

How to get your story in the media

Quick tips from a motoring journalist



Motoring Research @richardaucock

**30 years
writing about
cars**

**23 years at
Motoring
Research**

**Editor, Auto
Retail Agenda
and Bulletin**

Why get your story in the media?

So many reasons why...



Reach
people



Engage your
community



Build your
brand



Reward your
employees



Please your
shareholders



It's good for
business!

What
journalists
want

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graph TD; A[Something different] --> B[A clear story]; B --> C[A newsworthy story]; C --> D[Human interest]; D --> A;
```

Something
different

A clear
story

A
newsworthy
story

Human
interest

Best practice



Email is best



**Don't phone to
follow up**



**Remember
images!**



**Remember the
background info**



**Have someone
ready to field
queries**



**Offer interview
opportunities**

From news release to interview

Email landed...

... Story was intriguing...

... Response to PR set up an interview...

... Spoke to Geoff on his mobile...

... Story became an interview in Auto Retail Bulletin

Interview

How CV focus will boost profit at Orpington Ford

Bristol Street Motors Orpington Ford has recently reopened after being transformed from a cars and van retailer into a dedicated CV dealership.

Instead of selling new and used cars and vans, Orpington Ford is now solely focused on commercial vehicles, and has been extensively refurbished to prepare for its new role. It comes after a sharp rise in demand for commercial vehicle sales, servicing, maintenance and repairs over the past five years.

Geoff Taylor is the retailer's general manager, and has overseen significant investment including a strategic expansion of the site's aftersales capacity by 300%. "I rejoined the business to oversee the redevelopment, drawing up plans to converted it into a dedicated CV centre so we had the capacity to cope with the ever-growing CV market, and realise the profit opportunity."

It was a 10-week build and the team moved in during September. All 12 bays are fully configured for CVs, including the necessary overhead height and ramp capacity of up to six tonnes. "We used to have a 25-car showroom, and have remodelled the site to have a smaller showroom, giving more space to accommodate the workshop." Around two-thirds of the old showroom is now used as workshop area, with the front of the building forming the new showroom. The team comprises three new and three used salespeople, with a dedicated general sales manager and a new CV manager.

Ford passenger car sales will now be handled from Bristol Street Motors' Bromley site. The reduction in the size of Ford's passenger car portfolio makes this possible – "Bromley can concentrate on Puma, Kuga, Explorer, Capri and Mustang, and we can really ramp up Orpington to make it a more profitable site. We may do the odd car, for customers who live nearby and have always used us, but the new focus is to be number one in aftersales and service for CVs."

Overall, Orpington has a team of 42 people, including accounts and parts, four service advisors, an aftersales manager – and an expanded team of

14 technicians. "Recruiting technicians is very, very challenging, probably the hardest part of the operation. The good ones are kept where they are and paid well; they're looked after as the industry knows they're hard to find, so the last thing they want to do is lose one."

Taylor is hoping to tackle the shortage by embracing apprenticeships. "We've already had one parts and one technical apprentice, and are looking at bolstering them again this year. If we can put new apprentices into the workshop each year, we'll be able to address the shortages over the medium term."

A focus on efficiency

A key aim of the refurbishment has been to reduce downtime. "We're well known in the local area for customer satisfaction and being able to get vehicles in quickly for repair. Nobody else nearby has the amount of bays that we have. We're also right off the motorway, so are easy to reach, and all this helps drive footfall and boost word of mouth."

Taylor has planned diligently to get around local planning restrictions. "We can't run 24-hours due to planning, so we need to be more flexible with appointments. We're following timed appointments, as we don't want everything here first thing: the site would be inundated. Instead, we work with customers to fit in with their activity, with a big focus on while-you-wait servicing."

"It's a different mindset compared to people who work in cars. These vehicles are a customer's livelihood, and many of them are kitted out to make them a bespoke workshop. If you haven't got that, you can't do your job. We do have a big loan fleet of 13 vehicles, which we focus on spinning as quickly as possible, but many customers find they can't do the same work if they have a loaned van – they want their own vehicle back as soon as possible."

"It's all about the speed of turnaround. Planning is key: we pre-pick parts 48 hours in advance, and are rigorous with the health checks and CitNOW videos. It's also important to focus on transparency and getting a decision quickly so we can return vehicles to service as rapidly as possible." This makes the job very dynamic, says Taylor. "You have to be flexible and think on your feet."

All vehicle preparation work is done offsite, he says, with two technicians dedicated to this. "We also make sure all transporter deliveries are handled offsite – we couldn't cope with it here, particularly as these are large vehicles. Everybody who wants to work efficiently needs a compound."

Capacity to meet demand

Vertu chief executive Robert Forrester has followed the Orpington project closely. "The surge in demand for commercial vehicles has put pressure on the industry to deliver faster and more efficient aftersales services. At Bristol Street Motors Orpington Ford, we have responded to this challenge by significantly expanding our capacity."

"Our investment in state-of-the-art equipment and additional skilled technicians ensures that we can meet the growing demand with the quality and speed our customers expect. This expansion positions Bristol Street Motors Orpington Ford as a leader in the region, offering an unmatched level of service and support to businesses across Kent and South East London."

Taylor is very excited about the potential of the remodelled Orpington Ford site. "We're just starting the journey... expectations are now bigger, and we're working to bigger budgets. Once we get all the new technicians on board, we'll be able to increase throughout, increase the speed of execution – everything is now in place to really sweat this asset and make it a real profit centre for the business."



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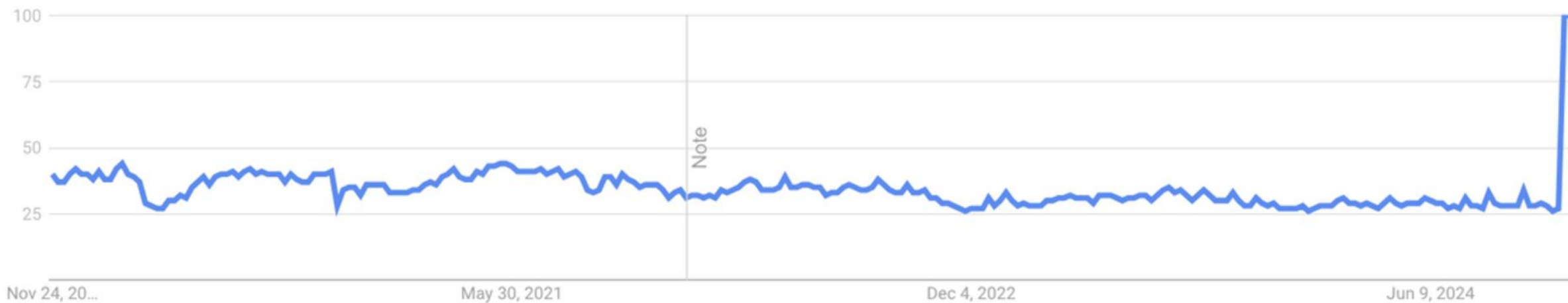
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Interest over time ⓘ





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