



## **2020: The year that changed everything**

Our diversity and inclusion  
leaders within automotive and  
mobility

ENNIS & CO

Ennis & Co are trusted by many of the world's leading automotive and mobility brands to appoint their senior leaders.

We carry out executive search assignments for organisations across the entire automotive spectrum, ranging from manufacturers to national sales companies (high-volume through to prestige and luxury brands), as well as supply chain companies, retail groups, leasing/mobility providers, data analytics organisations and innovative technology companies.



This past year has brought unprecedented change on a global scale. The impact of a global pandemic has brought loneliness, the tragic loss of life, the inability to "be together" in many cases and just the sheer realisation that things really can change drastically in a heartbeat.

Tragedy, the response of the Black Lives Matter movement, adaptability and huge advancements across digital platforms and different ways of working, have altered life as we know it. There is no doubt that 2020 will go down in history because of all this, and more. However, I believe that in years to come when we reflect on this year, one of our key focus points will be how effectively our leaders adapted to the challenges thrown at us. We look for firm guidance and direction during difficult times, which can be a rare find in an unpredictable global pandemic! It takes forward thinking, skill, and nerve to detect opportunity in these conditions, which fortunately appears to be widespread among automotive leaders.

The utilisation of the lockdown pause to advance D&I strategy is one that I applaud. This not only benefits individuals within the organisation, but also the company culture and idea generation moving forward. For these reasons, my team and I at Ennis & Co have collected the following insights into the strategies and activities of our key automotive leaders in 2020. These individuals have proven themselves during what is arguably the most challenging time of our lives.

I am truly grateful to be part of an industry where so many leaders have prioritised the wellbeing and safety of their people. At Ennis & Co, we have also maintained this focus, working from home where possible and transforming our events to digital platforms. We are proud to have successfully launched D&I focused initiatives such as Drivers of Change this past year and aim to advance our D&I prowess even further in years to come.

To produce this publication, we have conducted interviews with senior leaders across the sector about their D&I strategies, and I would like to thank all those who participated for their time and enthusiasm in this project.

Looking forward to when things finally return to normal, I hope that we bring these positive learnings with us and continue this fantastic D&I growth. Thank you and enjoy.



Lynda Ennis  
Founder & Director, Ennis & Co.

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# AutoTrader

**As the UK and Ireland's largest digital automotive marketplace, Auto Trader are not only driving change in how consumers are buying cars online, but also with their D&I prowess.**

Ian Plummer, Commercial Director at Auto Trader, provided a clear scope on the impact of COVID-19 within Auto Trader, and the D&I repercussions across the board. Auto Trader itself focused on three core factors at the beginning of lockdown: their people, their customers, and their business.

Ian said, "we made the decision to support our customers quickly. Auto Trader was free to its customers before lockdown had even started; and still delivered more than three quarters of a million leads during the period, as consumer demand remained high on our site. In fact, consumer demand was above prior year before we even entered the first lockdown period and although it dipped at the start of lockdown, numbers soon returned as quickly consumers re-engaged with car buying. Fortunately, for them and for our retailer or brand partners, our decision to waive charges meant that they could benefit from this demand while their showrooms were shut. We were really pleased to be able to continue to deliver value to our customers in what was an exceptionally challenging period for us all.

"Everybody felt a level of shock at the beginning of lockdown. I certainly did. There was a very strong need to support our people and maintain communication with them. We set up all sorts of different channels of communications including broadcasts from the management team and new Slack channels, which became a huge success. As well as business or customer news, people shared pictures of their pets at home, positive-thinking stories, and so on – much more than we would normally see. Staying connected in this way was great for wellbeing and reassurance. Mental health has suffered across the board, so we are continuing to support our colleagues in this area with a wealth of tools and services that they can easily access, as well as a great team of mental health first aiders.

We also arranged for a personal trainer to produce some exercise classes for our teams – it can be hard to get your steps up if you cannot leave your home, so we all found other ways of doing it.

