

AutoPulse

Community initiative by GaragePlug



PARINJAY

MANAGING DIRECTOR, CASTROL



CHRYSO TZIARRIDE

BUSINESS LEADER AT
AL-FUTTAIM



SALMAN SHAHID

BUSINESS PLANNING
LEADER AT 3M

"IT'S CRITICAL HOW YOU BUILD AND
MAINTAIN RELATIONSHIPS. THEY'RE NOT
JUST SOCIAL NETWORKS; THEY'RE
PROFESSIONAL LIFELINES."



MAJID HUSSAIN

BUSINESS HEAD, LEADER EXPRESS KSA

INDUSTRY EXPERTS



EXCLUSIVE CONVERSATION WITH THE MANAGING DIRECTOR OF CASTROL

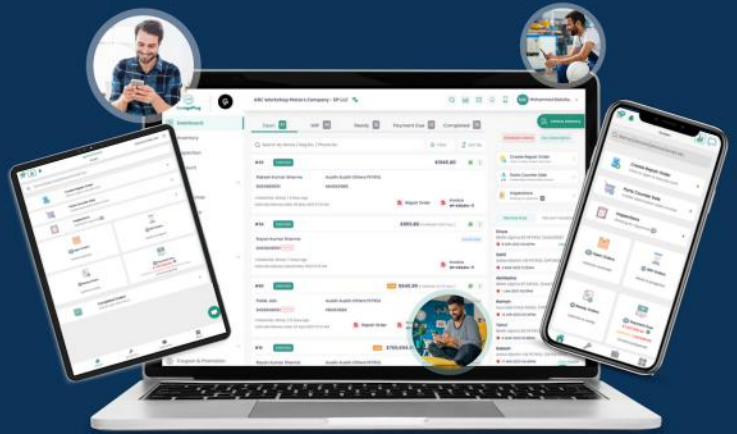
GETTING INSIDE THE GENIUS MINDS OF GLOBAL
BUSINESS LEADERS | BUSINESS GROWTH TALK

2024 JULY

ABOUT THE AUTOPULSE INITIATIVE BY GARAGEPLUG

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

HAPPY READING!

-TEAM AUTOPULSE + TEAM GARAGEPLUG



Ashish S

Community Evangelist



Gunjan A

Design Head



Sandhya N

Community Relationship Head



Jayesh R

Editorial Head

“

THE AUTOPULSE COMMUNITY - REFLECTION

Thought-Provoking Statements from the AutoPulse Community

”



Atif Ali
Director of Service Management
JSC Bosch

“In the age of digitalization, auto service providers must understand that the goal is to simplify and improve the customer experience, not merely automate processes.”



Rashid
Managing Director
EXP Oman

“While the concept of Intelligent Data may seem futuristic, it is rapidly becoming a reality for forward-thinking businesses.”



Elie Nasr
Workshop Concept Manager
Robert Bosch, ME

“Leveraging technology for efficient data management, tracking, and reporting can improve business operations in the competitive EV industry.”



Manikandan T K
Ex- Vice President
Lanson Toyota

“Monthly random audits by authorized personnel ensure high service standards and security, maintaining vigilance and smooth operations.”



Tariq Javed
CEO
National Car Maintenance Company
(Petromin)

“We built our transformation on five pillars: Maximizing Asset Value, Customer Experience, Digitalization, Operational Excellence and Cultural Transformation.”



Nabil Naamo
Managing Director
Topaz Detailing Group

“The challenges of managing a growing franchise network can indeed be transformed into opportunities through the integration of modern technology.”



Khalid Farooq
General Manager
World Automotive Group

“Workshop efficiency can be enhanced by prioritizing communication with staff and customers, optimizing operations, creating a conducive work environment, and embracing technology.”



Abijith Menon
BDM - Digital Processes
Petromin Corporation

“In today’s rapidly evolving business landscape, staying ahead means embracing innovative technologies that transform customer engagement.”

“

THE AUTOPULSE COMMUNITY - REFLECTION

Thought-Provoking Statements from the AutoPulse Community

”



Sandeep Ghai
CEO
Opal Marketing

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



Kenneth Arnold
Vice President
ADNOC Distribution

“Integrating technology in the automotive aftermarket goes beyond mere repairs and transforms the entire service experience into something that is not only convenient but uniquely tailored to each customer.”



Les
Director
Move Workshops

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



Rao Junaid Ahmed
General Manager
Fuchs KSA

“In today’s aftermarket services scene, data seems to be the new oil. In a business world loaded with KPIs, data is like the foundation for measuring how well things are going.”



Ankush Arora
CEO
Carspa

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



Majid Al Jbour
Network Development Manager
United Motors Company

“To maintain a good reputation, the automotive after-service industry should focus on online engagement, customer service and feedback, streamlined operations, and document digitization.”



Ajay Tandon
Business Head - Strategy and
Business Development
Opal Marketing

“Dealerships should prioritize awareness of pre-maintenance services with a transparent, consultative approach.”



Ravi Rajput
Aftermarket Head
AVTEC

“Educate customers on the economics of cost of maintenance vs cost of breakdown and make the aftersales experience for customers as pleasant as possible.”

WHAT'S IN THIS MAGAZINE?

Featuring top auto aftermarket service industry leaders

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800CARGURU WINS TOP AUTOMOTIVE SERVICE PROVIDER AWARD AT GLOBAL SAGA AWARDS 2024



800CARGURU has won the "Top Automotive Service Provider of the Year" award at the Global Saga Awards 2024. The award was presented to the CEO and Founder, Syed Ovais Ahmed, by Bollywood star Suniel Shetty, who was the Chief Guest.

CEO Syed Ovais Ahmed of 800CARGURU expressed gratitude for winning the award, highlighting the team's dedication and innovation. He emphasized their 24/7 roadside assistance and 30-minute response time, which enhance customer satisfaction and loyalty.

800CARGURU offers a one-stop solution for all car needs in the United Arab Emirates.

Courtesy: Gulf Today

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP TO LAUNCH SHELL SERVICE CENTERS ACROSS SAUDI ARABIA

Al Jomiah and Shell Lubricating Company have partnered with Autolead to open and operate Shell Service Centers throughout Saudi Arabia. The signing ceremony was attended by the heads of both companies, emphasizing enhancing customer experience.

This partnership will launch a network of quick service centers under the Quick Lead brand, a subsidiary of Autolead, in collaboration with Shell Service Centers. These centers aim to offer top-notch maintenance services and parts for both corporate and individual customers; combining Shell's advanced oil technology with Autolead's expertise in automotive aftermarket services.



Mr. Saher Hashem, CEO of Al Jomiah and Shell Lubricating Company, expressed excitement about the partnership, stating it aims to enhance customer satisfaction and market leadership. Mr. Ahmed Saud Abbasi, CEO of Autolead, highlighted the partnership's role in offering superior automotive services and innovative solutions, driving sustainable growth in the local market.

Courtesy: Zawya

AGMC AND DUBAI SOUTH LAUNCH \$136 MILLION AUTOMOTIVE HUB

Dubai South, known for aviation, logistics, and real estate, has partnered with AGMC, a major importer of luxury vehicles in the UAE, to launch a \$136.23 million automotive hub.

Located at The Business Avenue near the VIP Terminal and Al Maktoum International Airport, the facility covers 33,000 square meters.



Its strategic position offers easy access to key areas like Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Road, Jebel Ali Free Zone, and Expo Road, making it convenient for customers and businesses.

The hub includes a showroom and a fully-equipped service center providing comprehensive after-sales and maintenance services. This new facility will feature top brands like BMW and MINI.

Khalifa Al Zaffin, Executive Chairman of Dubai Aviation City Corporation and Dubai South, emphasized the facility's strategic importance. He said the advanced infrastructure and unique ecosystem at Dubai South will support AGMC's efforts to serve its customers.

Jan Felton, Managing Director of Al Batha Group, AGMC's parent company, noted that it aligns with the UAE leadership's vision and supports Dubai South's development plans by offering top-tier facilities and services.

Courtesy: Logistics Middle East

Do you know ?

The global repair and maintenance market is set to grow from \$1,536.06 billion in 2023 to \$1,665.26 billion in 2024, with a CAGR of 8.4%, and is projected to reach \$2,263.54 billion by 2028.

QUICK FIT OPENS NEW LUXURY CAR WORKSHOP IN UAE

Quick Fit International, founded in 2018 by Azhar Abbas and Muhammad Awais, has opened a new luxury car workshop with cutting-edge technology and a team of highly trained professionals onboard.

Located strategically in the UAE, it is easily accessible to luxury car owners across the region. This reinforces Quick Fit's position as the largest network of luxury car workshops in the UAE, alongside its existing locations like Quick Fit Autos Dubai and Royal Tech Autos Dubai.

Azhar Abbas, co-founder of Quick Fit, expressed excitement about the new workshop.

Courtesy: Business Insider

ROYAL SWISS AUTO SERVICES EXPANDS TO SAUDI ARABIA



Royal Swiss Auto Services, a leading car service center with locations in Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Sharjah, and Al-Ain, has expanded to Saudi Arabia by opening a new branch in Riyadh.

The new Riyadh workshop is designed for easy access and convenience and will feature the latest diagnostic tools and equipment. This move is expected to enhance service quality and increase the

customer base, offering comprehensive car care services under one roof.

“We’re excited to open our new branch in Riyadh,” said Fahad Al Hemeiri, CEO of Royal Swiss Auto Services. “Our goal has always been to offer a superior, affordable alternative to dealership services. With our experience, we aim to exceed customer expectations and make a lasting impact on the automotive service industry in Saudi Arabia.”

Courtesy: LinkedIn

ALBATHA AUTOMOTIVE GROUP LAUNCHES PITSTOP AUTOCARE IN SHARJAH



Albatha Automotive Group, known for importing high-quality vehicles in the UAE, has opened Pitstop Autocare, a new premium automotive service center in Sharjah.

Mirsad Nezirevic, General Manager of Pitstop Autocare, expressed excitement about the launch. He explained that Pitstop aims to be more than just a service center; it’s designed to be a destination for car enthusiasts to relax and connect while their cars are being serviced.

To celebrate the grand opening, Pitstop is offering

exclusive promotions, including a 25% discount for its first customers and special service packages. This invitation encourages automotive enthusiasts to experience Pitstop’s premium services firsthand.

Courtesy: Motor283

ALMAILEM GROUP AND KPTC LAUNCH K-PINK AUTO GARAGE AND CAR WASH CENTER FOR WOMEN



In a pioneering move, AlMailem Group has partnered with Kuwait Public Transport Company (KPTC) to introduce the K-Pink Auto Garage and Car Wash Center for Women. This unique facility, officially inaugurated on April 18, 2024, in Kuwait City, is designed to empower women within the automotive industry. The center aims to provide top-notch automotive services while promoting female participation and expertise in this traditionally male-dominated field.

Courtesy: AlMailem website

Do you know ?

The word car is derived from the Latin word ‘Carrus’ which means a two-wheeled wagon. Also, almost 80% of an average car’s parts are recyclable.

AUTOLAB: ALMAILEM GROUP OPENS THE LARGEST SPARE PARTS SHOWROOM IN KUWAIT



AlMailem Group has launched its latest venture, AUTOLAB, inaugurated by Managing Directors Mr. Kuldeep Singh Lamba and Mr. Mishari AlMailem. Located in Shuwaikh, AUTOLAB is set to be the largest spare parts showroom in the region, catering to American, Japanese, and Korean car models. This new showroom marks another milestone for AlMailem Group, with more than 40 showrooms and service centers across the country.

AUTOLAB offers a comprehensive range of automotive services, including spare parts, tires, batteries, engine oil, AC servicing, brake and suspension repairs, and quick maintenance solutions.

Courtesy: AlMailem website

SHELL OPENS FIRST BRANDED SERVICE STATION IN SAUDI ARABIA



Shell, in collaboration with licensee Wafi Energy, has launched its first branded service station in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. The station features Shell Café, Shell Recharge, a car wash, and a lube bay, all managed by a highly trained team. This marks a significant step towards enhancing fuel retail standards in the region.

Over 100 VIPs attended the inauguration, celebrating the beginning of an extensive expansion plan with 200 more stations to come.

Courtesy: LinkedIn

NIPPON PAINT OPENS BODY REPAIR, CAR CARE WORKSHOP IN GURUGRAM, INDIA



Nippon Paint has unveiled its first automotive paint and car care workshop in Gurugram, Haryana. The workshop, named 'Master Craft,' offers vehicle body repair, paint, and car care services. It features a rapid paint station that reduces the repainting time for a panel from 90 to 70 minutes.

Spanning 9,000 square feet, it offers a range of services including car collision repair, restoration, ceramic coating, and paint protection film application.

The company plans to expand to 25-30 outlets in key markets over the next three years and aims to focus on providing high-quality, quick, and efficient vehicle repair services.

Courtesy: Autocarpro

AUTOMECHANIKA RIYADH 2024 HIGHLIGHTS TECH INNOVATION AND SMART MOBILITY



The 6th edition of Automechanika Riyadh, Saudi Arabia's premier trade show for the automotive aftermarket was held from April 30 to May 2 at the Riyadh International Convention and Exhibition Center. The event featured over 340 exhibitors from 26 countries and attracted more than 8,000 visitors, spanning three halls and over 11,000 square meters.

The show highlighted a wide range of products from local and international brands, offering numerous networking opportunities for business expansion. The Automechanika Riyadh Academy featured keynote presentations, panel discussions, and market updates on sustainability, innovation, and urban mobility.

Giga projects such as NEOM, Red Sea Project, and AIUla were emphasized for their role in the strategic evolution of smart mobility systems in the Kingdom. Other topics discussed included Nanotechnology, digital transformation, IoT integration and innovations in smart mobility. Some of the key speakers were James Luxbacher, Chief Business Development Officer at SIXT KSA, Mark Notkin, Chief Innovation Officer at Petromin Corporation, Arda Arslan, Regional Vice President-Mobility Aftermarket at Bosch Mobility.

With one more successful event, Automechanika Riyadh has firmly established itself as the top trade fair for automotive parts, accessories, equipment, and services in Saudi Arabia.

COCKPIT LAUNCHES NEW TVC TO TARGET GEN Y AND GEN Z DRIVERS



COCKPIT, operated by Bridgestone Sales (Thailand) Co., Ltd., has launched a new TV commercial focusing on its slogan "Save Time and Money for Customer Safety." This initiative aims to expand its customer base to include Gen Y and Gen Z drivers, catering to their modern lifestyles and service needs.

