

GET TO THE ESSENTIALS

Aftermarket sat in on *Marketing Essentials*, one of the courses run by The Garage Inspector, Andy Savva, to see what attendees are learning

Marketing can be hard to grasp, even for the most experienced business operator. This made it an ideal topic for Andy Savva to cover as part of his 2019 training course schedule. Andy's one-day *Marketing Essentials* course provides an overview of what marketing actually is, looks at key approaches and how to apply them to a garage business.

Aftermarket sat in on a sold-out session held in Crawley in February. In front of a packed room, filled with garages owners and staff, Andy dispelled some myths and misconceptions surrounding the discipline: "Marketing is one of the most misunderstood functions found in business. Whatever the reasons for any negative image that marketing may have, it is essential to realise that marketing is vital to ensure the survival and growth of any business. Marketing cannot be ignored and needs to be a part of the culture of any successful organisation.

"Marketing affects everyone. We are all consumers. Most businesses depend on marketing to provide an understanding of the marketplace, to ensure their products and services satisfy the needs of customers, and that they are competing effectively."

Despite running great businesses, Andy has found that garage owners often struggle when it comes to marketing: "Understanding customers and anticipating their requirements is a core theme of effective marketing, yet this is somewhat difficult for garages to fully get to grips with. So too is understanding general market trends and developments that may affect both customers views and the activities of businesses in the aftermarket repair sector. You must also be aware that a business does

not have the marketplace to itself. There are always direct competitors, new entrants and indirect challengers."

Andy added: "Marketing should concern everybody in a business as it sets the context in which sales can take place. Whatever your role, you play a part in setting that context."

Interaction

As Andy got into the meat of the marketing matter, he led the delegates through what marketing is, and how they need to approach it and enact effective marketing within their businesses. Even the most experienced business owners and managers can get a little confused when asked to distinguish between marketing, advertising and sales. After asking attendees to pick where they would plant the marketing flag, with a few near misses along the way, Andy went through the specifics:

"Marketing is a systematic approach aimed at bringing buyers and sellers together for the benefit of both. Many people confuse selling and advertising with marketing but they are not the same. Marketing is about promoting goods and services that both satisfy customers and also bring profits to the business.

"Selling is the interaction that takes place on a personal level with

potential customers. Marketing on the other hand is aimed at generating those potential customers in the first place. Many people confuse selling and advertising with marketing but they are not the same. Advertising is part of the marketing function, but never the other way around."

For marketing to succeed, there needs to be a goal and a way of achieving it, which Andy went on to cover: "Any marketing campaign needs to have a clear focus and this is why it is so important to make the right choices. Will the business compete across the entire market, or only certain parts? It is also a good idea to ensure all employees know the strategies being adopted, so that everyone works together to achieve the same goals." Andy then asked a question of the group: "Do you know what your garage business is trying to achieve and how it is trying to achieve it? In most cases the answer is no."

The goal influences the method, and vice versa. From this point, Andy covered the classic four Ps of marketing – product, price, place and promotion – and went from there to the more recent extended marketing mix, incorporating people, process and physical evidence. Beyond this he laid out transactional marketing, which is sales-focused, and



relationship marketing, which takes a much broader view including customer service, and quality presentation and results.

Next he took on the thorny issue of branding as part of the marketing strategy, and why a strong brand is so important for recognition, financial value, motivation and loyalty. All of that was just the pre-lunch session. After lunch, Andy went into even greater detail on areas such as the marketing triangle, SMART objectives and SWOT analysis. It's heady stuff, but Andy made it approachable and applicable to the sector.

Inspirational

Those in attendance found a lot to take away from the day. Dani Comber from Thrussington Garage in East Goscote, near Leicester said: "I find Andy really inspirational. I think he's brilliant. He can come and work at our garage." Commenting on what she was learning about marketing from the day, Dani said it showed the gap between what they were doing at present, and what they should be doing: "I find it demotivating and motivating at the same time. You want to do everything, you've got the intention to do it, but you've not done it. On the other hand you are motivated because you see what you can do."

Elisa Bramall from Scantec Automotive from Hailsham, East Sussex said: "I have attended several training courses with Andy. I only have good things to say about him of course. His passion being the main thing, and that he says it how it is. No beating around the bush. A lot of his values we stand by as well, i.e. use of OE parts, tools and genuine equipment. When you attend his training courses, it aligns with what we want to achieve. With all of his experience, if you think you know it all you certainly don't."

Tina Drayson, Operations Manager at CCM Garage, based in West Sussex and Surrey said: "I have done Andy's financial course before. It is phenomenal. I have learned so much from it. It has certainly changed the way we are doing our business. I am hoping that today with the marketing essentials will give us even more direction going forward."

Terry Roberts, owner at Witham Motor Company in Witham, Essex said: "I have just become a RAC approved garage in the last few



weeks, so I am looking at changing my brand. I am really enjoying it. I am learning a lot and have picked up a lot of things."

Commenting on what he was getting from the course, Billy from Beacon Hill Garage in Hindhead, Surrey said: "It just hammers home that if your standards slip, and your marketing as well, and you take your eye off the ball, things will go wrong. I will be going back to give a few people a kick up the backside to bring standards back up."

Brothers Mahesh Vekaria and Pravin Patel own a garage each in Harrow. Mahesh, owner of Cardoc said: "What have I learned from Andy today so far? It has refocused and re-energised my enthusiasm for marketing. We do a fair bit of marketing, but coming today, you see a different angle to it."

Pravin, proprietor at Harrow Service Centre, observed: "Today has been interesting. I have learned a lot. In a sense we already do a bit of marketing, but to understand what it really does mean and the ways we are doing it – is it right or wrong? – is really useful. It is something to implement when we go back to work."

In that the pair are brothers and are based just half a mile apart, Aftermarket was curious as to who would get back and implement new marketing initiatives first. "I would say that I would," said Mahesh. Pravin agreed: "Yes he would, definitely, having said that, he looks after my marketing for my garage as well. So he has double the work really."

Information

Edward Cockhill of Uckfield Motor Services in Uckfield East Sussex observed: "It is quite an eye-opener. I saw marketing as just advertising, whereas it is really the whole

perception of my company. There is a lot of cogs that are going to be turning when I get home."

Peter Bedford of GT One Ltd in Chertsey, Surrey said: "We are an independent Porsche specialist. Our business is in need of a bit of a review in its marketing ideas, and we are looking to freshen it up. I have come along to see another angle of it. Some things I think I know and we have applied. Some I know and we have not applied, so you need a kick up the backside. Some things are brand new. On the whole it is brilliant."

Cieran Larkin from Larkin Automotive in Dublin commented: "It is good to get marketing training from a professional who has been in the garage business as opposed to someone who is dealing with generic marketing. Andy's experience is brilliant in that way."

Nick Robinson from Marchwoods in Folkestone had been to Andy's courses previously and was back for more: "I came to Andy's events last year for garage financial understanding and customer excellence. They were real eye-openers so I have come back for another one. I was badgering him earlier to see what is coming up next. I will be at that one as well!"

Meanwhile, for Edward from Swanley Garage in Swanley, it was his first time: "This is the first one I have been to. It is really good. It is about getting all the information and having the guts to go out and do it. We are all guilty of not doing marketing properly, it is about taking that jump to rebrand yourself or say right we are not doing that any more, or we are not doing cut price work, or we are not going to let the customers bargain with us any more, and seeing where it takes you."