



PRESS INFORMATION

March 2005

Automotive Advantage spearheads new customer service standard

Aftermarket specialists **Automotive Advantage** have signed up with the **British Standards Institution (BSI)** to spearhead the development of a customer service standard specifically aimed at the dealer and non-franchise repairer.

The standard will be the first of its kind specifically for the automotive industry aftermarket.

The initiative comes in response to the high levels of complaints made by consumers in the UK each year about poor service levels in the automotive repair sector.

The standards to be achieved will be published by BSI as a publicly available specification or PAS. It will be developed using BSI's fast-track approach and will draw on the principles of Automotive Advantage's successful Maxiima programme. This programme - already installed at many dealerships - has been proven to give an outstanding and immediate uplift on customer satisfaction and profit levels at the same time, giving positive payback results.

BSI will ensure that the standard is aspirational yet achievable, with a clear focus on achieving customer satisfaction and getting it right first time, rather than simply defining how to handle customer complaints. Consumer and other stakeholder interests will be addressed during the consultative stage of the document's development. It is expected that the PAS will become available as early as this autumn.

Commenting on the development, Dagmar Droogsma, Head of Approved Codes Team at the Office of Fair Trading said "We welcome initiatives such as this that help to raise industry standards and we look forward to seeing it succeed".

The organisation promoting the rights of consumers, Which?, echoed their support for the scheme. Pete Tynan, principal researcher said "Which? has been campaigning to raise garage standards for more than 30 years. We support any scheme that brings real benefits to motorists. It's about time that industry listened to what people really want and provided trained mechanics and quality service".

Pete Turner, Chairman of Automotive Advantage and creator of the Maxiima programme is delighted with the collaboration agreement with BSI as it fits with his strategy of revolutionising the garage trade by raising industry standards. He commented, "We have had several organisations already requesting their involvement in the 2nd stage development and testing of the standard and one or two have already signed agreements as they recognise the benefits it can bring. Our experience from the Maxiima programme means that much of the standard is already tried and tested which will shorten the development period considerably."

To ensure complete impartiality, BSI will also run an independent accreditation scheme. Those sites achieving the standard will be authorised to use the coveted BSI Kitemark – a mark that consumers are known to trust so highly.

The British Standards Institution shares Turner's optimism for the benefits it can bring to the industry. Commenting on the initiative, Anne Boyd, Managing Director of BSI Product Services said "The aim of the standard is to improve the customer experience when vehicle repairs are needed. In addition, the Kitemark will demonstrate to consumers that garages meeting its requirements are up to standard.

"BSI is in discussion with a number of leading players in the automotive aftermarket regarding commercial sponsorship and branding of the PAS publication."

Further information on the development of the PAS can be obtained from Chris Hallam, Development Director at Automotive Advantage on 01782 855700 or Mike Pearson Head of Projects, at BSI Product Services on 01442 230442.

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About Automotive Advantage

Automotive Advantage is a leading professional business operating exclusively within the retail motor industry, specialising in the automotive After-Sales sector. It provides solutions that deliver sustainable results and long-term profitability using practical, easy-to-adopt & innovative methods, as proven by its many award-winning successes.

The success of **Automotive Advantage** is based on the significant background and expertise of its principals and their long-term involvement with the automotive sector, making it the custodian of a unique and specialist fund of knowledge regarding automotive After-Sales. As experts in Service Team management and the automotive After-Sales market, combined with their expertise in human behaviour, **Automotive Advantage** helps create the ideal retail customer experience. It is already working closely with several manufacturers including Mercedes-Benz, Chrysler and Hyundai to create the optimum After-Sales team environment.

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About BSI Product Services and the Kitemark

BSI Product Services, with its HQ in Hemel Hempstead, provides testing, notified body and certification services for a wide range of products manufactured in Europe, Asia, and North America. The Kitemark is BSI's widely recognised product mark and was first registered as the British Standards mark in 1903.

To achieve the Kitemark, companies have their products or services independently evaluated by BSI Product Services to ensure they conform to stated standards, and their management systems assessed to ensure they can consistently produce products or services that conform to the relevant standard. The product or service is then subject to an ongoing evaluation programme.

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