



# Striving hard to serve up success on a plate change

After March's number plate change was disrupted by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, September took on even greater importance for car dealerships as buyers began putting lockdown behind them. Here is how four leading manufacturers approached the month in pursuit of new car sales:



**PATRICK MCGILLYCUDDY,  
HEAD OF SALES, VOLKSWAGEN UK**

#### **What products/offers are your main sales opportunities with the 70-plate?**

Our principal offer is the very successful 'Three Months On Us'. But we also have a mix of other attractive offers across the range, especially on our smaller SUVs, the T-Roc and T-Cross.

Don't forget, this is our brand's busiest year to date for new models. The most important are the enhanced Arteon and new Arteon Shooting Brake. Plus there are exciting new versions of the Golf, such as the GTI, GTE and the Estate. By the year's end, we will have one of the freshest and most compelling new car line-ups in the UK.

#### **Is this plate-change month of September more important than other years? What really makes it different?**

We have had a strong quarter so far, so we hope September will continue that good result. The market has performed above expectations, as have our sales. But, of course, the new plate makes September an important month for both us and the whole industry. We have been gearing up our logistics to bring more cars to the UK and deliver these to our network.

#### **How did you gear up your dealers for the plate change?**

First and foremost, we have been busy all year getting our retailers excited and enthused about our great new products. And that's not difficult, when you see the quality of those new cars.

On the logistics side, we have been sensible in encouraging retailers to start calling off their cars in August in order to make room at the ports for the additional production.

Together, we feel prepared.

#### **What did the business do to prepare for September?**

We have worked with our colleagues in Germany to help secure additional production to meet anticipated demand.

In addition, we have put shipping and logistics capacity in place to bring these cars to the UK.

And, of course, we have been busy from a marketing and PR perspective in communicating all our exciting products and offers to the UK buying public.



**RICHARD HARRISON,  
SEAT UK DIRECTOR**

#### **What products/offers are your main sales opportunities with the 70-plate?**

We have great offers across the entire award-winning range, but our SUVs are particularly enticing right now.

For example, the sporty Arona FR compact SUV now has enhanced finance contributions, while the first of our fantastic New Atecas arrives in the UK in September, featuring enhanced technology, such as wireless smartphone charging and connectivity across the range, while continuing to offer value for money.



Advertising feature



# Take advantage of strong used prices and sell more cars

Click2Trade, known as BAS in Holland, allows any size of franchised, or independent dealership to have their own in-house trade auction platform, but with a difference. With the industry experiencing a shortage of used vehicles, why wait for the vehicle to come into stock before you start the process of trading or auctioning it?

## The key benefits:

- It is free and can be accessed from whatever device is convenient for the client.
- Appraised vehicles can be added to the platform, which links to CAP HPI and pulls previous MOT advisories, allowing for better appraisals.
- For online customers or those that do not wish to visit the showroom a link can be sent to allow them to self-appraise their vehicle. We have already seen over 100 cus-

tomers do this in one month alone and complete it very well.

First launched in Holland last year 12,000 vehicles have been sold with retailers seeing an average increase in part-exchange values by £600. Achieving a high price on a customer's part exchange at point of appraisal has led to an increase in sales and better margins.

Because vehicles are sold prior to arrival they are paid for within 48 hours and collected within three days. This has a positive impact on cashflow and space on site. Of course, those that prefer, can still add vehicles the traditional way once they arrive in stock.

It is free to sell vehicles on Click2Trade. Buyers only pay £39 per vehicle bought and there is no subscription fee.



020 8355 5805

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Find out more:

www.click2trade.co.uk

Click2Trade

# Increase margin by 3-5% with better stock control

It has never been harder to buy used stock. Retailers are having to focus even more on the detail and turning stock quickly. The best retailers have robust preparation and cost control processes. When top money is being spent on a car, the margins are tight but there is still money to be made. vAutoStock is helping a lot of these retailers make the most of each purchase.

## How it works:

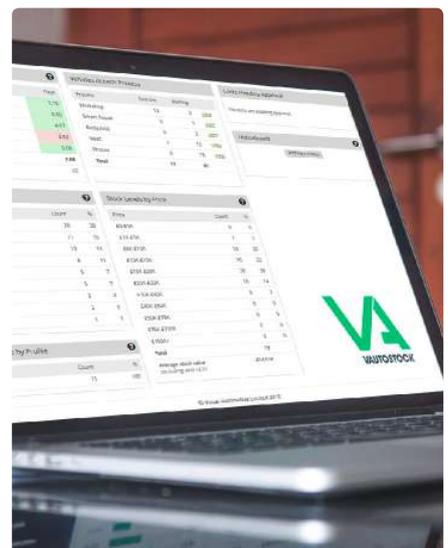
vAutoStock takes a feed from the dealer management system and then links all departments together, external and internal. Each retailer can be spoke their own process.