"From a tech perspective, we moved quickly to set up everybody's working from home capability. We provided additional workspace support where required, relative to health and safety checks.

"Our use of Slack has certainly been a success. We went from sending around 11,000 Slack messages a day at the beginning of the year to 30,000 daily once lockdown was announced. We also use Microsoft Teams much more than we previously did and it's become

our core platform for meetings. We currently manage around 400 meetings each working day on the tool.

Ian believes that regular, frank, and open communication is critical during any crisis. To assist in this and in addition to Slack, Auto Trader's operational leadership team created the operational leadership team television channel (OLTV) where team members discuss what is going on in the wider context of the crisis and how the organisation is navigating through it.

Ian said: "there are lots of regular company-wide email or video updates too, showcasing new things happening that colleagues can join as well as important product, people or customer updates. We also provided lots of broader business updates, either via our OLTV channel or through Microsoft Live Events with our team of around 850 people. We would usually have around 700 to 750 people attending these live interactive broadcasts, a greater level of attendance than if we'd been in our two main London or Manchester offices.

All of this has been extremely positive in getting people involved in new things and keeping them informed and engaged. "It has actually given us quite a lot of reassurance that we are doing the right thing and also, more importantly, it's been reassuring for our people, keeping them in the loop and keeping them aware of what is going on."

When discussing new initiatives brought forward by COVID-19, it appears that Auto Trader has been one step ahead since the start of the year.

Ian said: "we launched a new version of our flexible working approach in February, before lockdown started. This essentially gave people more flexibility to the ways they wanted to work and allows them to manage



**Ian Plummer**  
Commercial Director  
Auto Trader

childcare responsibilities, caring for relatives, or pets and so on.

There are some clear benefits but also challenges with the increased working from home that we all had to do this year. People can see the benefit of not spending so long commuting. People can see their pets and families more and take on more caring responsibilities. Equally though, many people have found this more challenging than ever, with these increased obligations in addition to the combination of working from home. Our people operations area of the business have been absolutely fantastic in giving support and advice to make sure we could make things as manageable as possible for those different conflicts. As I said, although in many cases people found it more pleasurable, after a while many people found it harder in terms of the impact on their mental health and general wellbeing.

"Overall, we believe both our business and our colleagues will benefit from the hybrid environment of office and home. As we get out of this crisis, we have more recently communicated to our team that the new flexible working policy will be based on a simple principle of 'more in than out'; so they will essentially be in the office more than they are out of it. We do not seem to be unique in that approach, but we feel the benefit of being together is the collaboration and creativity that you can only really get from physically being together. Equally, we realise that people benefit from the flexibility of being able to work from home and that can be particularly valuable for many team members. "To accommodate this, we are changing the technology to suit this blend of working in a way that can be really effective. Wherever

you might be you need to feel as though you can add to the discussion."

When discussing D&I specifically, Ian emphasises that for Auto Trader, a D&I focus is a necessity, now more than ever.

"We are absolutely maintaining our focus on D&I and continue to work hard supporting all of our core employee-driven networks, which comprise of: BAME, LGBT+, women, and disability & neurodiversity. Since we have all been working from home, all have grown in size and the frequency of catch ups, like the bi-monthly 'coffee catch ups' have been very well attended.

"These groups help widen networking outside of someone's immediate team and allow people to learn new ideas or ways of thinking from people they might not ordinarily interact with. That's all the more important in a context where the "water cooler moments" have been almost impossible.

We are aiming to support our people and offer additional training and coaching to really help the diversity elements of our teams grow up into the more senior roles in our company. We want to accelerate their journeys with the best possible opportunities for them within Auto Trader, which is why we are launching a new Diversity Talent Accelerator Programme

In terms of neurodiversity, Auto Trader possess valuable knowledge within this area and supports trainees and apprentices. I have personally seen several team members who are very involved with it because they have had family members who have issues and who find it extremely motivational to be working in a company that takes those same issues seriously, as it is unfortunately quite rare. Their motivation levels and their desire to make a difference in a company increases when they see the right sort of values, which they see as vitally important, are also important to the company they work for. This is incredibly valued by them.