The TVC features Luke Ishikawa, a popular model and actor, representing the new customer segments. It emphasizes COCKPIT's commitment as a total car life partner, promoting happiness and safe driving across all destinations. The campaign, launched from May 16, 2024, across television and online platforms, highlights COCKPIT's comprehensive service offerings and professional teams across its 270 nationwide branches.

Courtesy: Newswit

Do you know ?

The Car Parts Aftermarket Market is projected to grow at a steady rate of 4.05% from 2024 to 2030, reaching USD 335.67 billion. With evolving consumer preferences and advancements in technology, there is potential for innovative products to drive market growth.

SIME DARBY MOTORS'S NEWLY LAUNCHED MULTI-FRANCHISE SERVICE CENTRE PLANS SOUTH-EAST ASIA EXPANSION



From left: Sime Darby Auto Selection general manager Choong Chin Seong, Gan, Basham and Sime Darby Auto Bavaria and Auto Selection managing director Vi Thim Juan at the press conference after the launch.

Courtesy: The Sun

Sime Darby Motors (SDM) has introduced Drivecare, a multi-franchise one-stop service centre catering to all car brands and segments.

Drivecare is set to expand across Southeast Asia, starting with Malaysia and extending to Thailand, Singapore, and Indonesia, followed by a broader rollout in the Asia-Pacific region. This strategic expansion underscores SDM's commitment to providing accessible and reliable automotive services.

Jeffrey Gan, SDM Southeast Asia Managing Director, highlighted the focus on incorporating Malaysia into the brand and expanding to the Southeast Asia market. He announced plans to introduce Drivecare centres in Penang and explore locations in Johor Bahru.

SDM Managing Director Andrew Basham emphasized that Drivecare aims to set a new benchmark for after-sales service by combining exceptional service quality with competitive pricing. Drivecare addresses common customer frustrations, such as inadequate facilities and subpar customer service, ensuring a seamless and comfortable experience.

CHERY AUTO EXPANDS PHILIPPINE NETWORK WITH NINE NEW DEALERSHIPS



Courtesy: Wheels.ph

Chery Auto Philippines has signed agreements with nine dealer groups to expand its network in the country. The new partners include Unli Drive Motors (Chery Fairview), Auto Ten Trade and Services (Chery Cordon), Laus Group (Chery Bacolor), Angcore Motors (Chery Davao), MNV Auto Group (Chery Oton-Iloilo), Oro Auto Group (Chery Zamboanga), Autonomics Motors Inc. (Chery Tuguegarao), Beatitudes Auto (Chery Baliuag), and Citimotors (Chery Pasong Tamo).

Froilan Dytianquin, Group Managing Director of United Asia Automotive Group Inc. (UAAGI), expressed confidence in the Chery brand and welcomed the new partners. He emphasized the company's goal to make Chery vehicles and aftersales services more accessible to Filipino buyers, offering value-packed automobiles and a worry-free ownership experience.

Chery is a modern automotive brand present in over 80 countries, and with a roadmap geared towards further expansion. Chery Auto reentered the Philippine market in 2019 under the UAAGI distributorship.

This expansion highlights Chery Auto Philippines' commitment to growth, innovation, and delivering exceptional value to its customers.

GARAGEPLUG: DISRUPTING THE ERP LANDSCAPE WITH ERPNext PARTNERSHIP FOR END-TO-END DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

One of the Middle East's most popular and trusted software platform-based digital transformation tech companies - GaragePlug is preparing to enhance its service offerings with their upcoming partnership with ERPNext. While SAP has long dominated the ERP market in the Middle East's auto service industry with its comprehensive and scalable solutions, there is a growing need for ERP solutions that cater specifically to small and mid-level enterprise service brands.

Due to its powerful and extensive features, SAP remains an excellent choice for large enterprises. However, small to medium-sized enterprises often need a more user-friendly and cost-effective alternative. This is where the GaragePlug and ERPNext partnership comes in. ERPNext is known for its flexibility, ease of use, and affordability, making it an ideal solution for small to mid-level enterprises.

The quick growth of ERPNext in the auto service industry highlights the growing demand for more agile and user-centric solutions. **“By combining GaragePlug's expertise in workshop operations management and enhancing end-customer experience with ERPNext's user-friendly, open-source cloud ERP capabilities, we are set to offer a perfect solution for small to mid-level enterprises in the auto service industry”**, said Shubhra, CEO of GaragePlug.



CFAO MOBILITY KENYA AND NCBA LAUNCH "BEAUTY MEETS THE BONNET" FOR WOMEN CAR ENTHUSIASTS



CFAO Mobility Kenya and NCBA have partnered to launch the “Beauty Meets the Bonnet” (BMB) initiative, aimed at enhancing the driving experience for women. This program offers boutique experiences tailored to women's aspirations and lifestyles, providing valuable resources and benefits for vehicle maintenance and enjoyment.

Members of BMB will enjoy special offers on routine maintenance services and spare parts, access to exclusive themed events, and networking opportunities. At the launch event, CFAO Mobility Kenya's General Manager of Human Resources, Josephine Bekoe, emphasized the commitment to strong asset finance solutions and making vehicle ownership more convenient for women. NCBA Group Managing Director, John Gachora, highlighted the importance of empowering women and forming strategic alliances to support their aspirations.

The partnership represents a significant step in promoting gender inclusivity within the automotive industry, aiming to provide women with tools, knowledge, and opportunities in all areas of motoring, from vehicle maintenance to pursuing careers in automotive design, engineering, and leadership. Courtesy: Soko Directory

AL-FUTTAIM AUTO CENTERS LAUNCHES ELECTRIC & HYBRID VEHICLE SERVICES IN UAE



Al-Futtaim Auto Centers now offers maintenance and repair services for electric and hybrid vehicles across 18 facilities, making it the UAE's first multi-brand network to do so. These centers are equipped with advanced tools to cater to all electric and hybrid vehicle brands.

This initiative supports the growing popularity of eco-friendly cars in the region and includes expert diagnostics and repair by trained technicians from Al-Futtaim's E-Mobility Training Centre.

Jawahar Ganesh, Managing Director of Global Aftersales at Al-Futtaim Automotive, emphasized that these new services will boost customer confidence in switching to greener mobility options, including support for third-party warranty claims.

Courtesy: Zawya

EXPO CENTRE SHARJAH TO HOST MIDDLE EAST ELECTRIC VEHICLE SHOW IN 2025

Expo Centre Sharjah has partnered with MIE Events to launch the Middle East Electric Vehicle Show (MEEVS) in 2025.



This event will feature over 100 global brands, showcasing the latest in electric, hydrogen, and hybrid vehicles, as well as electric bikes and innovative technologies. The event will feature components like motors, electronic control units, and battery management systems, with participation from charging service providers and renewable energy solutions, highlighting advancements in the EV industry.

The show aims to promote sustainable transportation and support the UAE's "Net Zero by 2050" initiative. The signing ceremony took place at the Centre's headquarters and The agreement was signed by Saif Mohammed Al Midfa, CEO of Expo Centre Sharjah, and David Wang, CEO of MIE Events.

Courtesy: Asianlite

Chinese tech giant Xiaomi enters the automotive industry with the launch of its first Electric Vehicle, the **SU7**, which can go 0-100 kmph in 2.78 seconds, and has a range of up to 800 km.



ABU DHABI TO MANUFACTURE FLYING CARS, CREATING THOUSANDS OF JOBS



Archer Aviation, a US-based electric flying carmaker, has secured multi-hundred-million dollar investments from Abu Dhabi to launch its all-electric air taxi service. The company plans to manufacture air taxis in the UAE and establish its international headquarters in the Emirates. In the UAE, the four-passenger air taxis will aim to replace 60- to 90-minute car commutes with 10-to-20-minute flights.

The investment will also support the construction of vertiports in key locations and the launch of commercial air taxi operations in the country by 2025. This initiative is expected to generate thousands of jobs in manufacturing, maintenance, and operations. The UAE aims to become a global hub for urban air mobility, and this partnership with Archer Aviation is a significant step in that direction.

Courtesy: Khaleej Times

CARDIO AUTOTECH INTRODUCES NEW CAR MAINTENANCE APP IN NIGERIA

Cardio Autotech has introduced an innovative app to transform car maintenance in Nigeria. Addressing challenges in the automotive care sector, the app offers streamlined solutions for individuals and businesses.

"We're excited to launch the Cardio App, providing a transparent and efficient car maintenance experience," said Hephzibah Iniodu, Chief of Staff at Cardio Autotech. "Amid Nigeria's growing demand for reliable vehicle care, our app aims to save time, cut costs, and enhance convenience."

With strategically located workshops across Lagos, Cardio Autotech ensures accessible and high-quality service delivery, aiming to elevate automotive care standards nationwide.

Courtesy: Techpoint Africa



Auto Pulse Facts

Community Initiative by [Carapulse](#)

Saudi Arabia's \$40 billion AI investment fund aims to transform the Middle East into a global AI leader, potentially generating \$320 billion by 2030. This initiative could drive innovation, attract global partnerships, and foster economic diversification across the region. As countries like the UAE, Israel, and Egypt also invest in AI, the Middle East is positioning itself for significant technological advancement and economic growth.

AI ON THE FAST TRACK: A2RL BRINGS DRIVERLESS CARS TO THE ULTIMATE RACING FRONTIER



Imagine a race where cars zip around the track with no drivers—just computers behind the wheel. This isn't a sci-fi movie but the Abu Dhabi Autonomous Racing League (A2RL), launched on April 27, 2024, at the iconic Yas Marina Circuit. Created by ASPIRE, this groundbreaking event showcases fully autonomous vehicles, blending mechanical prowess with cutting-edge AI.

A2RL features eight teams from universities and research institutions, each racing a modified Super Formula SF23 car—the fastest open-wheel vehicle next to Formula One. These cars are packed with sensors, cameras, and LIDARs, giving them a 360-degree view of the track. But what makes them truly remarkable is their autonomy. Once the race starts, there's no human input—just algorithms making split-second decisions at speeds up to 270 km/h.

Stephane Timpano, CEO of ASPIRE, highlights that this isn't just a thrilling spectacle but a crucial testing ground for autonomous technology. The race pushes teams to develop AI capable of handling the complexities of high-speed racing, from managing tyre wear to executing strategic overtakes. It's not just about winning; it's about advancing technology that could one day make road travel safer and more efficient.

As these autonomous cars race, they serve as a beacon for future innovations. In a world where autonomous systems are already outperforming human drivers in trials, A2RL is a glimpse into a future where stress-free, safe commuting is the norm.

Courtesy: Edge Middle East

STELLANTIS UNVEILS FLEXCARE IN THE MIDDLE EAST : A NEW PROGRAM FOR VEHICLE PROTECTION



Stellantis has introduced FlexCare in the Middle East, a comprehensive vehicle protection program.

FlexCare offers a range of plans tailored to meet the needs of drivers, including routine maintenance and extended warranties up to 10 years or 200,000 km. The program also provides essential services like roadside assistance, oil and filter changes, and more, ensuring vehicles remain in top condition.

This initiative aligns with Stellantis' "Dare Forward 2030" strategy, which focuses on delivering superior product and service quality.

Shahzad Tauqir, Stellantis Middle East Aftersales Manager, stated that FlexCare represents a new standard in automotive care, offering peace of mind and maintaining vehicle value.

Courtesy: Club Alfa Global

A CANDID CONVERSATION WITH THE BUSINESS HEAD OF LEADER EXPRESS KSA



Mr Majid Hussain Business Head, Leader Express KSA

Majid Hussain, the business head of Leader Express KSA, boasts over 17 years of expertise in the automotive aftermarket, with significant roles at Petromin and Chevron.

Renowned for his strategic prowess in sales, marketing, and business development, Majid excels in leading teams and driving business growth in challenging, high-pressure environments.

His extensive experience ensures top-tier performance and innovation in the industry.

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

AutoPulse team's thoughts on this episode -

Majid is a true entrepreneur at heart and a very busy person to catch. After much effort, the AutoPulse team finally managed to secure some time for a podcast with him, and the insights we gained were truly outstanding.

We want to thank Majid for graciously hosting the AutoPulse team at his office.

Majid's significant contributions have been instrumental in the success of Leader Express. From the early stages of the company's inception, he has been a key figure in its transformation into a prominent brand, overseeing its growth to encompass over 30 service outlets throughout the kingdom. Through his strategic leadership and visionary approach, Leader Express has firmly established itself as one of the leading service brands in KSA.

Majid's story:

AutoPulse Team: Let's start from the beginning. You began your professional journey with Chevron in Pakistan back in 2006. Can you tell us more about that experience?

Majid: Certainly, I began my professional journey with Chevron Corporation in Pakistan in 2006. I joined their Retail Fuel Marketing division, where my primary responsibility was overseeing the

company-owned and company-operated (COCO) sites in Islamabad. I had the privilege of being a part of the team that successfully launched the first Havoline Express in Pakistan. This experience marked the starting point of my career in the automotive aftermarket and service industry.

AutoPulse Team: That sounds like a great start. What roles did you take on after your initial success with Chevron?

Majid: After my initial stint in Islamabad, I was promoted to various roles across different cities in Pakistan. I worked in these roles until 2014, gaining extensive experience in sales, marketing, and business development. In 2014, I moved to Saudi Arabia to join Petromin Express, Where I was responsible for managing the business Petromin Express in Al Qassim, Hail, Al Jouf and Northern Border provinces.

AutoPulse Team: What were your key achievements at Petromin Express?

Majid: When I joined Petromin, the area under my responsibility had only seven sites spread across four or five cities. Within three years, with the support of management, we expanded our network to 43-44 sites, covering the northern and central regions, from Qassim to parts of Tabuk. This rapid growth was a significant achievement and provided me with invaluable experience in business development.



AutoPulse Team: What challenges did you face when you joined Leader Express, and how did you overcome them?

Majid: Certainly, when I joined Leader Express, the company had a limited presence with only three operational branches and minimal brand recognition. The main challenges I faced were building a team, expanding the network, and establishing the brand from the ground up.

To overcome these challenges, we adopted a strategic approach. Firstly, we focused on establishing robust operations by hiring and developing a skilled team capable of delivering high-quality services.