We understand each business is different. vAutoStock is designed to fit the business it works with.

Being cloud-based, anyone from any location can see the exact status of all the used vehicle stock. Any problem vehicles are flagged. For example, if a vehicle arrives not as described it can easily be picked up and a claim sent. Every penny counts today.

With an average margin increase of three to five per cent, vAutoStock will make a huge difference to your business. With more focus online and reducing customer visits it is essential to have all your vehicles fully prepared and ready to go.

vAutoStock has over 8,000 vehicles being processed through it each month. To find out more or to arrange your 30-minute demo, go online to [vautostock.co.uk](http://vautostock.co.uk) or call 020 8355 5805.



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Find out more:

www.vautostock.co.uk





**Is this plate-change month of September more important than other years? What really makes it different?**

A strong September is always important, but this year what we all need is actually a strong July-to-December, to counteract the financial impact of the lockdown period.

I'm pleased to say that activity levels have bounced back strongly post-lockdown, with our retailers doing a great job looking after their teams and their customers in a safe environment and in line with the Government guidelines.

The result of their terrific efforts was a fast return to profit in July, with customer demand ahead of supply, and with our factory now adding additional right-hand drive production, which will arrive in October.

This period is particularly special as we have the strongest vehicle line-up in the brand's history.

The all-new Leon raises the bar for design, technology and quality in the segment and deliveries have now started, following a heavyweight media launch campaign that timed perfectly as we came out of lockdown, stimulating lots of retailer enquiries.

We've also got the first New Ateca landing later this month, which represents a real step forward versus its predecessor, and shares the same design language as new Leon.

It's a great-looking line-up.

On top of the Seat business, we're also seeing a strong early interest and excitement in Cupra Formentor – the first vehicle designed specifically for Cupra – with the limited VZ launch edition now nearly all reserved by customers keen to be the first to drive this stunning new performance model later in 2020.

**How did you gear up your dealers for the plate change?**

We have strong products, programmes and consumer offers, tailored for the current environment, and we have a motivated retailer team who continue to do a great job looking after customers in a COVID-safe environment.

Communication and accessibility is important to us, but even more so during this pandemic, so we continue to work closely with our retailer partners, keeping an open and frank dialogue to work through the challenges we all face together as a team.



**LISA BRANKLIN, SALES DIRECTOR, FORD**

**What products/offers are your main sales opportunities with the 70-plate?**

Fiesta and Focus have just had mHEV engines added and we've got good availability of our newest Product Puma – *What Car?*'s car of the year – and Kuga. This is combined with a range of customer offers including Zero Percent and Upgrade and Save.

**Is this plate-change month of September more important than other years? What really makes it different?**

September is typically the second largest sales month in the year behind March. So, it's vital for dealer and manufacturer volumes and profits. With lockdown occurring before the end of March this meant a significantly reduced March industry – and this continued through Q2.

This September will be the largest sales month of the year, giving both manufacturers and dealers an opportunity to recover volume and profitability.

**How did you gear up your dealers for the plate change?**

Since restrictions were lifted progressively through the UK, the Ford dealer network has been implementing process changes to support safe return to work for staff and a safe return to the showroom for customers.

We've been supporting this process with ongoing guidance alongside the usual preparations for a big sales month, around marketing, prospecting, vehicle supply, etc.



**DALE WYATT, DIRECTOR OF AUTOMOBILE, SUZUKI GB**

**What products/offers are your main sales opportunities with the 70-plate?**

We have got two products that we think are right for September – small cars and SUVs. Small cars are going really well. We have also introduced 0% finance and no deposit as a consumer offer and, what we believe is a new car first – a seven-day return option. We are conscious that some people may be a bit apprehensive about test driving a vehicle during the COVID-19 pandemic so we are giving them the chance to buy it and, if it's not right for them, they can return it after seven days.

**Is this plate-change month of September more important than other years? What really makes it different?**

It's pretty important. It gives us an opportunity to get our stock back into balance and maximise the pent-up demand, as well as make up some of the Q2 shortfall. Because, at Suzuki, we order our stock six months in advance, our stock mix is a little bit skewed, so it gives us a chance to readjust that.

**How did you gear up your dealers for the plate change?**

We don't want to overload our dealers with initiatives to start with so we broke the return to work into three easy to follow stages: back on your feet (light touch management of the dealers), up and running and sprinting to the line. We feel we are in the second phase, where we need to give them some breathing room to continue their progress. **ALEX WRIGHT**

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