"That is all internal, but we have also done quite a lot externally. It is not just COVID which has had an impact recently but also one of the biggest racial movements in decades. The Black Lives Matter movement shook us all, and importantly shined a light on issues that we all need to pay closely attention to. We showed our support externally for the BLM campaign but also internally to our own people. We offered specific counselling sessions to our black colleagues, many of whom were understandably very affected by the situation. This situation was a catalyst to spur even more movement on our focus on race in the workplace.

"D&I is not going anywhere; I think it will only increase in focus at Auto Trader, and hopefully elsewhere in the automotive industry, as it ought to. We all need to be mindful of being the change we want to see.

Auto Trader specialises in new and second-hand automotive sales, including cars sold by private sellers and trade dealers.

Auto Trader is listed on the London Stock Exchange, and is a constituent of the FTSE 100 Index







When it comes to the way it responded to the COVID-19 pandemic, CitNOW has, to borrow a military expression, had a very good war.

The company, who provides app-based video solutions to around 3,700 dealerships in the UK and is live in 53 countries, managed to move their entire Academy Learning and Development to an online model – which was previously delivered face-to-face within the dealerships.

As CitNOW Chief Executive Alistair Horsburgh explains: “We quickly helped dealerships to embrace video in a slightly different way, whilst completely changing the way our Academy delivered their learning through an online environment and not charging for this service.

“CitNOW started in 2008 as a live video platform, so everything was on demand. It was a bit like FaceTime and nothing was recorded.

“That didn’t really work because it was too early for its time, so we switched our business model to a recorded video solution in early 2012, which really accelerated the business.

“Technology has gone full circle and in 2019, we had been trialling a couple of dealers with live video to assess whether people would really like it. When we went into lockdown in March, we changed our technology strategy to align with the change in business needs of our customers.

“We still had our team in place so we realigned a couple of projects, one of which was the ‘live video’ project, and the other one was ‘pay’ – the ability to take contactless payments.

“The idea for live video was that if you take the scenario where the dealerships are closed, a sales person who might be in the showroom could get a customer on a FaceTime-like platform and have one-to-one communication using video. The advantage of using the CitNOW platform means that links to join are sent via branded emails and there is a log of the call in their Dashboard.

“The salesperson could present a car, new or used, from the showroom and carry on what they were doing from a mobile device.

“We also enabled desktop sharing so you could share documents very quickly. For example, you could share a screen going through finance payments or talking a customer through an aftersales invoice. We launched this on the CitNOW platform recently.

“If they were a CitNOW customer, we enabled live video communication and desktop sharing through their own account, and we rolled that out in about eight weeks.

“I think we put about a thousand dealers live on it at the beginning of June and we basically gave that to all of our customers for free.”

The decision not to charge meant CitNOW had to find its own cost savings to support the strategy. Management took a pay cut and employees, though not furloughed, were asked to work reduced hours.

Being a technology company, CitNOW was able to move its entire workforce seamlessly to a home-based working environment within 48 hours of the first lockdown in March, and employees have continued to operate remotely ever since.

Alistair says internal communication has been the key to maintaining a ‘OneTeam culture’ within the company, which in the UK is split between offices in Wokingham, in Berkshire, Stirling, in Scotland and field based employees – alongside European market team members.

During lockdown, Alistair and CitNOW’s Executive Chairman, Geoffrey Page-Morris, held bi-weekly webinars for the entire team, with employees able to ask questions, anonymously if they wished, and receive real-time answers.

The company also continued its popular ‘employee of the month’ award and focused on mental health and wellbeing in its internal communications, especially going into the second lockdown in November.

While the prospect of new vaccines offer light at the end of the pandemic tunnel, Alistair believes the different way retail customers were forced to interact with sales staff at dealerships is here to stay.

While he doubts that car retailing, particularly in the new car environment, will move entirely online any time soon, he believes the practice during lockdown of customers getting part-exchange valuations digitally will continue.