Secondly, we recognized the importance of effective marketing and brand building. We established a vibrant marketing team dedicated to promoting Leader Express and its services.

As a result of our efforts, we have successfully expanded our operations to 33 branches, with a few more under construction. This expansion has allowed us to cover almost all major regions of Saudi Arabia. It has strengthened our market presence and provided us with a certain level of scalability.

Overall, by focusing on building a capable team, expanding our network, and implementing effective marketing strategies, we have been able to overcome the initial challenges and position Leader Express as a prominent player in the automotive aftermarket industry within Saudi Arabia.

AutoPulse Team: That's a remarkable achievement in a short period. How do you balance striving for perfection with the need to grow and adapt quickly?

Majid: Achieving perfection is crucial during the planning phase, particularly when developing the business plan. However, once execution begins, it becomes essential to remain flexible and adapt to changing circumstances. Balancing the pursuit of perfection with the agility to adapt allows for efficient growth and ensures the ability to seize new opportunities.

AutoPulse Team: That's a valuable insight for any entrepreneur. Now that Leader Express is in a growth stage, what are your plans for the future?

Majid: While we have achieved significant progress and garnered recognition, our journey is far from over. Our primary objective is to optimize and refine our operations, ensuring sustainable and consistent growth. Additionally, we are dedicated to enhancing our service offerings and further expanding our network. By embracing innovation and staying attuned to market demands, we aim to solidify our position and continue delivering exceptional value to our customers.

AutoPulse Team: It sounds like you're well on your way to achieving even greater success. Any growth advice you can share from your experience so far?

Majid: I would say - don't aim for perfection from the start. Instead, focus on growing and adapting. Execute your plans with flexibility, learn from the challenges, and keep improving. Perfection in planning is important, but in execution, let things flow and evolve naturally.

Leader Express and their growth strategies

AutoPulse Team: That's great advice. Now, can you tell us a bit more about Leader Express itself? What services do you offer, and what are your expansion plans?

Majid: Sure, With its establishment in 2020, Leader Express is a renowned automotive services company with a strong foothold in the industry, boasting an extensive network of 33 branches across the kingdom.

Our commitment to excellence and customer satisfaction has been instrumental in our rapid growth, establishing us as an emerging leader in the market.

We are a multi-brand service provider catering to all types of cars, irrespective of make or model, offering the highest quality oils from major brands to ensure optimal performance and longevity of our customers' vehicles.

At Leader Express, we understand the importance of providing a world-class experience to our customers. Our branches are thoughtfully designed with excellent facilities, embodying our commitment to creating a comfortable and inviting environment.



Affordability is another hallmark of our business. We firmly believe that quality automotive services should be accessible to all. Therefore, we have structured our pricing to remain highly competitive without compromising the quality of service we offer. Our commitment to offering affordable solutions has earned us a reputation for providing excellent value for our customers' money.

To deliver exceptional service, we make significant investments in our team of professionals. Our staff members undergo rigorous training programs and are equipped with the latest industry knowledge and skills.

As part of our expansion strategy, our goal is to establish a prominent position within the industry by becoming one of the top three companies in terms of branch network. To achieve this, we plan to strategically expand our network of branches across the kingdom, ensuring convenient access to our services for our valued customers.

AutoPulse team: That makes perfect sense. Expanding your branch network is a positive step, but it's crucial to go beyond that to ensure the long-term success and sustainability of each location. How do you achieve this? Is your focus on both profitability and customer satisfaction or do you prioritize one over the other?

Majid: Ensuring the ongoing success and sustainability of each location is a top priority for us at Leader Express. We understand that simply opening branches is not enough; we must focus on a combination of profitability and customer satisfaction.

We offer high-quality services at reasonable prices, catering to both quality-focused customers and those who prioritize value. By maintaining this balance, we aim to achieve ongoing success and sustainability for each of our locations while creating a positive customer experience that drives our growth in the automotive services industry.

AutoPulse Team: That's a clever strategy. Can you elaborate on how you manage to offer these competitive prices while still maintaining profitability?

Majid: Certainly. Our ability to offer competitive prices while maintaining profitability stems from our unwavering commitment to operational efficiency and excellence. **Through careful streamlining of processes and optimal resource allocation, we have achieved cost-effectiveness without compromising the quality of service we provide.**

By consistently refining our operations, enriching our service portfolio, and cultivating trust with our customers, we strike a harmonious balance between competitive pricing and profitability. Our continuous efforts to enhance operational efficiency enable us to optimize costs, while our expanded service menu allows us to leverage economies of scale and maximize resource utilization.

However, it is the trust we build with our customers that truly sets us apart. **Through transparent communication, comprehensive inspections, and clear explanations of recommended services, we establish a solid foundation of trust.** This trust becomes the gateway to offering additional services that genuinely benefit our customers' vehicles.

In summary, our success in offering competitive prices while maintaining profitability is grounded in our unwavering focus on operational efficiency, portfolio enrichment, and customer trust. By constantly improving our operations, diversifying our services, and fostering strong customer relationships, we create a mutually beneficial scenario. This approach ensures that our customers receive high-quality service at reasonable prices, fostering their loyalty and driving repeat business, which ultimately contributes to our overall profitability.

Strategic market insights from brains behind Leader Express

AutoPulse Team: Let's talk about the evolution of the MENA region's automotive aftermarket industry. You've been in this space for a while, Majid. What are the key factors that have contributed to this industry's growth?

Majid: The MENA region's automotive aftermarket industry has experienced significant growth and transformation, and I've witnessed it firsthand. There are several key factors that have contributed to this evolution.

One major driver of growth has been the increasing availability and accessibility of information through digital channels. The rise of social media and mobile technology has empowered customers to become more informed about car maintenance and repair. They can now research issues, compare prices, and read reviews online. This has shifted the power dynamic, as customers are no longer solely reliant on the expertise of mechanics or service advisors.

Additionally, the advancements in car technology and the complexity of modern vehicles have played a crucial role in the growth of organized service centres. Traditional small-scale repair shops often lack the specialized equipment, technical knowledge, and training required to service these sophisticated car models. In contrast, organized service centres like Leader Express have invested in advanced diagnostic tools, skilled technicians, and ongoing training to meet the evolving needs of customers and their vehicles.



Overall, the combination of increased access to information and advancements in car technology has led to a shift towards organized service centres in the MENA region's automotive aftermarket industry. These centres, like Leader Express, have embraced these changes by investing in technology, expertise, and customer-centric approaches to meet the growing demands of informed customers and their diverse vehicle service needs.

AutoPulse Highlights

Majid's mental model for early stage business growth

"Perfection in planning is important, but in execution, I let things flow and evolve naturally. I execute my plans with flexibility, learn from the challenges, and keep improving. I try not to aim for perfection from the very start."

AutoPulse Team: So, there's a positive transformation happening across the industry in KSA too?

Majid: Certainly! The automotive aftermarket industry in KSA has undergone a positive transformation, accompanied by a significant increase in car sales over the past 2-3 years. This rising demand for automobiles has played a crucial role in the industry's growth and development.

Additionally, the entry of Chinese OEMs into the market has brought new players and increased competition. These OEMs have introduced a diverse range of vehicles, providing customers with more choices in terms of brands, features, and pricing. This influx of new entrants has further fueled the positive transformation within the automotive industry in KSA.

As a result of these developments, service centers within the automotive aftermarket industry have witnessed increasing opportunities to cater to the expanding customer base and address their diverse vehicle servicing needs.

AutoPulse Team: So, there's still a significant opportunity for players like Leader Express to expand?

Majid: Undoubtedly, there exists a significant opportunity for players like Leader Express to expand their operations in the Saudi Arabian market. The ongoing positive transformation within the automotive aftermarket industry, coupled with the increased number of car sales and the rise of professional service provider networks, creates a favourable environment for expansion.

Moreover, it is important to note that as the market continues to grow and more customers transition from traditional shops to organized service centres, there is ample room for multiple players to thrive. The expansion of Leader Express, alongside other service centres, will not only contribute to their individual growth but also foster the overall development of the industry, benefiting customers and the market as a whole.

In conclusion, the prevailing market conditions in Saudi Arabia present a compelling opportunity for Leader Express and similar players to expand their operations and capture a larger share of the expanding customer base. By seizing this opportunity, they can contribute to the progress and advancement of the automotive aftermarket industry in the region.



Customer relationship building strategies

AutoPulse Team: Let's delve into customer relationship building. Majid, how do you see customer relationships impacting your business in the aftermarket service industry? What strategies do you use to build and maintain strong customer connections?

Majid: Customer relationships are our top priority in the aftermarket service industry. We emphasize transparency, customization, and keeping customers informed throughout the process. Our dedicated staff plays a vital role in providing exceptional service, from the initial greeting to the final farewell. We value open communication, actively listen to feedback, and promptly address any concerns to build trust and loyalty.

Our focus extends to building long-term relationships through personalized interactions and tailored recommendations. By exceeding customer expectations, we aim to foster lasting connections. Additionally, our Customer Service Center and social media platforms play crucial roles in maintaining strong customer connections. The Customer Service Center promptly handles inquiries and ensures satisfaction, while social media allows us to engage, share updates, and create a sense of community. These efforts contribute to our commitment to exceptional customer service in the aftermarket service industry.

AutoPulse Highlights

“Customers can now research issues, compare prices, and read reviews online. This has shifted the power dynamic, as customers are no longer solely reliant on the expertise of mechanics or service advisors.” - Majid

AutoPulse Team: You're right, effective communication is a two-way street. Understanding what's not being said is important.

Majid: Indeed, effective communication is a dynamic process that involves not only conveying information but also understanding what is left unsaid. As a service provider in the aftermarket industry, we recognize the significance of listening and interpreting our customers' needs beyond their explicit words.

By actively practising attentive listening and observing non-verbal cues, we strive to gain a deeper understanding of our customers' expectations, concerns, and preferences. This allows us to go beyond the surface level and address their underlying needs effectively.

We encourage open dialogue with our customers, creating a welcoming environment where they feel comfortable expressing themselves.

This approach enables us to build stronger connections and provide tailored solutions that align with their specific requirements.



Digital transformation and its role in Leader Express

AutoPulse Team: Let's shift gears and discuss digital transformation. How is technology impacting Leader Express and the MENA aftermarket industry as a whole?

Majid: Digital transformation has revolutionized Leader Express and the MENA aftermarket industry. We utilize technology for marketing, accounting, staff training, and repair procedures. Digital tools improve efficiency, enhance customer experience, and allow us to reach a wider audience through online promotions. Embracing technology has opened up new opportunities for growth and innovation, ensuring our continued success in the industry.



AutoPulse Team: Now, for the final question: what's your prediction for the automotive aftermarket industry in the next 5-10 years?

Majid: In the next 5-10 years, I foresee significant growth and positive developments in the automotive aftermarket industry. This growth will be driven by various factors that contribute to an improved customer experience and industry expansion.

One key driver of this growth will be the increasing customer awareness and expectations. As customers become more informed about their vehicle needs and aftermarket options, they will demand higher quality services and innovative solutions. This will push industry players to continually improve their offerings and provide exceptional customer experiences.

Another contributing factor will be the entry of new players,, alongside established industry leaders. This influx of competition will foster innovation and drive advancements in service quality, product offerings, and overall industry standards. The healthy competition will benefit customers by providing them with more choices and driving industry-wide improvements.

Overall, the automotive aftermarket industry is poised for growth and positive change in the coming years. Through customer-driven demands, competition, and technological advancements, the industry will evolve to meet the evolving needs of customers and provide enhanced experiences in the aftermarket service sector.

I can see a positive future with significant growth driven by several factors. Increased customer awareness, supportive government initiatives, and the entry of new players like Leader Express will contribute to this growth. Established names like Valvoline, Shell, and Total will also play a role. This perfect storm will lead to an overall improvement in customer experience, service quality, and industry growth.

AutoPulse Team: That's reassuring for anyone in the industry. Thank you so much for sharing your insights, Majid.

Majid: Thank you for having me. It was a pleasure to share my story and outlook.

AutoPulse Team: Thanks again, Majid. This was a great conversation.

Majid: Thank you. I appreciate it.



CANDID CONVERSATION WITH A BUSINESS LEADER FROM AL-FUTTAIM

DRIVING DATA-DRIVEN DECISIONS & DEPARTMENT GOAL ALIGNMENT IN THE AUTOMOTIVE SECTOR



Ms Chryso Tziarride Project Manager Strategy & Transformation at Al-Futtaim

Chryso Tziarride, a financial mastermind with over two decades of experience, thrives on results. She steers all aspects of a business's finances, from budgeting and forecasting to in-depth analysis. Restructuring companies, slashing costs, and maximizing efficiency are all in her wheelhouse. Chryso currently leverages her expertise as a Product Manager at Al-Futtaim.

When she's not guiding finances, she's likely brainstorming innovative solutions or tackling a new challenge.

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

AutoPulse team's thoughts on this episode -

Chryso Tziarride is one of the most capable, strong-willed, and yet one of the sweetest people we've ever met in the auto service industry. We've known Chryso for a while now, from our discussions with her at GaragePlug and through those meetings, we've noticed her business-building capabilities.

Chryso has also been a well-wisher of ours for a long time, and we too have looked up to her. When the time came, we reached out to her for this podcast, and she graciously accepted.

Throughout her career, we felt that she's gained experience with various aspects of a business, leading her to become an all-in-one business-building leader.

This showed in the podcast as her knowledge wasn't limited to one side of a business, she knew strategies and she thinks from all directions of a service business. We were highly impressed and loved doing the podcast with Chryso.

Chryso's story:

AutoPulse Team: To start, can you tell us a little about your background and how you became the Project Manager of Strategy & Transformation at Al-Futtaim?

Chryso: Certainly. Academically I am an FCCA with the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants, so my journey began as a Junior Accountant at Deloitte, one of the Big 5 accounting firms, I quickly advanced to the position of Senior Manager and after a brief stint at the National Bank of Greece, I transitioned from the profession to the corporate world, specifically into the automotive industry, which I found my true passion. A fast-paced, interesting, and ever-changing industry.

I began as the Deputy CFO at the Volkswagen importer in Cyprus, where I was responsible for implementing a new EIT system, quality assurance, ISO certification, and maintaining principal standards.

We were nominated the best VW importer for two consecutive years. Later, I became the CFO, leading the company through an economic crisis, during which the business lost close to 75% of its turnover. It was a challenging time, but I gained invaluable lessons.

