

Stockwell by name, stock well by nature

Stockwell Motor Accessories & ABM Motor Factors – the first Activant UK customer more than 25 years ago – now form a group. MD Lloyd Osborne explains how its computer system has helped shape the business and protects its most valuable commodity – stock

“SUCCESSFUL FACTORING IS about successful stock management. We don’t indulge in distress-purchases from WD’s or so called super factors. We’ve always held a fantastic profile of stock on the shelf and will continue to do so,” says Lloyd Osborne, Managing Director of Stockwell Motor Accessories in South London.

Osborne’s comments are not indicative of today’s perceived aftermarket, where parts proliferation and the number of vehicles on the road makes it near impossible for a motor factor to stock anything but a range of fast movers for specific product groups.

On the contrary, Stockwell Motor Accessories is a business based on traditional automotive aftermarket values, dating back to the company’s early beginnings in 1957.

“It sounds almost cliché now,” says Lloyd, “but the aftermarket really has changed beyond recognition in the past 50 years. As a business, we’ve changed too, but we’ve always been successful at giving customers what they want, when they want it.”

South London is arguably one of

the most competitive areas in the UK and this again underlines the success of a motor factor that invests heavily in stock and customer service.

Today, Stockwell and its sister company ABM – based in Plumstead employ over 50 people, 20 vans and have a turnover in the millions. The group’s factor businesses are managed together through Activant’s distributor system, sharing, reporting and analysing critical business information.

Evolving

When Activant arrived in the UK 25 years ago, ABM Motor Factors was its very first customer. Activant has worked closely with the group ever since, ensuring their IT solutions continue to assist them to meet the needs of an ever evolving aftermarket.

Osborne explains: “The owners of the business 25 years ago were very forward thinking and recognised that a computer system was needed to take the business forward, and to give us a real competitive edge in the market.

In the past, keeping aging stock on

the shelf and making only two deliveries daily was the norm, but the market is much quicker now and we realised that a tighter reign on the business was required.”

Their foresight over 25 years ago has seen the group grow in size and stature. Today, the quality of tradition is still encouraged and this time Osborne is tasked with taking the company forward and embracing new technology.

Countermen

The group is benefiting from MasterCat3 with its enhanced Cover-to-Cover parts database providing technical information as well as high quality graphics, helping countermen to select the right part at the right time whilst driving down part returns rates. And now with the integration of AConneX into the business, Osborne looks forward to the efficiencies of online ordering for his customers as well as for him with his suppliers. Lloyd is quick to point out that he is by no means a ‘computer wizard’, but an advocate of using the best tools available for a business operating under the competitive conditions in the aftermarket.

“I believe that in order to survive,” Osborne says, “we need to continue to embrace the technology available to us and better our business. This doesn’t just apply to IT but to new products such as diagnostics and air conditioning.

“We run our entire businesses on our Activant distributor management system,” he boasts. “We can easily set up numerous price structures, manage stock effectively and monitor



Stockwell Motor Accessories has a proud heritage and was opened in 1957

Stockwell Motor Accessories
Branches: Two – Stockwell & ABM Plumstead
www.abmmotorspares.co.uk



Stockwell's MD Lloyd Osborne

product and customer sales.

One of the critical issues any company has is training; with Activant's Virtual Classroom we have been able to accelerate our learning curve online with dedicated trainers in Activant Coventry. This has ramped up our knowledge of what we can do from our Activant system whilst allowing us still to remain in our business. Virtual Classroom is certainly the way forward in training.

Diversified

The Group's business profile at both ABM and Stockwell has diversified over the years and is now split between parts, accessories and refinishing. At Stockwell, the business is open seven days a week, something that the company says is unique in today's climate.

The company's continued growth has seen new customers emerge from outside traditional vehicle repairers. The refinishing side of the business is managed by Steve Simkins, whose family started the business in Stockwell. Steve believes winning and growing contract work is a key opportunity for the business and is clear that Activant's management system is ideal for helping them deliver on these opportunities.

Osborne says: "Our system really puts the power with the distributor

and allows us to take an external view of our company, identifying where our strengths and future opportunities are. With the management reporting available, together with the ability to extract and analyse data, we are now starting to raise our management of the group to a higher level."

Face to face customer service, high stock availability and technical support are all key traditional benefits of working with ABM & Stockwell Motor Accessories, thread together from a modern distributor management system. Osborne sees his system as the very heart of his business, again a trait against the usual motor factor approach.

"When we started out in business, there were very few cars on the road – today there are over 30million. These cars require servicing and repair and so we have to ensure that we are best placed to provide installers with the products and services they need. To do so, we need the best computer system the aftermarket can offer, allowing us easy access to information critical for us to remain at the top of our game.

"Twenty five years ago, Activant helped establish us as the leading motor factor in South London and with their continued support, we've been there ever since. Here's to the next twenty five years" ■

"We need to embrace the technology available to us. We run our entire business on Activant's distributor management system" – Osborne