

How well do you manage your used car stock?

Stock turn is one of the key drivers for a used car business, and by adopting a new stock management system around three years ago, Manchester dealership Williams BMW has been able to control it more effectively.

The FullControl system, from Cooper Solutions, draws information directly from the company's Kerridge DMS and produces a real-time stock list that governs whether or not a car is available to sales execs across the group.

"It's of huge importance," says the Manchester BMW used car sales manager Damian Boneham. "Whenever a car is sold or has a deposit on it, you simply go into the edit function to mark it as such, to remove the risk of double selling a vehicle elsewhere in the business."

It is also a diary system for each vehicle. "You can use it to book cars out for a demonstration at specific times for example," he says, which again helps to avoid double-booking in a group that has five BMW dealerships among other franchises.

Preparation cycle

FullControl also allows the dealership to track where its vehicles are in the prep cycle.

Personalised email marketing

"You can add vehicle images to FullControl," says Damian, "so when a customer enquires about a vehicle we use it to send a pdf brochure by email with a personalised covering letter from one of our sales execs. You can easily edit the message you want to send and, crucially, it gives a direct return email to the sales exec which our previous system was unable to do.

"We do a lot of that, it's a quick and easy function to use."

To ensure the images are fresh and appealing, as soon as a used car has been valeted the prep controller takes half a dozen photographs. These are then uploaded to both BMW and the Cooper system.



Damian explains: "We try to stick to a three-day turnaround for used cars that don't require bodywork, or five if they do. And we operate a strict 60-day stocking policy – if a car is 60 days old at the end of a month we get one opportunity to write it down in value or else we have to trade it out.

"So it is vital that when a car comes in to stock – ie, when a purchase invoice is raised on it – we get it through our prep centre, bodyshop if required, valeting and back on-site as quickly as possible.

"The Cooper system helps us to do that, because you can differentiate between when a car has been prepped or not. If we didn't have this system, we would have to do a lot more manual work to maintain our

stock lists and see what stage our cars were at in the process. Now, on a daily basis our prep controller can log in and see the date a car has come into stock and the anticipated prep date."

Over-age warning

Damian adds that the management reports that FullControl provides are useful in that they allow you to see the age profile of your stock and also the number of days each car has been in stock – at 30 days it is amber and 60 days it is red, to highlight the cars that you need to focus your attention on.

With used cars, he says, "you have to buy the car at the right price and you have to be able to turn them quickly. If you're not aware of your ageing profile then you can be sure that car will have depreciated in value and you forego the benefits of having it in stock in the first place."

Williams BMW makes used car stock management a top priority

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YOUR ACTION PLAN

- Review your turnaround time for used car preparation
- Closely monitor your used car stock age profile

- Send personalised pdf brochures to customers by email
- Get your prep controller to photograph cars for the web