AutoPulse Team: That's quite a journey. Can you tell us more about Al-Futtaim and its role in the automotive industry?

Chryso: Al-Futtaim is a diversified organization operating in more than 20 countries with over 200 companies. It's the biggest automotive retailer in the UAE, offering a full range of automotive services from sales and finance solutions to aftersales, second-hand cars, fleet, and leasing.

Our portfolio includes over 10 brands such as Toyota, Lexus, Honda, Volvo, Chrysler, Jeep, Dodge, Ram, Polestar, and BYD.

Al-Futtaim maintains a strong position in the market, and its future trajectory is promising. The management is making strategic moves and investments in new geographies like Saudi Arabia and in new products like mobility solutions and EV chargers.

AutoPulse Team: Impressive. What are some of your key contributions to Al-Futtaim?

Chryso: At Al-Futtaim, opportunities abound, and my extensive experience in various automotive areas has allowed me to participate in numerous projects.

These include organizational restructuring, digital transformation, and the implementation of a new e-commerce platform. I've also introduced new systems like EVHC and enhanced processes and procedures.

Currently, I'm focusing on Tier-2 Autocenters, a start-up within the company. We've built a network of 15 locations and are expanding, with three more locations planned for 2024 and four for 2025. We're also enhancing our product offerings, streamlining procedures, and building customer loyalty.



Chryso's take on data driven decision making

AutoPulse Team: Chryso, you've mentioned how information is important throughout your career. Can you explain why using data to make decisions is crucial in today's car repair and service industry, and how Al-Futtaim uses this approach?

Chryso: In today's competitive market, information is essential for any successful car repair shop. We can't just rely on guesswork anymore. Data helps businesses make smart decisions that improve every aspect of their operations.

At Al-Futtaim, we use such data for predictive maintenance for example. We use data based on mileage and last checks performed on cars by our technicians, to predict when certain components might fail and schedule repairs or replacements in advance. This helps both customer satisfaction and loading the workshop. Data can also be used to gain insights into customer preferences and service requirements. We can recommend additional services, and remind the customer of upcoming services.

Inventory management is another area where data is invaluable. In an all makes all models workshop, the number of SKUs can become chaotic unless analytics and data are used to maintain healthy inventory levels and efficient management. By analysing historical data, customer demands or additional parameters like active campaigns and promotions in place, we can optimise ordering and ensure we keep the right stock at the right quantity and at the right time. Cash flow is a crucial parameter for service shops but with the right tools, one can make well-informed decisions to avoid overstocking, and delays in the repair of customer cars while at the same time increasing profitability.

AutoPulse Team: Can you share some specific examples of how data-driven insights influenced important decisions at Al-Futtaim?

Chryso: Absolutely. Here are two prime examples that illustrate the power of data:

Customer Retention Through Targeted Re-engagement: Data analysis revealed patterns in customer behaviour that indicated when a customer was likely to stop using our services. **This allowed us to develop targeted marketing campaigns to win back these customers with personalized offers and incentives.** By using data to understand customer behaviour, we were able to significantly increase customer retention rates. In simpler terms, **we looked at customer data and saw patterns** that showed us when customers were likely to stop coming to us for repairs. This allowed us to create targeted marketing campaigns specifically designed to win these customers back.

We offered them special deals and service packages that fit their needs, and this helped us keep them as loyal customers.

Optimizing Product Offerings: We analyzed customer purchase data to understand what services and parts they were buying most often. This data revealed a growing demand for service packages that bundled multiple services together at a discounted price.

Consequently, **we introduced Service Maintenance Contracts (SMCs) and combo packages** that included oil changes, tyre rotations, and other routine maintenance services at a competitive price. This strategy not only boosted customer satisfaction by providing them with a convenient and cost-effective way to maintain their vehicles but also generated additional revenue streams for Al-Futtaim.

To explain this another way, we looked at data on what parts and services customers were buying and saw a trend towards people wanting bundled service packages. So, we created new packages that included things like oil changes, tyre rotations, and other maintenance services, all at a discounted price.

This made it easier and cheaper for customers to take care of their cars, and it also made Al-Futtaim more money.

AutoPulse team: Those are great points. What specific data points or metrics do you find most valuable in guiding decision-making processes?

Chryso: The specific metrics depend on the area and each area needs to have metrics suitable for different levels within the organization.

For top management, it's essential to have high-level KPIs across all departments, not just financial but also customer satisfaction metrics like NPS, operational KPIs such as number of visits or spend per visit, HR metrics such as headcount turnover and training days, standings against competition like price index, and marketing metrics like spend per car and customer acquisition costs. Employee satisfaction is also critical.

One layer down, the metrics are linked to top management's KPIs but are more specific to their position. For example, digital marketers might use behavioural analytics to determine the adequacy of websites.

A pricing manager would scrape websites for prices to understand where the competition stands and determine their own price point based on the company's strategy. Aligning targets and KPIs ensures everyone is moving toward the same objectives, thus accelerating progress.

AutoPulse team: That's impressive. For businesses that are just starting to collect data, what would you recommend they focus on first?

Chryso: For businesses just starting, it's essential to focus on their own data first. Understand what data you already have and how it can be used. It's also useful to know what the competition is doing.

Market research, including mystery shopping, can provide valuable insights. In regions where data isn't readily available, like the GCC, businesses might need to rely more on internal data and market research.

Implementing systems like **BI tools and dashboards** can help visualize and track this data. For example, having big screens displaying daily targets and achievements can keep everyone aligned and motivated. Breaking down targets into daily goals can make them more achievable and maintain constant awareness among staff - even a bit of a healthy competition amongst them.



AutoPulse Team: Looking ahead, where do you see the future of data-driven decision-making and goal alignment in the aftermarket service sector, particularly in the MENA region?

Chryso: The future is undoubtedly data-driven. As technology advances, the volume and sophistication of data available will continue to grow. Businesses that effectively leverage data analytics will gain a significant competitive edge.

In the MENA region specifically, we expect to see a surge in data adoption. As the automotive industry embraces digitalization and connected car technologies, a vast amount of valuable customer and vehicle data will be generated. Businesses that can harness this data to personalize customer experiences, predict maintenance needs, and optimize operations will be well-positioned for success.

AutoPulse Team: How can organizations in the MENA region adapt to changing market dynamics and emerging technologies to stay competitive?

Chryso: Here are some key strategies for organizations in the MENA region to stay ahead of the curve:

Embrace a data-driven culture: Invest in data analytics tools and expertise to transform raw data into actionable insights that inform strategic decision-making. Don't just collect data; empower your teams to understand and utilize it effectively.

Invest in digital transformation: Embrace digital tools and processes to streamline operations, enhance customer interactions, and improve data collection capabilities.

This could involve implementing a user-friendly online appointment scheduling system, a mobile app for service tracking and communication, or digital tools to optimize parts inventory management.

Develop a culture of agility: The automotive industry, particularly in the MENA region, is experiencing rapid change. Be prepared to adapt to changing market conditions and customer needs. This requires a willingness to experiment with new technologies and business models, learn from failures, and continuously iterate strategies.

Prioritize customer centricity: Leverage data to understand customer preferences and personalize the customer journey across all touchpoints.

This could involve offering targeted service packages, implementing loyalty programs with personalized rewards, or utilizing digital tools to provide real-time service updates and progress reports.

Upskill your workforce: Equip your employees with the data literacy skills necessary to understand and utilize data effectively. This could involve training programs on data analysis, interpretation, and communication.

Additionally, fostering a culture of continuous learning will ensure your workforce stays up-to-date with the latest technologies and industry trends.



Aligning Departmental Goals with Company Objectives

AutoPulse Team: How do you ensure that the goals of each department at Al-Futtaim are aligned with the overall objectives of the company?

Chryso: At Al-Futtaim, we all work together to achieve the company's big goals. Cascading KPIs are our way of making sure everyone's on the same page. Imagine you're building something amazing, like a giant puzzle. Cascading KPIs are like the picture on the box, showing what the finished product looks like.

The company's big goals become smaller goals for each department, like different coloured pieces of the puzzle. The business development team will focus on finding new customers, while the service team works on making more money from each customer visit. Even individual Service Advisors and Technicians will have goals, like number of visits per day or upsell value per visit.

For example, let's say a top-level company goal is to increase sales by 10%. This would then be broken down into more specific targets for different departments. The marketing department might have a target of acquiring a certain number of new customers each month, while the service department might have a target of increasing the average revenue per service visit. Even individual service advisors might have a target of selling a certain amount of additional services (upselling) to each customer.

But it's not just about giving everyone a list. We talk things through, so everyone understands why their goals matter and how they fit into the big picture. This way, people feel like they're really contributing to the overall goal, not just following orders.

Here's the key: We focus on what we actually achieve, not just the work we do. The number of calls a salesperson makes is great, but what truly matters is how many potential customers they find. This keeps everyone focused on getting the right things done.

Things change quickly in business, so our goals need to change too. We check in regularly to make sure everyone's on the right track and adjust things as needed. It's like working on a puzzle together; sometimes you need to shift a piece or two to get everything to fit just right.

And of course, we celebrate success! When teams and individuals reach their goals, we make a big deal about it! Knowing their hard work is appreciated keeps everyone motivated and doing their best.

But it's not just about each department doing their own thing. We encourage everyone to work together to grow together. By working together like this, we achieve even more! By combining cascading KPIs with these other ideas, we create a powerful team at Al-Futtaim. Everyone is aligned, working towards the same goal. It's a recipe for achieving our goals and for having a happy and motivated workforce. That's the kind of team I'm proud to be a part of!



AutoPulse team: Chryso, it's great to hear that you encourage your team to work together. You celebrate success and keep your team motivated.

But these are emotional and intangible ways, right? Not everyone can replicate what you do. So, how do you strategically foster a culture of collaboration and accountability to achieve these aligned goals?

Chryso: If you speak of strategy, then here's my take on it. Fostering a culture of collaboration and accountability starts with clear communication and setting smart targets.

Regular discussions and performance reviews are crucial. For instance, we have weekly top-management meetings where we review performance dashboards and trend reports.

If a location is underperforming, the operations manager will visit and discuss the issues with the local team to identify and solve problems. At the grassroots level, setting up incentive models aligned with company goals is vital. Ensuring that targets are tied to performance and compensation helps keep everyone motivated. Open discussions are also important. If there are issues, they need to be addressed promptly to prevent them from escalating.

AutoPulse team: Can you give an example of how you implement this on a practical level within your team?

Chryso: Absolutely. For instance, when I implemented the packages for paintless dent repair (PDR), I kept the team updated with emails highlighting who was leading in sales. This created a friendly competition and kept everyone engaged. Small rewards like lunch or gift vouchers or other incentives can go a long way in motivating the team.

Moreover, we talked earlier how it is important to break down the big tasks to smaller and relatable tasks to individuals. Say you measure the technicians performance on billable hours which you then break down to daily tasks. Make that task visible and live as the techs are working. You can then use your clock-in system to display their progress on a leader-board. It can foster a sense of competition and enthusiasm.

AutoPulse team: It sounds like you have a very systematic approach to ensure alignment and accountability. How do you handle situations where a department or individual consistently underperforms?

Chryso: Consistent underperformance needs to be addressed through continuous monitoring and open discussions. If we see a department or individual consistently underperforming, we dig deeper to understand the root cause. I always say if you ask three times why, that's when you find where the actual issue lies. Sometimes it is very simple and remedies can be swift. It might be due to personal issues, lack of resources, or misalignment of goals.

For example, if an operations manager finds that an employee is frequently off sick or facing personal problems, we try to find solutions, such as hiring short-term labour or redistributing tasks. The key is to identify the actual problem and address it. This might involve additional training, better resource allocation, or adjusting targets to be more realistic.



AutoPulse team: It seems like a lot of your strategy revolves around constant feedback and adjustment. How important is it to have these regular check-ins and feedback loops?

Chryso: Regular check-ins and feedback loops are crucial. They help in identifying issues early on and allow for timely interventions. Monthly reviews, for instance, help us track progress and make necessary adjustments.

Having these feedback loops also keeps everyone accountable and ensures that we are all aligned with the company's goals. It's about maintaining a continuous cycle of monitoring, feedback, and improvement.

This approach not only helps in achieving targets but also fosters a culture of transparency and collaboration.

Chryso's views on being called a "Woman leader in the auto service space"

AutoPulse Team: Throughout the conversation, we've covered a lot of ground, including KPIs and alignment strategies. But before we wrap up, we wanted to touch on a hard topic: women in the automotive industry.

Chryso: Absolutely.

AutoPulse Team: What advice would you give to aspiring women leaders, particularly those interested in the region segment?

Chryso: I want to believe this industry isn't about gender. If you believe this is your passion, go for it! Don't get hung up on labels. Your ideas, your skills, your drive – they're all valuable. Besides, a woman always brings a different perspective to the table.

This industry is starving for passionate people, and that's what will set you apart. Don't get me wrong, the automotive world can be tough. But if you have a fire in your belly, a love for cars, and a drive to succeed, then gender is irrelevant.

Focus on being the best version of yourself, bringing your unique perspective and ideas to the table. Let your passion shine through in everything you do, and your talent will be recognized. Trust me, colleagues who see your dedication will value your contributions. So, aspiring women leaders, don't be discouraged. This industry needs you – your voice, your skills, and your passion. Come join us and rewrite the narrative. The automotive world is waiting for you.

AutoPulse Team: Chryso, thank you so much for joining us today and sharing your valuable insights!

Chryso: Thank you for having me. It was a pleasure to share my story and outlook.

AutoPulse Team: Thanks again, Chryso. This was a great conversation.

Chryso: Thank you. I appreciate it.



CANDID CHAT WITH THE BUSINESS PLANNING LEADER OF 3M

CULTIVATING TALENT AND EMBRACING INNOVATION IN THE AUTOMOTIVE
AFTERMARKET SERVICE INDUSTRY



Mr Salman Shahid Integrated Business Planning Leader, 3M

Salman Shahid brings nearly two decades of experience in the automotive repair industry across the Middle East, Africa, and Southeast Asia to his role at 3M. His experience includes market research, business development, and regional business management.

He has collaborated with major automakers like Toyota and Ford. Salman leverages his expertise to navigate the automotive repair landscape and develop solutions.

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

AutoPulse team's thoughts on this episode -

Salman Shahid is a great orator. We noticed the way he spoke and his clarity of thought. The podcast was the very first time we met Salman and it was interesting. He was in the middle of a busy schedule and we managed to squeeze in between his time, but he graciously welcomed us.

