

Marriott Motor Group

In added-value sales, its relationships that matter most

Tracing its roots back to 1909, East Anglia based Marriott Motor Group is a multi-franchise organisation operating Volkswagen, Audi, Volkswagen Commercial, ŠKODA, Renault, Dacia and SsangYong sites as well as a specialist used car operation. Today, the business is led by the great-grandson of its founder Oliver Barnard and the sense of stability, continuity and service are deeply embedded in the business' culture and the way it takes a proactive and caring role in the communities in which it operates. The sense of stability is underlined by Group Operations Director, Ian Woodward, who has been with the business for 32 years having joined them as a sales executive.

At the heart of the business is a culture that is focused upon quality relationships. Internally within the Marriott team and externally with its customers, supplier partners and local communities, Marriott is committed to long-term relationships.

The business' long-term approach is centred upon integrity, transparency and relationships, as Ian points out;

"Our sustained business success has always been about trust and relationships, treating all of our stakeholders in a caring and fair manner. These traditional, arguably old-fashioned, values have always underpinned our business and its growth. For us, regulation of finance and insurance was to a large extent business as normal rather than a hurdle to be overcome. In added-value sales, it's relationships that matter most, helping the customer and working with people who can add to the quality of what we do every day."



The Marriott Team picked up a top prize at the Volkswagen One Business Awards in January.

The Marriot approach to added-value services is a simple one; the business works to ensure every customer is offered all of the added-value options available, at a sensible price. There is no hard sell, sales executive incentives are modest and the ethos is about enabling the customer to choose products that they believe could benefit them.

Certainly, Ian recognises the profit opportunity available from services such as GAP and extended warranties, but it is something he sees as a parallel benefit to enhancing the customer experience and a natural part of great customer care. For this reason, there is a rigorous focus on quality in assessing the added-value options. This includes the products, level of cover, claims process (and the data to support it), dealer support and a flexible, collaborative working approach.

"Quality is central to how we work and the added-value services we offer must work when the customer needs them. Candidly, a successful claim is a great advert for our business. The key to getting that scenario is a combination of the breadth of product quality, the clarity and ease of documentation and claims process. At the same time, we want flexibility and an accommodating approach from our supplying partners. Back to relationships; all of these work better when you work side-by-side for the long-term."

Our relationship with AutoProtect and their account management team has been in place for many years; for us, they are an extension of our business and this in itself has paid dividends down the years."

As with many dealer groups, Marriott's success has been intertwined with that of its manufacturer partners. These remain highly valued and the whole team was delighted to be recognised by its long-term partner Volkswagen at the start of the year when the Group won the top honour at the Volkswagen One Business Awards. In parallel with its manufacturer activities, Marriott has branched

out to develop its own used car operation, within which extended warranties feature prominently. Ian believes the experience and flexibility of AutoProtect in supporting the new venture perfectly illustrated the importance of working with people you know and trust as he concludes:

"There is no magic formula to added-value success, but as we have seen across many years in Marriott, the key attributes for me are a long-term relationship with the supplier partner based upon mutual understanding and respect and a long-term outlook for the customer; lifetime value counts."