It is why CitNOW is bringing a new product to market in early 2021 that will enable customers to upload video of their vehicles and help dealers provide accurate valuations.

“One of the big changes during the pandemic was that customers were not able to bring their cars to dealerships to get them valued,” says Alistair.

“Customers were sending photographs on WhatsApp or just trying explain their cars in detail, and of course valuations were done incorrectly.

“It’s often too late when the customer turns up to pick up their new car and you see their old car has got a

nine-inch scratch down the side. They have probably already agreed the deal and signed the finance documents. Suddenly, dealerships were out of pocket.

“We think the norm from now on is actually going to be that customers will continue to want to get their vehicles valued without actually going to the dealership, so we’re concentrating on what we can do to bridge the gap between digital and physical and how we can bring a solution to the market place that they already use today. It has to be simple to use so that the customer can just extend their journey digitally.”

The ‘new normal’ across the UK dealership network will also inevitably mean further pressure to reduce costs. But with many dealers having already made significant redundancies, finding those cost savings could prove increasingly challenging.

Alistair says: “To reduce costs, dealerships are going to be looking for single suppliers to supply a broad spectrum of software solutions that will help them to sell more cars more profitably or to service more customers in a more customer-friendly, customer service-orientated manner.”

It is an environment in which CitNOW will hope to provide the answers.



CitNOW are the originators of the automotive video industry and specialists in it, having been established as video experts since 2008. Partnering with over 43 car manufacturers, they are live in 53 countries with more than 9000 installations.

CitNOW provide app-based video solutions to the car industry to create a more transparent and easier car buying, and owning, experience. They enable automotive retailers to navigate the digital revolution and bridge the digital to physical customer experience.

CitNOW’s solutions improve the performance of dealerships by allowing sales execs to send personalised, branded video presentations of vehicles for sale. Workshop Technicians send personalised videos to evidence work and parts required. CitNOW Web provides an easy to use tool to manage the digital assets of new stock and dramatically reduces time to web and our Bodyshop app enable accurate condition assessments to be provided to the customer.

CitNOW’s applications are seen as an essential tool for automotive retailers and workshops, building crucial, transparent and effective touchpoints with their customers.



# OUR VALUES DRIVE OUR DECISIONS. OUR NUMBER ONE PRIORITY IS, AND ALWAYS HAS BEEN, OUR PEOPLE

## Cox AUTOMOTIVE™

Cox Automotive has always appreciated the importance of their wonderful workforce – yet 2020 has shone a spotlight on how their people have truly valued them in return...

We spoke to Alison Fisher, Chief People Officer at Cox Automotive Europe, who has been leading her people through the most unpredictable year the organisation has ever seen.

Cox Automotive prides itself in ensuring its employees' needs are met – with this year proving to be the biggest test yet, as needed to adapt to new ways of working. Being part of the world's largest automotive service organisation, the company looks after thousands of employees across all areas of its business which were all affected by lockdown.

"After hearing the Prime Minister's words on that Monday evening back in March, we were straight on phone calls to sort out next steps. Within 24 hours, we had closed every single location to ensure our peoples' safety," says Alison.

"From a Cox Automotive perspective, our values have always driven our decisions not financial results and priority has always been about our people and their safety. This led to the quick decisions we made, and for this reason, we still have not been back to physical auctions. Remote working is still in place throughout the company where possible."

With the rapid change to working life brought about by lockdown affecting so many people across the business, Alison focused on the key component that would be missed when working remotely – connection.

"As a social animal myself, I thought this would be hard. I have to say – I have loved it!

We probably surprised ourselves with how well we could work remotely, but I had to ask myself initially; how can we continue to connect with people when coffee chats and "face-to-face interaction" wasn't there?"

"As a company, we are now better at communication than ever before. We initiated a leader call every

Tuesday without fail, which is still in place. We also completed remote charity challenges, such as fitness challenges to raise funds for our chosen charity Mind, which included the "SnowdIN" challenge.