Our podcast lasted for about two and a half hours and we had a great chat with Salman. Salman's early career was very interesting when we learnt that his early boss asked him to work directly on the shopfloor where he was also made to sometimes clean the shopfloor even though he joined 3M as a postgraduate executive position. He worked for more than 6 months in the shopfloor which changed his entire perspective on leadership and drove him to be the leader he is right now.

Salman's story:

AutoPulse Team: To start, can you tell us a little about your background and how you came to be the Integrated Business Planning leader at 3M?

Salman: Certainly. I appreciate the opportunity to share my journey. I believe that sharing experiences can inspire others, particularly those who are new to the industry or are considering a career change.

My background is quite diverse, and I think that's what has allowed me to bring a unique perspective to my role at 3M. **I started with a triple major in information systems, marketing, and supply chain from the University of Minnesota.** My initial career was focused on corporate pricing automation, which was gaining traction in the early 2000s as companies transitioned from manual to automated processes.

My entry into the automotive aftermarket industry was somewhat surprising. During my early days at 3M, I was involved in various projects that required me to collaborate with different departments. I was working on a pricing project when I was introduced to the automotive sector. The colleague sitting next to me managed the automotive aftermarket business, and through our interactions, I developed a keen interest in the field. He explained the parallels between the automotive aftermarket and healthcare, particularly in terms of operational efficiency and turnaround times. This analogy sparked my interest, and I decided to delve deeper into the industry.

A pivotal moment in my career was when I was sent to work at a body shop in Rashidiya, UAE even though I was a management graduate. This hands-on experience was challenging but immensely rewarding. I was tasked with understanding the daily operations of a body shop, which included everything from buffing and painting to customer interactions. This immersive experience gave me a profound understanding of the industry's intricacies and the challenges faced by technicians. It was during this time that I truly grasped the importance of efficiency and customer satisfaction.

Over the years, I've had the privilege of developing business for 3M in over 30 plus countries . This extensive exposure has allowed me to understand diverse market dynamics and tailor our strategies to meet local needs. My journey has been one of continuous learning and adaptation. From sales and technical work to business development and general management, each role has equipped me with a deeper understanding of the industry.

Today, as the Integrated Business Planning leader, my role is to ensure that all aspects of our business are aligned to deliver the best possible service to our customers.



AutoPulse Team: What is 3M? Can you talk about the business, its business model, growth in your geography, and future trajectory?

Salman: 3M is a global diversified technology company known for its innovation and product diversity. Our business spans various sectors, including consumer goods, industrial products, and safety. In the automotive aftermarket, 3M is recognized for its high-quality products and solutions that enhance productivity and efficiency. Our business model is built on a foundation of innovation. We invest heavily in research and development to ensure that we are at the forefront of technological advancements. This commitment to innovation allows us to offer products that not only meet but exceed customer expectations. In the automotive sector, for instance, we provide a wide range of products, from abrasives and adhesives to paint finishing systems and personal safety equipment.

In the EMEA region, we've seen significant growth driven by our ability to adapt to local market needs. We've established strong relationships with distributors and end-users, ensuring that our products are readily available and supported by excellent customer service. Our growth strategy includes expanding our presence in emerging markets, where we see significant opportunities for our products and solutions.

Looking ahead, our focus is on sustaining our growth trajectory through continuous innovation and expansion. We are exploring new technologies and materials that can further enhance the performance and sustainability of our products. Additionally, we are committed to expanding our footprint in emerging markets, where we see tremendous growth potential.

AutoPulse Team: What are your key contributions to 3M? Can you talk about some innovations, new initiatives, improvements, and challenging projects you've worked on?

Salman: One of my key contributions has been in the area of integrated business planning. This role is crucial as it involves aligning all elements of the business to ensure that we meet our service levels and customer expectations. In the automotive aftermarket, service levels are critical. Customers expect quick turnarounds, and any delays can significantly impact their operations. My role involves ensuring that we have the right products available at the right time and place.

I've also been involved in several innovative projects. One of the most significant was the implementation of a go-to-market strategy for our middle east Africa region. This changed the way we service our customers and became much more relevant to our end users the collision shops. I replicated and led a similar project for Southeast Asia which helped improve process and service at an end user level.

Another key initiative was our expansion into new markets. This involved extensive market research and building relationships with key stakeholders in various countries. One of the challenges we faced was understanding the unique needs and preferences of customers in different regions. By spending time on the ground and working closely with local teams, we were able to tailor our strategies and products to meet these needs effectively. I also spearheaded the approach of implementing 3M's recommended standard operating processes (SOPs) to the collision shops in the region. This helped bring in process efficiency and improvement at the body shop level and helped end users achieve quick turnaround times on repairs. This is a key strength of 3M's system approach and is recognised globally.

AutoPulse Team: That's an interesting role. Since your role itself has the word leader, Salman, what is your leadership style? How futuristic are you in adopting innovations and changing the company landscape?

Salman: My leadership style is collaborative and inclusive. I believe in empowering my team and giving them the autonomy to make decisions. This approach fosters innovation and creativity, which are crucial in our industry. I see myself as a facilitator, providing the resources and support my team needs to excel.



I also prioritize open communication and transparency, ensuring that everyone is aligned with our goals and objectives.

In terms of adopting innovations, I am a forward thinker. I believe that staying ahead of the curve is essential in today's fast-paced world. This means continuously exploring new technologies and methods that can improve our operations and deliver better value to our customers. For instance, I've been a strong advocate for digital transformation within 3M. We've adopted advanced analytics and automation tools to enhance our business processes and improve efficiency.

Changing the company landscape is not just about adopting new technologies; it's also about fostering a culture of innovation. I encourage my team to think outside the box and challenge the status quo. This involves taking calculated risks and learning from failures. Also, I have been fortunate to have leadership like Dave Gunderson and Jason Eaton, both whom are recognized as industry leaders and have a very collaborative approach while running the Automotive After Market business for 3M

Evolving Skill Requirements and Skill Gaps in the Auto Service Industry

AutoPulse Team: How is the aftermarket service industry evolving regarding skill requirements and skill gaps? What are your overall observations about technical skills?

Salman: The aftermarket service industry is evolving rapidly, and the skill requirements are changing accordingly. There's a growing demand for technical skills, particularly in the areas of diagnostics, repair, and maintenance. As vehicles become more sophisticated, technicians need to be proficient with the latest tools and technologies.

However, there is a noticeable skill gap in the industry. Many technicians lack the necessary training and experience to work on modern vehicles. This gap needs to be addressed through targeted training programs and continuous learning opportunities. For instance, understanding and working with advanced driver-assistance systems (ADAS) requires specific knowledge and skills that many technicians currently lack.

To bridge this gap, we need to invest in training and development programs that equip technicians with the skills they need to succeed. This includes both formal education and on-the-job training. At 3M, we offer a range of training programs that cover the latest technologies and best practices in the industry.

We also collaborate with educational institutions and industry associations to ensure that our training programs are aligned with industry standards and requirements. 3M has recently invested in a state-of-the-art Skills development centre in St.Paul and want to take this approach globally.

AutoPulse Team: How is the industry changing in terms of digital transformation and customer experience? Do you see skill gaps here related to computer skills and customer-facing skills?

Salman: Digital transformation is reshaping the aftermarket service industry. The integration of advanced diagnostic tools, automated systems, and customer management software has become essential. **However, this shift has highlighted a significant skill gap in terms of computer skills and customer-facing skills.** Many technicians are not fully equipped to handle the digital tools required for modern vehicle diagnostics and repairs. Additionally, customer expectations have evolved, and there is a greater emphasis on providing an exceptional customer experience. This requires technicians to have strong interpersonal skills & the ability to communicate effectively with customers.

To address these skill gaps, we need to provide comprehensive training that covers both technical and soft skills. This includes training on how to use digital diagnostic tools and customer management software, as well as how to interact with customers effectively.

At 3M, we offer training programs that cover these areas, ensuring that our technicians are well-equipped to meet the demands of the modern automotive aftermarket.

Attracting Top Talent

AutoPulse Team: What innovative strategies have been successful in attracting top talent within the automotive aftermarket service industry in the MENA region?

Salman: Attracting top talent in the MENA region requires a multi-faceted approach. **One successful strategy has been the development of robust training and internship programs.** These programs provide hands-on experience and mentorship, which are crucial for skill development. By offering these opportunities, we can attract young talent who are eager to learn and grow in the industry.

We also focus on creating a positive work environment that fosters growth and development. By offering competitive salaries, benefits, and opportunities for advancement, we can attract and retain top talent.

Additionally, partnerships with educational institutions and industry organizations have been instrumental in attracting talent. These partnerships allow us to identify promising candidates early and provide them with the training and support they need to succeed.

Another effective strategy has been leveraging digital platforms for recruitment. By using social media, online job portals, and other digital tools, we can reach a broader audience and attract talent from diverse backgrounds. This approach also allows us to showcase our company culture and the opportunities we offer, making us more attractive to potential candidates.

We also invest in our employer brand by highlighting our commitment to innovation, sustainability, and employee development. By positioning 3M as a forward-thinking and supportive employer, we attract individuals who share our values and are excited about the opportunities we offer.

AutoPulse Team: How do you test and hire the right talent? What strategies and characteristics do you take note of when recruiting?

Salman: Hiring the right talent starts with a thorough understanding of the skills and qualities we need. In the automotive aftermarket, technical proficiency is crucial, but we also look for individuals who demonstrate problem-solving abilities, adaptability, and a commitment to continuous learning.

Our recruitment process involves several stages designed to assess both technical skills and cultural fit. Initially, we use online assessments and technical tests to evaluate candidates' knowledge and capabilities. These assessments help us identify individuals who have the technical expertise required for the role.

Interviews play a critical role in our hiring process. We conduct multiple rounds of interviews, including technical interviews with subject matter experts.

During these interviews, we assess candidates' problem-solving skills, communication abilities, and how well they align with our company values and culture.

We also place a strong emphasis on practical assessments. For technical roles, we often include hands-on tasks or simulations to evaluate candidates' ability to perform in real-world scenarios. This approach helps us gauge not only their technical skills but also their ability to apply those skills effectively.

Another key strategy is involving current team members in the hiring process. By including technicians and team leaders in interviews and assessments, we ensure that new hires are a good fit for the team and can collaborate effectively with their colleagues.

Talent retention tactics, future-proofing operations and Talent Development

AutoPulse Team: With talent retention becoming increasingly challenging, what innovative retention tactics have aftermarket service providers found effective in retaining skilled employees and fostering long-term loyalty?

Salman: Retaining skilled employees is indeed a challenge, but it's also an area where innovative strategies can make a significant impact. At 3M, we've found that creating a supportive and engaging work environment is crucial for retention. This involves offering competitive compensation and benefits, but it goes beyond that.

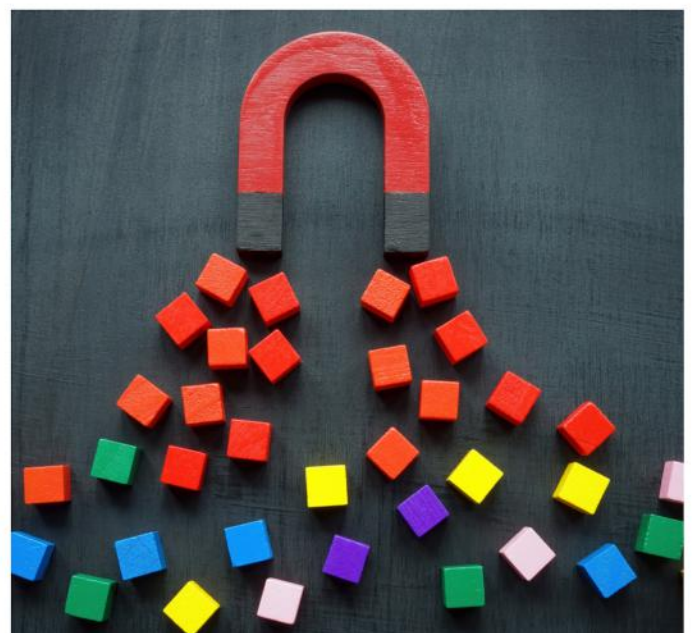
One effective retention tactic is providing continuous learning and development opportunities.

Employees want to feel that they are growing and advancing in their careers. We offer a variety of training programs, certifications, and career development workshops to help our employees enhance their skills and advance their careers.

Recognition and rewards also play a vital role in retention. We have implemented programs to acknowledge and reward employees for their contributions and achievements. This can range from formal awards and bonuses to more informal recognition, such as shout-outs during team meetings or personalized notes from managers.

Another important aspect is work-life balance. We offer flexible work arrangements, such as remote work options and flexible hours, to help employees balance their professional and personal lives. By supporting our employees in this way, we foster a more positive and productive work environment.

We also focus on creating a strong sense of community within the company. Team-building activities, social events, and community service initiatives help build camaraderie and a sense of belonging among employees. **When employees feel connected to their colleagues and the company, they are more likely to stay long-term.**



AutoPulse Team: With rapid advancements in automotive technology, how can businesses future-proof their operations and talent development strategies to ensure long-term success in the MENA region?

Salman: Future-proofing operations and talent development requires a forward-thinking approach. It's about anticipating industry trends and preparing our workforce to meet future challenges.

One key aspect is investing in advanced technologies that can enhance our operations. This includes adopting state-of-the-art diagnostic tools, automation systems, and data analytics to improve efficiency and decision-making.

In terms of talent development, continuous learning is essential. We need to provide our employees with access to the latest training resources and ensure that they are up-to-date with industry advancements. This includes both technical training and soft skills development, such as leadership and communication skills.

Building strong partnerships with educational institutions and industry associations is also crucial.

These partnerships can support ongoing talent development and ensure a steady pipeline of skilled workers. By collaborating with these organizations, we can align our training programs with industry standards and stay ahead of emerging trends.

Additionally, we need to foster a culture of innovation within the company. Encouraging employees to think creatively and embrace new ideas will help us stay competitive in a rapidly evolving industry. This involves creating an environment where innovation is rewarded and providing the necessary resources for employees to experiment and innovate.

AutoPulse Team: Thank you, Salman, for sharing your insights and experiences. Your expertise in cultivating talent and embracing innovation in the automotive aftermarket service industry is truly inspiring.

