al Habtoor (Diamond Lease), Europcar, Gargash (Mercedes-Benz), Al-Futtaim (Hertz), and now Kabi. Which lessons stand out the most in shaping your AutoService2.0 vision?

**Vinay:** Each company taught me something unique:

- **Diamond Lease (Al Habtoor):** I realized how important ERP systems and data-driven insights are for large fleets. That was my first big experience with a massive operation, and implementing Oracle EBS changed my perspective from purely mechanical to operational and financial.
- **Europcar:** Here, I handled a large body shop with over 100 bays and 120 technicians, plus insurance claims from companies like AXA. I learned collision repair management and, interestingly, how to paint vehicles properly. I spent weekends with Axalta technicians to perfect painting techniques. This hands-on approach gave me respect for every skill in the workshop.
- **Gargash (Mercedes-Benz):** I sought advanced diagnostic training and learned how to program control units. This taught me the intricacies of modern automotive electronics and gave me a chance to see how premium-brand service centers function with strict manufacturer guidelines.
- **Al-Futtaim (Hertz):** Once again, I returned to fleet management, looking at day-to-day operational efficiencies.
- **Cars Taxi (Kabi):** My current role consolidates everything—mechanical repairs, body shop needs, advanced telematics, and a push for automation. We manage over 3,000 to 4,000 vehicles, which demands everything I've learned so far.

The biggest lesson? Technology alone isn't enough. You need to train your people and have clear processes. Whether you're adopting RFID or advanced telematics, it's the human factor—buy-in from technicians, managers, and drivers—that truly enables success.

**AutoPulse Team:** That's a useful takeaway. Now, many might be at the start of their own transformation journeys. What practical advice would you give a small or medium-sized service centre aiming to implement its own "Version 2.0"?

**Vinay:** I'd say:

**Start Simple:** Pick a repetitive process that causes bottlenecks. For us, it was car washes. We added RFID there first, saw immediate benefits, and built momentum.

**Measure and Record:** If you don't measure your turnaround times or parts usage, you can't improve them. Even if you're not fully automated, start capturing data in a structured way (Excel spreadsheets or a basic software system).

**Adopt a Step-by-Step ERP/Software Integration:** You don't have to do everything at once. Integrate one module—like workshop management—then grow to inventory, then finance. Gradual integration means less chaos.

**Team Training:** New systems can be intimidating. Organize training sessions, create user-friendly manuals, and encourage open dialogue so staff can ask questions.

**Stay Open to Unorthodox Ideas:** Maybe a subscription model, maybe driver rewards—sometimes these unique strategies turn into your competitive edge.

**AutoPulse Highlights**

From RFID integration to production-line accident repairs, from subscription-based maintenance models to driver gamification, Vinay's ideas illustrate what's possible when we dare to rethink tradition.



## NEXT-GEN SERVICE CENTER (AUTOSERVICE2.0)

**AutoPulse Team:** That's a remarkable journey. Let's shift gears to the heart of today's topic: If you were to envision your brand's Version 2.0, what would it look like? In your case, you're now at Cars Taxi, recently rebranded as Kabi. Could you describe your "Kabi 2.0" vision?

**Vinay:** Of course. Let me set the stage: Cars Taxi (now Kabi) has been in the region for about 25 years, operating around 3,000+ vehicles in Dubai alone—and over 4,000 across different areas. We're one of the largest taxi fleets after Dubai Taxi Corporation. So, the brand has a lot of legacy processes that worked fine in the past but aren't necessarily efficient by modern standards. Kabi 2.0 is my way of saying, "We want to upgrade to a data-driven, proactive approach to after-sales service and fleet management." Here are some key pillars:

- **Real-Time Data Capture:**
  - We're moving away from manual logs. For example, washing counts used to be done by physically counting cars; now we use RFID tags on every vehicle to automate that.
  - Eventually, we want the system to track each car's odometer via telematics. When the car hits a specific mileage, the system automatically logs a service requirement.
- **Automating Preventive Maintenance:**
  - No more reliance on windshield stickers. A telematics-based system will send service alerts directly to the workshop and the driver app
  - This way, we avoid late services and reduce the likelihood of breakdowns.

- **Faster Accident Turnaround with Production Lines:**
  - Accident repairs are often a bottleneck. We're setting up production lines in the body shop, classifying repairs into minor, medium, or major.
  - Technicians specialize in specific damage levels, and we keep a stock of the most common spare parts. This drastically cuts down waiting times.
- **Enhancing Driver Experience:**
  - Our 10,000+ drivers are effectively our "sales force." The more time they spend on the road rather than in workshops, the more revenue we generate.
  - By giving them quick, predictable service schedules—plus safety features like ADAS (blind-spot monitoring, lane departure warnings)—we can reduce accidents and downtime.
- **Centralized ERP and Analytics:**
  - We use Microsoft Dynamics as our ERP, integrating it with other fleet-management add-ons. This allows near real-time dashboards on vehicle status, workshop load, spare parts inventory, etc.
  - Instead of making decisions on spreadsheets that are a week old, we're aiming to see daily or even hourly updates.