Alison explained that SnowdIN was born due to COVID-19 restrictions meaning the team could not physically climb Mount Snowdon as originally planned which is an annual Cox Automotive fundraiser. So, all team members were encouraged to complete the "SnowdIN Challenge" virtually, which involved walking 24,000 steps (the route equivalent) over 24 hours. This ultimately allowed for more involvement from team members across the organisation, as the impact of travel and time commitments were removed. This was a huge success and we raised over £10,000 for Mind.

"In these uncertain times, we were so proud to see our team members embracing the "Spirit of Cox" by supporting communities and charities in this way," Alison explained, "but most importantly – we were having fun too. We created a highlights video of all the activities we had been up to, keeping up connectivity via social media – it was amazing. It truly made me proud of a company that does the right thing."

"Mental wellbeing is so important, and we are so proud to support Mind," Alison said. "It wasn't just about engaging everyone through exercise, though. It was also



Alison Fisher  
Chief People Officer  
Cox Automotive

# Barbara Cox Women of the Year Award

about looking after everyone's mental wellbeing during such an unpredictable time in other ways. We have delivered regular video update messages to the whole company; we organised virtual lunches and quizzes – it was about connecting and coming together as a team that was important. We made sure our employees had what they needed, and supported them through."

"The power of video has really shone through during these times and just telling people, and showing, you care is so important. Even if it is just a call to someone checking in and seeing how their day is going. This is extremely important."

Throughout her career, Alison has worked with thousands of people – yet this does not mean she is no longer surprised when it comes to how they react to situations. "People have continued to amaze me with their resilience, flexibility and adaptability" Alison says. "The fact we closed the business down in a day and able to continue working remotely has astounded us all. We have embraced remote working – we have been quite traditional previously, but we have really thrived on this."

"Technology has really supported us throughout lockdown and beyond. However, it is not about presenteeism – it is about output. I am also concerned about burnout for people as they are working exceptionally hard for the company. There seems to be an "always on" culture and people need the opportunity to step away, change perspective, take a break – even if they are not physically going anywhere. We encourage holiday to be taken. Our people are so dedicated, but we need to ensure burnout is NOT an occurrence."

For Alison, the "traditional" working landscape has really changed this year. "Work is what you do, not where you go", Alison explains. "This mindset change needs to be brought forward – that work is not about a location. It is about working wherever suits you, wherever you find most productive. Whether people want to work collaboratively in an office on strategy, or independently on a project quietly – there should be flexibility."

"And I think this will change in terms of "ways of working" in the future. I fundamentally believe if you trust your people to do the right thing – they will do the right thing. Our business has done incredibly well in the last seven months because we have trusted people. And they have trusted us in return."

As Alison reflects on 2020, she explains that pipeline plans have been accelerated.

"COVID-19 has helped us push forward our people plan probably 18 months to two years ahead of schedule," Alison said. "With this, our diversity and inclusion strategy focus has changed quite significantly. We are focusing more on inclusion now: We have signed up to Inclusive Employers; we have celebrated National Inclusion Week; and focused more on this with our 'Women With Drive' events. It has been more about "what makes you, you" and how to feel more included. There will be conversations taking place that are open, honest, and hopefully helpful to those feeling the same."

"This combination is an enabler to forward-thinking organisations that want to drive flexible working and inclusion. It proves we can trust people. We cannot go back to the way we worked before – if we do, we have failed."

About Cox Automotive UK

Cox Automotive is the world's largest automotive service organisation. We provide dependable solutions that improve performance and profitability throughout the vehicle lifecycle to manufacturers, fleets and dealers. Our businesses are organised around our customers' core needs across vehicle solutions, remarketing, funding, and retail. Cox Automotive brands in the UK include Manheim, Dealer Auction, NextGear Capital, Modix, Movex, wewantanycar.com and money4yourmotors.com. The group employs more than 2,500 team members in the UK and works with thousands of businesses throughout the automotive industry. For more information, visit [www.coxauto.co.uk](http://www.coxauto.co.uk).