Salman: Thank you for having me. It's been a pleasure to share my journey and thoughts on the industry. I hope that my experiences can provide valuable insights for others and contribute to the ongoing development and success of the automotive aftermarket service industry.



CANDID CHAT WITH THE MANAGING DIRECTOR OF CASTROL



Mr Parinjay Managing Director, Castrol KSA

Parinjay is a seasoned automotive leader with over 18 years of experience driving growth across India, Asia, the Middle East and North Africa. Throughout his career, he has led successful business strategies for renowned brands like Castrol and General Motors, consistently exceeding targets and building strong relationships across diverse markets.

He has been an experienced General Manager and Regional Sales & Marketing Director, successfully delivering revenue and profit gains in highly competitive environments.

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

AutoPulse team's thoughts on this episode -

Parinjay, someone we highly respect and who reciprocates our well wishes, has finally joined us on our podcast after more than a year of trying to schedule him. The wait was definitely worth it.

Parinjay's depth of knowledge is highly commendable, particularly given his extensive expertise in working with international enterprises and building startups.

Our conversation with Parinjay lasted for about 2 hours, and we found it very challenging to capture all the knowledge he shared within a 10-page spread in AutoPulse Magazine.

Parinjay also has a charming personality that complements his leadership qualities. It was a pleasure chatting with Parinjay and gaining insights into his thinking process.

Parinjay's story:

AutoPulse Team: So Panjay, could you tell us about your background and how you came to be the MD of Castrol KSA?

Parinjay: It's been quite a few years. This year I will finish 30 years of working. So that's three decades of working. And those three decades have taken me across about 18 countries. My experience spans both the automotive and the lubricants business. I used to work for General Motors before moving to Castrol, and I've now been with Castrol for many years. I moved into my KSA role in 2020, largely because we had expanded our business, building a manufacturing plant and there were other significant business transformation activities underway.

AutoPulse Team: Can you tell us more about your career journey and some of the different roles you've undertaken?

Parinjay: One thing I've always cherished about my career is the rich variety of experiences. I've been privileged to do many different things in these 30 years. It's a mix of geographic diversity and a wide range of roles. **I've done three startups, building businesses from the ground up.** I've worked in both high-growth markets and mature markets that grow only 1% to 2%. Each requires a different mindset and strategy to win, I find this very satisfying.

AutoPulse Team: Could you talk about the start of your career? What was your initial role?

Parinjay: I started in sales, and my first company was Dunlop, where I did export sales out of India. One interesting thing from my time at Dunlop was selling aircraft tyres. After two years with Dunlop, I moved to General Motors for a decade, and then to BP Castrol, where I've spent about 18 years.



AutoPulse Team: So, were most of your roles focused on driving the business side or operations?

Parinjay: My core anchor is still sales, but I've had significant cross-functional exposure. I've been in marketing as a brand manager, in strategy and transformation, and now managing P&Ls for almost a decade now.

AutoPulse Team: Did you always have an interest in sales, or did you choose it for other reasons?

Parinjay: Sales happened to me by chance. This wasn't preconceived. I've done many things in life. I was a STEM student who wanted to study medicine, then went on to do my Bachelors in Commerce, and my MBA is in International Business with a major in Finance. Sales happened to me rather than being a choice. I've always had a love for automobiles, even in college. I drove my first vehicle when I was ten years old, and although it wasn't legal, it sparked my interest in automobiles. I used to work on restoring old motorcycles, and I guess that's how I ended up working so long for automotive companies.

AutoPulse Team: That's a fascinating journey. Could you share some significant learnings or experiences from your career that stand out?

Parinjay: One pivotal moment was when I was applying for jobs in the automotive industry. Despite my passion, many companies wouldn't consider me because I wasn't an engineer. That's when I realized the value of relationships and networking. I knew people who recognized my passion and guided me into the industry. As a young professional, you need relationships, advocacy, and mentors. They provide wisdom and guidance. I've always made time for people seeking advice because others made time for me.

AutoPulse Team: That's quite insightful. Can you share more about your experiences working across different countries and cultures? Which culture was the most challenging for you to adapt to?

Parinjay: Working across countries truly makes you understand cultural differences. For example, in Japan, I learned about the concept of Nemawashi, the meeting before the meeting, where most decisions are made. The actual meeting is more ceremonial. Understanding and adapting to such cultural nuances is vital for success.

Culturally, South Korea was very different and challenging difficult to operate in due to its hierarchical nature. It was challenging to drive innovation and differing opinions, especially as a junior member of the team.

Leadership and relationship

AutoPulse Team: Let's talk about your leadership style. What are some key elements?

Parinjay: Leadership styles vary depending on the role and organization. **My bespoke model is the 3C Framework: Collaboration, Clarity, and Communicate.** Collaborating and co-creating builds team commitment and fully leverages the knowledge and intent of the Team. Once that's done, clarity ensures everyone understands the agreed direction and roadmap.

Finally, communication is a continuous loop of updates and feedback.

AutoPulse Highlights

Parinjay's Mental Model for Leadership

The 3C framework -
Collaboration + Clarity + Communicate.

Parinjay: I believe people should come out better having worked in your team. It's a measure of success if team members move on to bigger, more senior roles. I take pride in seeing many of my former team members now in senior positions.

Also, I like to challenge the Status Quo. It's about constantly seeking improvement and not settling for doing things the same way just because they've always been done that way.

AutoPulse Team: You've worked in many different markets. How do market dynamics differ across regions, and what strategies do you employ to adapt?

Parinjay: Market dynamics can vary significantly across regions. For example, in Europe, oil changes typically happen during regular vehicle servicing, while in the Middle East, oil changes are more frequent and often done independently of servicing. Each market has its own consumer behaviours, regulatory environments, and competitive landscapes.

To adapt, it's important to have a deep understanding of local market conditions and tailor strategies accordingly. This might involve different marketing approaches, pricing strategies, and distribution models. Flexibility and local expertise are crucial for success in diverse markets.



AutoPulse Team: Speaking of local expertise, how important is it to have local leadership in different markets?

Parinjay: Local leadership is incredibly important. Leaders who understand the local culture, market conditions, and consumer behaviours can make more informed decisions and drive better results. They can navigate regulatory environments more effectively and build stronger relationships with local stakeholders. For multinational companies, empowering local leaders and providing them with the autonomy to make decisions is crucial. It ensures that strategies are not only relevant but also executable in the local context.



Parinjay with the leadership team of Omoda | Jaecoo leadership

AutoPulse Team: How do you approach building and maintaining relationships in different markets?

Parinjay: Building and maintaining relationships requires time, effort, and genuine interest. It's important to invest in understanding the local culture and showing respect for local customs and traditions. Regular communication and personal interactions are key. Whether it's through formal meetings, social events, or casual conversations, staying connected and engaged with local stakeholders is crucial. Trust is built over time, and it's important to be consistent and reliable. Also, being open to feedback and willing to learn from local counterparts can strengthen relationships and foster collaboration.

AutoPulse Highlights

If you're a multinational company, then local expertise with local leadership is very important. What is more important is providing them with the autonomy to make big decisions of their own.

-Parinjay

Industry understanding from a lubricants market perspective

AutoPulse Team: Moving to the core topic, what are some of the biggest challenges the lubricant industry is facing today, and how is Castrol KSA working to address them?

Parinjay: The lubricant industry has seen many changes over the years. One of the biggest challenges we face today is the evolving relationship between consumers and their vehicles. Twenty-five years ago, automobiles were a symbol of passion and performance. People were deeply involved with their cars, tweaking and optimizing them with better quality fuels and lubricants. However, modern vehicles are highly advanced, and the room for personal intervention has significantly diminished. This shift has turned vehicles into more of a mobility solution rather than a performance asset.

AutoPulse Team: That's an interesting point. How has this shift impacted the lubricant industry specifically?

Parinjay: This shift has led to lubricants becoming a low-involvement category for consumers. In the past, people cared a lot about what kind of oil went into their cars.

But now, with vehicles becoming more standardized and reliable, the differentiation between lubricant brands has reduced. Most consumers are unaware of the specifics and rely on basic quality criteria. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated these changes, driving the lubricant market towards increased commoditization.

AutoPulse Team: With this commoditization, how are companies adapting their strategies?

Parinjay: Companies are adapting by re-evaluating their business models. Earlier, leading international brands could charge a premium for high-quality lubricants. **Today, the focus has shifted to cost-efficiency.** Workshops and retailers, facing increased input costs, are more interested in procuring lubricants at the lowest price. This has fundamentally changed the business dynamics.

AutoPulse Team: Given these challenges, is the lubricant business still profitable?

Parinjay: Absolutely. Despite the challenges, the lubricant business remains highly profitable. It's not as lucrative as it once was, but it still outperforms many other sectors in the automotive industry. The key is to adapt to the changing landscape and find new ways to add value.

AutoPulse Team: Looking ahead, how do you see the lubricant industry evolving in the coming decades?

Parinjay: The future of the lubricant industry will be shaped by a few key trends. First, the entry barriers are getting lower. This means more brands are entering the market, increasing competition. Second, the shift towards electric vehicles (EVs) is going to be a major change agent.

As the demand for traditional lubricants decreases, companies are investing more in products for EVs and bringing focus on industrial lubricants.

AutoPulse Team: How are large companies like Castrol and Shell adapting to these changes?

Parinjay: Many large companies are diversifying their portfolios. They are investing in industrial lubricants and products for electric vehicles. For instance, developing specialized fluids for EVs or high-end industrial lubricants, which require specific technical expertise and have higher entry barriers.

This helps them maintain a competitive edge and ensure long-term profitability.

AutoPulse Team: You mentioned earlier that the lubricant industry is becoming more fragmented. Can you elaborate on that?

Parinjay: Certainly. With the lowering of entry barriers, we see a proliferation of new brands in the market. Ten years ago, a handful of major players dominated the market.

Today, there are dozens of brands competing in each viscosity category. This fragmentation means that market shares are shifting, with smaller, lesser-known brands gaining ground.

This is especially evident in markets like Saudi Arabia, where the 'others' category has grown significantly.

AutoPulse Team: How does this fragmentation impact the traditional business models?

Parinjay: The impact is profound. Traditional models relied heavily on brand loyalty and premium pricing. With fragmentation, the focus has shifted to competitive pricing and cost efficiency. This means that companies must be more agile and innovative in their approach. They need to find new ways to differentiate themselves, whether through superior service, innovative products, or strategic partnerships.

AutoPulse Team: What role does technology play in this evolving landscape?

Parinjay: Technology is a crucial enabler in this new landscape. It helps in several ways, from improving supply chain efficiency to enhancing customer engagement.

For instance, digital platforms can provide real-time data on lubricant performance, helping companies optimize their offerings. Additionally, technology can help in building stronger relationships with customers by providing personalized service and rewards programs.

This is essential in a low-involvement category like lubricants, where brand loyalty needs to be fostered through exceptional service experiences.

AutoPulse Highlights

With the lubricant side of the auto service industry getting fragmented and becoming a more low-involvement category, traditional business model relying on brand loyalty and pricing won't work.

Superior service, innovative products, or strategic partnerships is the way forward.

-Parinjay

AutoPulse Team: Speaking of customer engagement, how important is the service network in maintaining brand strength?

Parinjay: The service network is incredibly important. **As lubricants become a low-involvement category, the physical touchpoints where customers interact with the brand become critical.** Service centres and workshops are where customers can see and feel the brand. Ensuring a high-quality service experience at these touchpoints helps in building brand loyalty and differentiating the brand from competitors.

AutoPulse Team: Can you share more about the strategies being employed to leverage service networks effectively?

Parinjay: Sure. Many companies are focusing on creating integrated service models. This means offering a range of services beyond just oil changes, such as car washes, detailing, and convenience stores at fuel stations. By doing this, they can capture a larger share of the customer's wallet.



Parinjay is a passionate trekker. Here's a picture him of trekking and climbing in Nepal this year with his daughter.

AutoPulse Team: You mentioned the importance of integrated service models. Could you elaborate on why only price cannot be the competitive advantage in the future?

Parinjay: Certainly. In today's market, relying solely on price as a competitive advantage is not sustainable. While cost-efficiency is important, it's equally crucial to provide additional value to customers.

This is where integrated service models come into play. By offering a variety of services such as maintenance, car washes, and convenience stores, companies can enhance the customer experience and foster loyalty. This approach not only helps retain customers but also allows companies to diversify their revenue streams.



Parinjay with his daughter at the peak of Nepal.

AutoPulse Team: Given these varied approaches, what do you think will be the key factors for success in the future?

Parinjay: The key factors for success will be flexibility, customer focus, and technological integration. Companies need to be flexible enough to adapt their strategies to different markets. They must keep the customer at the centre of their operations, ensuring that they provide value beyond just the product.

Technological integration will also be critical, as it enables companies to gather and analyze data, improve service delivery, and engage with customers more effectively. Those who can blend these elements seamlessly will be well-positioned for success.

AutoPulse Team: Can you provide an example of a market where the integrated model has been particularly effective?

Parinjay: Certainly. In Saudi Arabia, for instance, the high frequency of oil changes makes the integrated model very effective. Companies have set up comprehensive service stations that offer multiple services, including oil changes, car washes, and convenience stores.

This model maximizes the revenue potential of each customer visit and provides a superior customer experience.



AutoPulse Team: How do you see the role of digital platforms in this evolving landscape?

Parinjay: Digital platforms such as GaragePlug play a crucial role in this evolving landscape. They provide the technological backbone necessary for efficient service delivery and customer engagement.

These platforms enable companies to gather real-time data on customer preferences and service performance, allowing for continuous improvement. They also help in building stronger relationships with customers by providing personalized service and rewards programs.

In a low-involvement category like lubricants, such digital interventions are essential for maintaining customer loyalty and differentiating the brand.

AutoPulse Team: You mentioned the concept of a long sunset for the lubricant industry. Can you elaborate on that?

Parinjay: Yes, the concept of a long sunset refers to the gradual decline in demand for traditional lubricants as the world shifts towards alternative energy sources and electric vehicles. While we won't see an abrupt end to the use of lubricants, we will see the market reach peak demand followed by a steady decrease in demand over the next few decades. This means that companies need to start planning for this transition now. Investing in new technologies, diversifying their product portfolios, and exploring new markets will be essential strategies to remain relevant and profitable in the long run.

AutoPulse Team: How should companies prepare for this long sunset?