In short, Kabi 2.0 is about transforming a legacy taxi service into an agile, data-centric operation that benefits both drivers and customers.

**AutoPulse Team:** Let's talk about the roadmap to achieve that. Could you give us short notes on the business roadmap to reaching "Version 2.0"? How do you move from your current state to your ideal future?

**Vinay:** Absolutely. Let's break it down into practical steps:



## 1. Assess Current Gaps:

- We first list every manual or paper-based process (like counting car washes or using stickers for service intervals).
- Then we rank them by urgency. For instance, car washes are daily tasks—if we automate that, we get immediate value.

## 2. Implement Electronic Data Capture:

- I believe in starting small. We began with RFID at the wash bays, because it's a straightforward, repetitive process.
- Once we mastered that, we expanded into telematics for real-time odometer tracking. This eventually triggers alerts in our ERP, so the workshop knows which vehicles are due soon.

## 3. Restructure the Workshop:

- Accidents are unavoidable in a taxi fleet. Instead of lumping all collision repairs together, we categorize them by severity.
- A minor scratch doesn't wait behind a major chassis fix. We keep specialized bays and dedicated technicians for each level of damage.
- Spare parts planning: Over time, we see which parts break the most (bumpers, headlights, etc.). We keep them in stock to reduce delays.

## 4. Leverage an Integrated ERP:

- Whether it's Oracle EBS, Microsoft Dynamics, or another system, the key is integration. The workshop data must flow into the finance and operations modules in real-time.
- This ensures that every repair job, and every spare part used, is instantly visible in the overall P&L.

## 5. Measure, Analyze, and Improve:

- Legacy systems might give you data once a month. That's too late to fix daily problems. We want daily or even hourly dashboards showing how many cars are in the shop, how many need parts, how many are out for accidents, etc.
- Once we see a bottleneck—like a surge in minor dent repairs—we can adjust staffing or reorder parts proactively.

## 6. Train and Involve the Team:

- Every new system fails if people don't embrace it. We explain to drivers, service advisors, and technicians why these changes help them: less wait time, clearer job roles, and fewer repeated mistakes.
- Regular training sessions ensure everyone knows how to use the new tools, from scanning RFID tags to filling out digital repair orders.

**AutoPulse Team:** We've discussed the practical, step-by-step approach. Now, could you share any futuristic but realistic strategies that you think will define the next decade for taxi fleets, including Kabi?

**Vinay:** A few futuristic-yet-feasible ideas include:

- **Advanced Driver Assistance Systems (ADAS):**

- We're looking to equip our cars with features like blind-spot warnings, lane departure alerts, and forward-collision warnings. This can prevent many accidents before they occur.
- Since every accident avoided is significant cost savings—and fewer downtime days—the payoff is huge.

- **Predictive Maintenance with Analytics:**

- Once we gather enough data on car usage, we can predict when certain parts tend to fail. Let's say we notice that a specific brand's brake pads fail around 40,000 km.
- We can replace them at 35,000 km, preventing breakdowns and driver complaints.

- **Mobile Apps for Drivers:**

- Instead of having drivers physically come to the base station for tasks like scheduling repairs, we can give them an app. They'd log an issue, pick a slot, and show up for service precisely when needed.
- This reduces waiting time, organizes the workshop schedule, and keeps drivers happier.

- **Production-Line Body Shops:**

- We've mentioned categorizing minor, medium, and major repairs. In the future, we could have a full "assembly line" format. One bay for removing damaged panels, another for dent fixing, another for painting, etc.
- It's akin to how a factory operates—just reversed for repairs.

- **Smart Inventory Management:**

- Tying real-time usage data with ERP can help us keep an optimal inventory. No more waiting for a part that's routinely needed. We also avoid overstocking expensive items.
- This balances cost and availability.

**AutoPulse Team:** Some of us like hearing about unorthodox or bold ideas. Are there any "brave" innovations you'd like to share that might challenge conventional thinking?

**Vinay:** Sure. I have a couple that might sound unconventional:

- **Subscription-Based Maintenance:**

- Typically, drivers or companies pay per service visit or per repair. What if we created a flat monthly fee that covers all preventive maintenance, minor collision repairs, and even telematics?
- This gives the driver or fleet owner predictable costs, and the workshop has an incentive to keep vehicles in top shape—because fewer repairs mean lower operational expense on our side too.

- **Gamification for Drivers:**

- We talk about points systems and rewards in consumer apps. Why not in a taxi fleet? We could award points for good driving behaviour, punctual servicing, and minimal accident rates.
- Drivers could trade these points for perks—like better shift allocations or small bonuses. It fosters healthy competition and encourages better driving habits.

- **Mobile Service Vans:**

- Instead of having all drivers come to a single hub, imagine mobile vans stationed at hot spots. These vans perform quick oil changes, minor repairs, or even certain bodywork tasks on-site.
- It saves time, cuts queues at the main workshop, and keeps cars on the road longer.

## PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER—Kabi 2.0 IN PRACTICE

**AutoPulse Team:** Let's solidify the vision of Kabi 2.0 with a real-world example. Could you walk us through a typical day in this next-gen environment?

**Suppose a Kabi driver has to get a routine service, or maybe the car has a minor collision. How is it handled in your 2.0 framework?**

**Vinay:** Sure, let's imagine a scenario:

### 1. Preemptive Alert:

- The telematics system notices the taxi is at 9,800 km since its last oil change. Our threshold is 10,000 km. The system automatically schedules a service slot in the ERP for the next day (when the driver typically has fewer trips).
- The driver also gets a text or an app notification saying, "You have a service appointment tomorrow at 2 p.m. at Station B."

### 1. Arrival and Check-In:

- When the car arrives, an RFID reader at the station recognizes it. The workshop staff sees the car's history on a tablet: "Oil change due + brake pad inspection."
- The driver only needs to confirm the app prompt—no manual paperwork or back-and-forth waiting.



### 3. Inspection and Quick Repair:

- A technician completes the service in a specialized bay. If everything checks out, the car is good to go. If the brake pads are worn out, the parts inventory system confirms we have them in stock.
- Because we planned around real data, there's minimal waiting for parts. This might add 30 minutes to the job, but it's still done in a single visit.

### 4. Accident Scenario:

- If, say, the driver arrived with a minor fender dent from a low-speed collision, we direct the car to the minor repair line. We keep the necessary bumpers or paint materials on hand. The staff specialized in quick cosmetic fixes handles it.
- For more extensive damage, the car would go to the medium or major line. Once again, the system logs the needed parts and checks if they're in stock. If not, it triggers an automatic order, and we see an estimated arrival time. The driver can be given a replacement or plan around how long the repair might take.

### 5. Completion and Feedback:

- After the service or repair, all relevant costs, time stamps, and job details flow into the ERP. Management sees, in near real time, how many vehicles are serviced, how many remain in the queue, and the average turnaround.
- The driver gets an in-app message: "Your car's service is complete. Next service due at 20,000 km."

In essence, Kabi 2.0 is about orchestrating each step—data capture, scheduling, parts availability, and execution—so that everything feels seamless and proactive rather than reactive.

**AutoPulse Team: Vinay, thank you for painting such a detailed picture of how an AutoService2.0 setup can look. Any final reflections you'd like to share with our AutoPulse audience?**

Vinay: Certainly. My biggest reflection is that the automotive service industry is ripe for modernization, but it won't modernize itself.

People who have been in the same company for decades might be comfortable with manual methods. You have to show them the value of change—how data makes their job easier, not harder. Also, don't underestimate the small details. For instance, shifting from a sticker-based system to a telematics-based one may seem small, but it can drastically reduce missed services or breakdowns. Similarly, having an RFID system at the wash bay might sound trivial until you realize how much time is wasted in manual counting and how inaccurate that data can be.

**Finally**, keep learning. My path started with me physically turning wrenches in a rural garage, and it led me to handle ERP systems, advanced body shop processes, and strategic fleet management. Every step taught me something new. Stay curious, talk to experts, watch how your data flows from the workshop floor to the financial ledger, and never hesitate to try bold ideas. That's how you truly build an AutoService2.0 that lasts.



(Vinay with his family)

**AutoPulse Team: Vinay, thank you for sharing your story and your roadmap for Kabi 2.0. It's fascinating to see how passion for hands-on automotive work can blend with the pursuit of data-driven, automated solutions.**

**Vinay:** Thank you for having me. I hope these experiences and ideas inspire others to push their service centers forward. It's an exciting time to be in the automotive industry, and I'm always glad to share what I've learned along the way.

# UPCOMING EVENTS

2025



**Feb 9 – Feb 12**

**Leap 2025**  
**Riyadh, KSA**



**Feb 10 – Feb 11**

**ReFuel Forum**  
**MENA, Dubai**



**Feb 19 – Feb 20**

**AutoAmericas**  
**Show, USA**



**Mar 12 – Mar 14**

**Tyrexpo Asia,**  
**Singapore**



**Apr 2 – Apr 3**

**ReFuel Forum**  
**APAC & ANZ**



**Apr 18 – Apr 21**

**Automorrow Event,**  
**Egypt**



**Apr 28 – Apr 30**

**Automechanika Riyadh,**  
**Saudi Arabia**



**May 22 – May 24**

**Chengdu International**  
**Trade Fair for**  
**Automotive Parts and**  
**Aftermarket Services,**  
**China**



**Jun 3 – Jun 5**

**Automechanika**  
**Birmingham, UK**



**Jun 19 – Jun 21**

**Automechanika**  
**Ho Chi Minh City,**  
**Vietnam**



**July 25 – July 27**

**Auto Parts Vehicle**  
**Expo, Pasay, Philippines**



**Sep 1 – Sep 3**

**ReFuel Forum Africa,**  
**Cape Town**



**Oct 22 – Oct 24**

**AutoCare Jeddah,**  
**Saudi Arabia**

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