FACEBOOK 

**Facebook's products empower more than 3 billion people around the world to share ideas, offer support and make a difference.**

As a digital platform centred around social connection, it is no surprise that Facebook's organisational culture is one of empathy, transparency, and trust. This inclusive environment breeds productivity and innovation and was one that Geraldine Ingham, Global Category Director Automotive, was happy to join as she began her role in the early months of 2020. Having spent the majority of her career within automotive, Geraldine provided an informed view on the impact of the pandemic on the industry as a whole.

Geraldine said, "There is no denying that COVID-19 has affected the automotive industry, as it has almost every sector. The obvious negative commercial side stems from the disaster of having retailers and factories close with no cars built or sold during that period.

"However, from my view, there have also been changes for the better in the embrace of digitalisation and servicing customers online, instead of being solely physically as before. The forced development of eCommerce has enabled OEMs and retailers to really



**Geraldine Ingham,**  
Global Category Director Automotive  
Facebook

progress in these areas. I believe there will be a point where even transactions will be majority handled online, for a proportion of all sales.

"Brands have accelerated thinking and are looking at issues in different ways. This is the way forward, as we must learn to live with the virus; it is not going away."

As the country locked down in March, we saw many organisations adapt to remote working.

Geraldine said, "Initially I think we all loved working from home. There was no commute, we could wear more casual clothing, as well as gain extra sleep. I found that it felt like there were more hours in the day to work without feeling like you were actually doing more time, due to the lack of travel.

"Additional family time was another real benefit. For me personally, we have been having dinner as a family every night during lockdown, where previously this was never possible. I think that the family balance has been great for those with children.

"However, since that initial positive buzz there has been a real 'Zoom fatigue.' I am finding that the lack of human contact is causing a drain on creativity and looking at the same four walls every day is starting to weigh on everybody. While it was possible, I would visit my local coffee shop for a couple hours each day to work and found that I was actually much more productive there. I need that activity around me to be at my full capability."

Geraldine began her role as Global Category Director Automotive during the initial March lockdown. Due to this, she has a unique perspective on leading a team she has never met, completely virtually.

"There are absolutely benefits to working from home and it is true that you can be just as efficient in your work. However, it is also about being effective and creative, which is much harder to achieve remotely as a team. Though I work globally, in normal times I would have ensured a monthly physical meeting.

"As I am in a new role, I am especially feeling the strain of building a team dynamic without physically being there."

When it comes to engaging their people and supporting mental health Facebook's culture is one of selfcare and communication, providing their employees with plenty of mental health resources.

Geraldine said, "Facebook is clear in encouraging selfcare, they do not want people to feel chained to their desks. It is absolutely fine to get outside to do voice calls instead of video, for example.

"Working from home was extended until Christmas as they equipped the office to have a safe environment. As time passed this has been re-extended to July for those who feel more comfortable in their homes while we wait for a vaccine, even if the office is open. The key to all this is visibility and transparency in organisational actions.

"Facebook has also introduced 'COVID leave' for those who have caring responsibilities for children or elderly relatives as well as for individuals who have caught the

virus. This time could be taken separately from normal sick leave or holiday time and without any negative stigma for individuals to do what they needed to do. Our culture embraces putting people first and supporting teams 100%.

"This trust in people and forward thinking is a breath of fresh air. There is a lot of energy and planning flowing through the company."

As a source of motivation, Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg broadcasts a live Q&A to the entire global organisation on a weekly basis.

"Due to the lockdown he now films this from his home in California. It was through this Q&A that he discovered the need to extend working from home through to July, as well as people's desire for more visibility within the company. This interactive approach is so much more motivating than just a suit in a video."

When looking back to the start of 2020 Geraldine had two key learnings. She said, "What I have learnt from Facebook is the importance of being kind to your people and putting them first. You get so much more from your people in an empathetic and kind culture. People are far more motivated to give and go that extra mile when they feel included.