Parinjay: Companies should focus on **three main areas: diversification, innovation, and sustainability**. Diversification involves expanding into new markets and product lines, such as industrial lubricants and fluids for electric vehicles. Innovation is crucial for staying ahead of the competition and meeting the evolving needs of customers.

This includes investing in research and development to create new products and improve existing ones. Finally, sustainability should be a core part of their strategy. As the world becomes more environmentally conscious, companies that prioritize sustainable practices will have a competitive edge.

AutoPulse Highlights

Community Initiative by GaragePlug

Fun Facts -

- Digitalization has the potential to create around \$1 trillion of value for the oil & gas supply chain. Of that amount, \$260-\$275 billion is expected to accrue to downstream companies.
- Globally, more than 50% of the total lubricant volume is being used for automobiles, approx. 40% for industrial purposes and rest in the marine industry.

www.abnresource.com



AutoPulse Team: What role do you see for smaller, emerging brands in this evolving industry?

Parinjay: Smaller, emerging brands have a significant role to play in this evolving industry. With lower entry barriers, these brands can bring fresh ideas and innovative products to the market.

They are often more agile and can adapt quickly to changing consumer preferences and market conditions. By focusing on niche markets and leveraging digital platforms for marketing and distribution, these smaller brands can carve out a space for themselves and compete effectively with established players.

AutoPulse Team: In your experience, what are some of the most innovative strategies you have seen in the lubricant industry?

Parinjay: Some of the most innovative strategies I've seen include the development of specialized lubricants for electric vehicles and high-end industrial applications. Companies are also leveraging technology to create more efficient and eco-friendly products.

For example, some brands are developing lubricants that can extend the service intervals, reducing the frequency of oil changes and thus lowering the environmental impact. Additionally, the use of digital platforms to enhance customer engagement and service delivery is another area where we see a lot of innovation.

AutoPulse Team: How important is collaboration in driving innovation in the lubricant industry?

Parinjay: Collaboration is extremely important in driving innovation. The challenges we face today are complex and require a multi-faceted approach.

By collaborating with other companies, research institutions, and technology providers, we can pool resources and expertise to develop better solutions. This collaborative approach not only accelerates innovation but also helps in addressing broader industry challenges, such as sustainability and regulatory compliance.

AutoPulse Team: It sounds like the key to success in the future will be adaptability and innovation. Would you agree?

Parinjay: Absolutely. The lubricant industry is at a crossroads, and the companies that will succeed are those that can adapt to changing consumer behaviours and market dynamics. Innovation, whether in product development, service delivery, or business models, will be crucial. Companies need to stay ahead of the curve and continuously find new ways to add value for their customers.

AutoPulse Team: How do you see the industry evolving in the next decade or two?

Parinjay: The lubricants industry will continue to see a shift towards more specialized products. The automotive segment will become more commoditized, with lower involvement from consumers.

However, industrial and electric vehicle lubricants will see more innovation and investment. The overall trend will be towards integrated service models that offer multiple services under one roof, capturing a larger share of the consumer's wallet.

AutoPulse Team: Thank you, Parinjay, for sharing your insights and experiences with us. It's been a pleasure having you on the podcast.

Parinjay: Thank you for having me. It's been a great conversation, and I hope my experiences and insights can help others in the industry.

THE PERFECT BLEND: INDUSTRY 4.0, SOCIETY 5.0, AND OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE



Majid AL Jbour

Network development and PMO at
United Motors Company

Majid Al Jbour is an accomplished industry leader with over 15 years of experience in the automotive sector. As the Network Development and PMO Manager at United Motors Company, he has expertly managed a distributor network of 86 locations, achieving the highest dealership compliance scores for Stellantis in the Middle East.

Majid has spearheaded the construction of advanced facilities for KIA and Stellantis, including the largest Stellantis plant in the region. His strategic leadership in dealer network development and project management has significantly contributed to the growth and success of automotive dealerships across the GCC.

This article explores an additional aspect of the author's academic research, which has been submitted to Anglia Ruskin University in Cambridge, United Kingdom.

In the ever-evolving landscape of technology and society, the ideas of Industry 4.0 and Society 5.0 have emerged as symbols of groundbreaking innovation and forward-thinking. The advent of Industry 4.0 marks a significant milestone in the world of manufacturing and production, as it brings together digital technologies and traditional systems. This integration seeks to transform operational efficiency, introduce innovative business models, and promote sustainability within industries.

The industrial landscape is experiencing a significant transformation. The advent of Industry 4.0 has revolutionised the manufacturing landscape, bringing in a new era of automation and data-driven processes that are reshaping our interactions with technology. However, achieving real progress requires a comprehensive approach. Here's how Society 5.0 and Operational Excellence (OpEx) work together to shape the future with a powerful synergy.

Industry 4.0: A Revolutionary Technological Drive

Recognising factories that operate with intelligent equipment, facilitating smooth data exchange and real-time production optimisation. This summarises the fundamental nature of Industry 4.0.

The integration of physical and digital environments is facilitated by many technologies, including:

- **The Internet of Things (IoT):** IoT refers to the implementation of a network that connects equipment and devices, facilitating the interchange of data and allowing remote monitoring.
- **Big data and analytics** include the collection and analysis of large quantities of data to get valuable insights and enhance the process of decision-making.
- **Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML)** refer to the ability of machines to learn and adjust in order to enhance processes, anticipate issues, and execute intricate jobs. The advantages of Industry 4.0 are indisputable: enhanced efficiency, improved excellence

Society 5.0: Innovation with a Focus on Human Needs

The shift from Industry 4.0 to Society 5.0 indicates a move towards prioritising human needs in technology and societal progress.

While Industry 4.0 is centred around the digitization and digitalization of processes, Society 5.0 takes a different approach by prioritising human well-being, sustainability, and resilience.

Society 5.0 extends the narrative to a more advanced stage. It acknowledges the need to use technical progress not just for increased productivity but also for the improvement of society. The present approach emphasises human-centricity.

- **Social Innovation:** In the field of social innovation, technology is used to effectively tackle many societal issues, such as healthcare, education, and environmental sustainability.
- **Promoting inclusivity and collaboration:** ensuring that all individuals, rather than a privileged few, get the advantages of technological breakthroughs.
- **The Impact of Wellbeing on Quality of Life:** Enhancing human potential and creating a more fulfilling life experience via the use of technology to promote well-being and quality of life.

Operational Excellence: Connecting Technology and Humanity

Efficient operations are crucial for achieving the objectives of Industry 4.0 and Society 5.0. It involves improving operational processes, using digital technologies, analysing data, and implementing smart manufacturing practices to make operations more efficient, cut costs, and improve overall performance.

In today's fast-paced digital age, organisations must stay competitive, embrace technological advancements, and meet the changing needs of society. This is where operation excellence comes into play. By focusing on operational efficiency and effectiveness, organisations can ensure their long-term success and ability to adapt to the ever-changing business landscape.



Operational excellence is the key to connecting technology and people. Emphasising a philosophy of continuous improvement, the main focus is on understanding and surpassing customer expectations by delivering top-notch products and services.

- **Prioritising Customers First:** striving to understand and exceed customer expectations by delivering top-notch products and services.
- **Constantly Improving:** Always seeking better methods, reducing inefficiencies, and maximising efficiency.
- **Enhancing Employee Engagement:** Empowering employees to actively contribute to improvement efforts and take ownership of their roles.
- **Utilising Data-Driven Decision Making:** Employing data and analytics to guide decision-making and assess progress.

The Optimal Combination: A Synergistic Framework

The combination of Industry 4.0, Society 5.0, and Operation Excellence creates a powerful triangle that drives technical advancement, social advancement, and operational effectiveness. Organisations may use the capabilities of digital technology to revolutionise their production processes and business models by adopting the ideas of Industry 4.0. Society 5.0 presents a future in which technology is used to benefit people, fostering sustainability and design that prioritises human needs. The genuine strength comes in the harmonic interaction of these three principles. Industry 4.0 serves as the technical foundation, Society 5.0 assures its alignment with humanity, and OpEx facilitates the connection between these two concepts.

In the context of Industry 4.0 and Society 5.0, operational excellence serves as a driving force that drives organisations towards achieving success.

Organisations could achieve excellence in performance, flexibility, and competitiveness by optimising operational procedures, using digital technologies, and prioritising efficiency.

Visualise an organisation that utilises Industry 4.0 technology while prioritising the health and well-being of its employees (Society 5.0). Implementing OpEx principles will guarantee ongoing improvement, optimising efficiency while prioritising the human factor.

Future Prospects:

It is crucial to adopt this comprehensive strategy as we go, by prioritising technical progress (Industry 4.0), enhancing human welfare (Society 5.0), and implementing ongoing enhancements (OpEx), we may create a future that not only benefits industries but also society at large.

In a nutshell, the combination of Industry 4.0, Society 5.0, and Operation Excellence represents a paradigm shift towards a forthcoming age where technology, society, and operations are tightly interconnected.

Organisations may effectively negotiate the complexities of the digital era, foster innovation, and make valuable contributions towards the establishment of a sustainable and human-centric future by adopting these paradigms.



Statement -

"Online car repair info misleads consumers, diminishing the value of professional workshop mechanics."



Mr. Anas Hantash

National Manager at Repair2Care Saudi

"In today's digital age, there is an abundance of marketing materials available online, covering various aspects of our lives. These materials range from DIY home improvement guides to health and wellness tips, and more recently, car maintenance advice. However, a significant issue with many of these marketing pieces is that they often lack real, accurate information, particularly when it comes to fixing problems in cars. This issue is especially prevalent in advertisements and promotional content that oversimplifies complex car repairs.

The "Magic Color Pen" Myth

For instance, consider the numerous ads that

Anas's THOUGHTs on this statement -

tout the miraculous capabilities of a "magic colour pen" designed to fix car scratches. These ads claim that the pen can easily, quickly, and almost costlessly erase any scratch, restoring the car's appearance to its former glory. While this might sound appealing to the average consumer, it is a far cry from reality. Fixing a deep scratch on a car panel is not a simple task and certainly not one that can be accomplished with a mere swipe of a pen.

The Complexity of Deep Scratch Repairs

Deep scratches on a car's surface penetrate beyond the clear coat, often reaching the base coat or even the metal underneath. Repairing such damage requires a series of steps, including cleaning the area, sanding down the scratch, applying primer, painting, and finally, adding a clear coat for protection. Each of these steps necessitates time, skill, and the proper materials. Therefore, the notion that a quick fix can address such an issue is misleading.

AutoPulse Thoughts
Community Initiatives by AutoPulse



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

Statement -

"Online car repair info misleads consumers, diminishing the value of professional workshop mechanics."

The Broader Impact of Misinformation

This type of misinformation has a broader impact than just misleading consumers about the effectiveness of a product.

It sets unrealistic expectations regarding the cost and time involved in car repairs. Consumers, influenced by these overly simplistic marketing claims, begin to believe that fixing a deep scratch should be an inexpensive and quick process.

Professional Devaluation

This belief leads to a skewed perception of the work involved, causing consumers to undervalue the expertise and effort required for proper car repairs.

As a result, when these misinformed consumers seek professional help for their car problems, they often enter negotiations with unrealistic expectations.

They might argue that the price quoted by a professional is too high, based on the assumption that the repair is a simple task that shouldn't require much time or money. This not only devalues the work of skilled professionals but also leads to frustration for both the consumer and the service provider.

Recognizing the Value of Skilled Mechanics

Professional mechanics and auto body specialists invest in training, equipment, and materials to ensure they can provide high-quality repairs.

When the value of their work is undermined by misleading marketing, it can lead to a devaluation of the industry as a whole. Moreover, consumers who attempt to use these so-called miracle fixes might end up causing more damage to their vehicles, resulting in higher repair costs in the long run.



Need for Accurate Information

In conclusion, while the internet is flooded with marketing materials that promise easy solutions, consumers must approach such claims with scepticism. Accurate information is vital for making informed decisions, especially when it comes to something as complex and valuable as car repairs.

By understanding the true nature of the work involved, consumers can better appreciate the cost and effort required to maintain their vehicles.

This, in turn, fosters a more respectful and realistic dialogue between consumers and professionals in the auto repair industry."

Statement -

"Online car repair info misleads consumers, diminishing the value of professional workshop mechanics."



Mr. Grant Fitzpatrick

Group Aftersales Director at Al-Mansour Automotive

As with any other industry, the automotive industry's digitalization journey carries with it both pros and cons when it comes to online repair information. One area in particular that seems to have more cons than pros is the abundance of online vehicle repair "experts".

The Risks of Unverified Online Advice

For any do-it-yourself vehicle owners, it's great to have access to these so-called experts who can help you repair or maintain your vehicle. The issue, however, is that the consumer does not know the level of skill or expertise that the person they are speaking with actually possesses.

This can lead to improper diagnosis, costly and unnecessary repairs and incorrect information being given to unsuspecting consumers. Not to mention the skill level of the customer may not be at a level where they should be attempting to repair the vehicle themselves.



Role of OEM Technical Assistance Centers

Many OEMs have technical assistance centres set up to assist a skilled and licensed technician in their repairs as many times faults in the vehicle are not always present when the vehicle is being diagnosed. These are some of the brightest and most capable technicians hired specifically to assist the dealers with repairs.

These people will be the first to tell you that diagnosing problematic vehicles over the phone, even with a dealer technician on the other end of the line is challenging.

Statement -

"Online car repair info misleads consumers, diminishing the value of professional workshop mechanics."

The Impact on Consumers and Manufacturers

Now, imagine what it would be like if both parties were doing this part-time and not really qualified to be either the repair person or the technical assistant. Obviously, it's a recipe for bad things to happen even if the best of intentions were meant.

These types of situations can hurt the customer's financial situation with unnecessary parts replacements or unneeded work being done. **It can also negatively impact the customer's impression of the vehicle manufacturer which could have most probably been avoided by making a short trip or call to the dealership.**

For many vehicle owners, their main motivating factor for doing this is economical which unfortunately could have a reverse effect if the person directing them is not qualified.

Without even discussing the safety impact and precautions that should be taken when working on vehicles, economically taking advice from someone who we don't really know can be very risky and costly.

The Best Advice: Trust the Professionals

The best advice will almost always come from dealership professionals or directly from the OEM, who have the training, experience, and resources to ensure that repair are done correctly and safely, ultimately saving time, money, and potentially avoiding severe consequences.



5 Car Repairs You Should Never DIY

It's tempting to save money by doing your own car repairs, but some tasks are best left to professionals. Here are five car-maintenance chores to steer clear of:

- **AC Repair or Recharge:** Handling refrigerants can be dangerous and often indicates a deeper issue.
- **Transmission Repair:** The complex system of around 800 parts is best managed by experts.
- **Suspension Component Replacement:** High-pressure parts like coil springs can cause serious injury if mishandled.
- **Brake System Maintenance:** Incorrectly replacing brake components poses significant safety risks.
- **Timing Belt or Chain Replacement:** Even a small error can lead to catastrophic engine damage.

MASTERING INVENTORY MANAGEMENT: A KEY TO SUCCESS IN THE AUTO SERVICE INDUSTRY

The auto service industry has always been dynamic, but recent global events have brought unique challenges that have tested the resilience and adaptability of businesses. The COVID-19 pandemic, semiconductor shortages, and global supply chain disruptions have exposed critical vulnerabilities, particularly in inventory management. Despite its crucial role, inventory management often remains overlooked and underrated.

As we navigate through 2024, it is essential to recognize that optimizing inventory management can lead to higher returns and improved customer satisfaction.

The Pandemic's Long Shadow

The ripple effects of the COVID-19 pandemic continue to impact the auto service industry. Production delays due to semiconductor and parts shortages have persisted, leading to a shortage of new vehicles. This shortage has pushed customers towards the used car market, increasing the demand for repairs and consequently putting pressure on workshops to manage their inventories effectively.

A 2021 study by IMR revealed that the average car turnaround time in repair shops had increased by a day and a half since the pandemic began. This delay was attributed to parts shortages and disruptions in the supply chain. Although the situation has improved slightly, the industry is far from fully recovered.



Inventory Management: The Underrated Hero

Inventory management is a critical aspect of the auto service industry, yet it is often underestimated. Efficient inventory management ensures that parts are available when needed, reduces downtime, and enhances customer satisfaction. In the current scenario, where supply chain unpredictability is the norm, having a robust inventory management system is more important than ever.

The Consequences of Poor Inventory Management:

Poor inventory management can lead to several issues, including:

- **Increased Downtime:** When parts are not available, repairs are delayed, leading to increased vehicle downtime. This not only frustrates customers but also affects the reputation of the service provider.
- **Higher Costs:** Emergency procurement of parts due to poor inventory planning can lead to higher costs. This includes expedited shipping fees and premium prices for parts.
- **Lost Sales:** If a repair shop cannot provide timely service due to parts unavailability, customers may seek alternatives, leading to lost sales and potential long-term customers.
- **Inventory Piling Up:** On the other hand, overstocking parts that are not in demand ties up capital and storage space, which could be better utilized elsewhere.

Digitalization and Optimization:

The Path Forward

The solution lies in digitalizing and optimizing inventory management processes. By leveraging technology, auto service businesses can ensure they have the right parts at the right time, reduce costs, and improve customer satisfaction.

Real-Time Inventory Tracking:

One of the significant advancements in inventory management is real-time tracking. Modern inventory management systems, such as those offered by GaragePlug, allow businesses to track inventory levels in real time. This ensures that service providers are always aware of their stock levels and can reorder parts before they run out.

A study by Wasp Barcode Technologies found that 43% of small businesses either don't track inventory or use a manual process. This lack of real-time tracking leads to inefficiencies and increased costs. By implementing a digital inventory management system, businesses can avoid these pitfalls and operate more efficiently.

Predictive Analytics:

Predictive analytics is another powerful tool for optimizing inventory management. By analyzing historical data and trends, predictive analytics can forecast future demand for parts. This allows businesses to maintain optimal inventory levels, ensuring that they have the necessary parts when demand arises.

According to a report by McKinsey, companies that use predictive analytics in their supply chain operations can reduce inventory levels by 20% to 30% while maintaining or improving service levels. This highlights the potential for significant cost savings and efficiency improvements through the use of predictive analytics.

Automated Reordering:

Automated reordering is another feature that can greatly enhance inventory management. With automated reordering, the system can automatically place orders for parts when inventory levels fall below a predefined threshold. This ensures that parts are always available and eliminates the risk of stockouts.

A survey by Software Advice found that businesses using automated reordering systems saw a 15% reduction in stockouts and a 12% reduction in overstock situations. This demonstrates the effectiveness of automated reordering in maintaining optimal inventory levels.



The Role of Communication

Effective communication is crucial for successful inventory management. By keeping customers informed about potential delays due to parts shortages, businesses can manage expectations and maintain customer satisfaction.

Clear communication also allows businesses to offer alternatives, such as rescheduling appointments or providing loaner vehicles.

All this is only possible if you perform the right digital transformation of your auto service business and build a proper SOP for your employees to follow.



The Strategic Importance of Inventory Management

Inventory management is not just about keeping track of parts; it is a strategic function that can significantly impact a business's bottom line.

Effective inventory management minimizes the costs associated with excess inventory and stockouts, optimizes cash flow, and enhances service delivery.

Data Point: A report by the National Association of Wholesaler-Distributors (NAW) found that companies with optimized inventory management systems saw a 10% to 15% increase in overall profitability.

Challenges in Inventory Management

- **Demand Variability:** Predicting customer demand can be challenging, especially in a post-pandemic world where consumer behaviour has shifted. Accurate demand forecasting is critical to maintaining optimal inventory levels.
- **Supply Chain Disruptions:** Global supply chain disruptions have become more common, making it essential for businesses to have contingency plans in place.
- **Technology Integration:** Integrating new technologies with existing systems can be challenging but is necessary for modernization and efficiency.
- **Data Management:** Managing and analyzing large volumes of data can be overwhelming without the right tools and expertise.



Overcoming Challenges with Technology

- **Demand Forecasting Tools:** Advanced demand forecasting tools use machine learning algorithms to predict future demand based on historical data and market trends. These tools can significantly improve forecasting accuracy and reduce the risk of stockouts and overstock situations.

Data Point: According to a study by Gartner, businesses that use advanced demand forecasting tools can reduce forecast errors by up to 50%.

- **Supply Chain Management Solutions:** Modern supply chain management solutions provide end-to-end visibility into the supply chain, allowing businesses to identify potential disruptions and take proactive measures.
- **Integration Platforms:** Integration platforms enable seamless connectivity between different systems, facilitating data flow and process automation.
- **Data Analytics and Business Intelligence:** Data analytics and business intelligence tools help businesses make sense of their data, uncovering insights that can drive strategic decision-making.

Future Trends in Inventory

Management

The future of inventory management in the auto service industry will be shaped by several key trends:

Internet of Things (IoT):

The Internet of Things (IoT) is set to revolutionize inventory management. IoT devices can provide real-time data on inventory levels, usage patterns, and environmental conditions. This data can be used to optimize inventory levels, reduce waste, and improve overall efficiency.

Data Point: According to a report by MarketsandMarkets, the IoT in the automotive market is expected to grow from USD 15.87 billion in 2015 to USD 82.79 billion by 2022, at a CAGR of 26.75% during the forecast period.

Blockchain Technology:

Blockchain technology offers a secure and transparent way to track inventory and ensure the authenticity of parts. By using blockchain, businesses can create a tamper-proof record of each part's journey from manufacturer to end-user. This can help prevent counterfeit parts and improve trust in the supply chain.

Data Point: A survey by Deloitte found that 53% of senior executives identified blockchain as a critical priority for their organizations in 2020.

Artificial Intelligence (AI):

Artificial Intelligence (AI) can further enhance inventory management through advanced data analysis and decision-making capabilities. AI can analyze vast amounts of data to identify patterns and trends, enabling more accurate demand forecasting and inventory optimization.

Data Point: According to a report by PwC, AI could contribute up to USD 15.7 trillion to the global economy by 2030, with USD 6.6 trillion coming from increased productivity.



Conclusion

In the ever-evolving auto service industry, efficient inventory management is key to staying competitive and meeting customer demands. By digitalizing and optimizing inventory processes, businesses can reduce costs, improve customer satisfaction, and enhance overall efficiency. Implementing the right inventory management system offers the tools and features needed to navigate the challenges of today and prepare for the opportunities of tomorrow.

If you're ready to take your inventory management to the next level, contact a trusted provider today. Ensure that your team is equipped with the tools and knowledge needed to maintain the right parts at the right time, every time.

Sources:

1. IMR's 2021 survey
2. Wasp Barcode Technologies study
3. McKinsey report on predictive analytics
4. Software Advice survey
5. National Association of Wholesaler-Distributors (NAW) report
6. Gartner study on demand forecasting
7. MarketsandMarkets IoT in Automotive Market report
8. Deloitte Blockchain Survey
9. PwC report on Artificial Intelligence

By focusing on inventory management, you can position your business as a leader in the auto service industry, ready to meet the challenges of today and tomorrow with confidence and efficiency.

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



New Global Head of Strategy of Castrol

Name - Prasoon Nigam

Prasoon Nigam, a seasoned leader with over 15 years of experience in sales, strategy, and transformation, is the Global Head of Strategy (Interim) at Castrol, bp. He excels in driving strategic growth and leading multicultural teams.



New General Manager at Petromin Corporation

Name - Wajih Ul Hasan

Wajih ul Hasan Mahmood, the new General Manager at Petromin Corporation has over 15 years of experience in sales and marketing management across the UAE, Pakistan, and Egypt. He has a proven track record in automotive quick service, light repairs, and strategic business growth.



New General Manager - IT of Al Tayer Motors

Name - Melvin Lasrado

Melvin Lasrado, the new General Manager - IT at Al Tayer Motors, has extensive experience in IT management within the automotive industry, specializing in business processes, operations management, and analytical skills.



New Global VP of Strategic Operations at Fix Network

Name - Nick Spiers

Nick Spiers, the new Global VP of Strategic Operations for Fix Network, has been instrumental in the company's global expansion since 2016. With diverse experience in sales, business development, commercial, and operations, he now oversees strategic planning and execution globally.



New Director of Albatha Automotive Group and CEO of AGMC

Name - Dr. Hamid Haqparwar

Dr. Hamid Haqparwar, an experienced automotive executive, has been named Director of Albatha Automotive Group and CEO of AGMC. He brings nearly two decades of strategic leadership at BMW Group, driving business and sales across various regional markets.

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



New COO at Saudi Automotive Services Company (SASCO)

Name - Abdulrahman Alyaesh

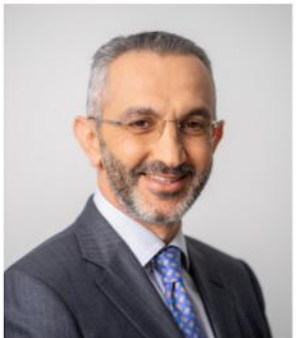
Abdulrahman Alyaesh is a seasoned executive with a robust expertise in business development and operations. Currently the COO of SASCO, he has successfully led teams and strategic initiatives, significantly contributing to business growth and operational excellence in the automotive services sector.



New Head of Digital Transformation at Shell Oman

Name - Mohammed Al Kindy

Mohammed Al Kindy is the new Head of Digital Transformation at Shell Oman Marketing, with nearly 20 years of experience in sales, operations, and IT leadership. He specializes in digital strategy implementation and client relationship management, driving innovation and growth.



New Group Chief Executive Officer of Al Rostamani Group

Name - Mazen Dalati

Mazen Dalati, the new Group CEO at Al Rostamani Group, is an inspirational leader with 30 years of executive experience in MedTech, healthcare, and family businesses. He excels in geographical expansion, strategic growth, and team building, holding roles from CEO to board member across diverse regions.



New Managing Director at BMW Group Middle East

Name - Karim Christian Haririan

Karim Christian Haririan, appointed as Managing Director at BMW Group Middle East, brings a wealth of international business administration experience and a robust track record in driving sales and operational success across diverse global markets.



New Managing Director at Matrix Auto Repairing

Name - Rajesh Lobo

Rajesh Lobo, the new Managing Director at Matrix Auto Repairing LLC, brings years of expertise in the automotive industry, specializing in workshop management and service operations. He has a proven track record of leading successful teams and enhancing business growth in the UAE.

WORTHY AUTOMOTIVE JOBS TO LOOK OUT FOR:



BATAS **MAW**
Commercial Vehicles
Nepal has been actively
searching for a **General
Manager - After Sales** to
join them.



HCP

HCP Automotives has
been actively searching for
a **General Manager,
Aftersales** to join their
client in Singapore.



Luxury Lounge LLC
Dubai has been actively
searching for a **General
Manager** to join them.



AutoCentral Multi-brand
Car Service Centre in Abu
Dhabi has been actively
searching for a **Service
Advisor** to join them.



AutoMillennium Group
Dubai has been actively
searching for a **Business
Development Manager**
to join them



Pratik Automobiles
Ranchi has been actively
searching for a **General
Manager - Service** to
join them.

Disclaimer:

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

UPCOMING EVENTS



July - August

July 10 - July 11

**Global EV & Mobility
Technology Forum
(GEMTech Forum),
Riyadh, Saudi Arabia**

July 26 - July 28

**United Auto Expo,
Coimbatore, India**

Aug 1 - Aug 3

**Automechanika
Kuala Lumpur**

September - October

Sept 2 - Sept 4

**ReFuel Forum
Africa**

Sept 4 - Sept 6

**China International Tire
Expo**

Sept 9 - Sept 11

ReFuelForum USA

Sept 17 - Sept 19

**EV Auto Show, Riyadh,
Saudi Arabia**

Oct 5 - Oct 7

Auto Mobility Expo, USA

Oct 23 - Oct 25

**Automotive World
Nagoya, Japan**

November - December

Nov 5 - Nov 7

AAPEX USA

Nov 13 - Nov 14

**MENA EV Show,
United Kingdom**

Nov 19 - Nov 21

**Automechanika
Johannesburg, South
Africa**

Nov 21 - Nov 23

**Auto Care Expo,
Mumbai, India**

Dec 2 - Dec 5

**Automechanika Shanghai,
China**

Dec 10 - Dec 12

**Automechanika Dubai,
UAE**

ENDING NOTE FROM THE AUTOPULSE TEAM

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

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

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



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feedback on this edition`



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JOIN THE AUTOPULSE COMMUNITY IN REVOLUTIONIZING THE AUTOMOTIVE
AFTERMARKET INDUSTRY TOGETHER**

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