"My second learning was the importance of digital. Within automotive, if retailers are sharp, they will find a way to talk to consumers through messaging or one

to one communication. They will utilise live virtual car walk arounds and take as much of the car journey online as possible. I think this pandemic has taught us that without a doubt OEMs need to accelerate the digitalisation of the car buying process.

"The importance of human contact cannot be overlooked and there is only so much you can do virtually. We are social animals, and I am sure people will ultimately settle into a mix of working from home and in the office. I am curious to see what the future holds and hope that we take our learnings with us.

**Facebook is constantly iterating, solving problems, and working together to connect people all over the world. That is why it is important that their workforce reflects the diversity of the people they serve. They believe that hiring people with different backgrounds and points of view helps them make better decisions, build better products, and create better experiences for everyone.**







**“We need to constantly talk about these issues and have representation of diverse talent front of mind throughout the organisation.”**

Ford Credit’s diversity and inclusion strategy stems from their strong corporate values and their responsive actions to employee feedback.

Adrian Stead, HR Director for the financial services arm of Ford Motor Company in Europe is a proud advocate of the Ford African Ancestry Network and a champion of inclusive corporate culture. Though the impact of recent events such as the UK lockdown and the Black Lives Matter movement have had an effect on the organisation’s D&I initiatives, many forward thinking steps have been in place within Ford Credit for some years now.

Adrian said, “During the initial stages of the pandemic everything happened at once. All our employees were instantaneously virtual, working from home, and isolated from the workplace. There has therefore been more of a shift to wellness and remote team inclusion since the COVID-19 lockdown.”

Mental health is a key focus at Ford Credit, a topic which has been a priority since before the coronavirus crisis. The organisation has been training employees to become mental health first aiders for several years now.

Adrian described Ford Credit’s mental health strategy, “We do lots of work on communicating the benefits of dealing with mental health and wellness using specific techniques and tools. Through our employee assistance programme, we have confidential tools for people to tap into.

“During lockdown we ran resilience sessions to prevent feelings of loneliness. These referred to tools and tips from people who work in extreme conditions such as on oil rigs or in international space stations. At the time, we did not know how long the pandemic would last, so we wanted to see what sort of things you could do to adapt to being potentially quite isolated.

“To combat this isolation further, we launched a ‘Working Together Remotely’ series and each day we had an event which employees could plug into to feel more involved with the new virtual Ford Credit team. This was important to share experiences and to support each other.

“This series combatted additional dangers of working from home, such as working longer hours and becoming immobile at your desk. Ford Credit initiated exercise

classes and talks on how to boost employees’ immune systems.”

The Working Together Remotely series ran for six months from the start of lockdown up until the summer. Adrian acknowledged that this took up a lot of HR’s resources and time, but the team felt it was important to meet different employee needs and provide that sense of community.

Adrian said, “When you work in an office there is a mental break between work and home, not only work life differentiation but also the mental process people go through. When going to the office people prepare for their day and get things in order before starting, but when working from home people tend to switch on immediately and begin work; there isn’t that process and planning time that a commute provides. Our sessions combatted this feeling.

“It is important to be able to verbalise and share any issues that we have. The feedback we got from the Working Together Remotely series was very positive, and hundreds of employees participated.”

However, it was not only COVID-19 which had a recent impact on Ford Credit’s D&I focus. Following the Black Lives Matter global movement, the organisation has taken specific steps in supporting their BAME community.

Adrian said, “We were already in the process of developing further inclusive strategies. At Ford and Ford Credit we have established employee resource groups. For example, our African ancestry network, Asian association, working parent network, and so on.

“In the last quarter of 2019 we led an initiative to ensure we had an executive champion from Ford Credit helping support each employee resource group. For me personally, I am champion for the Ford African Ancestry Network.



**Adrian Stead**  
HR Director  
Ford Motor Services



“So, when the George Floyd tragedy occurred, we did not hesitate to respond. The Ford African Ancestry Network ran sessions to share black lived experiences in the UK. These sessions covered some of the perceptions from black and minority employees about their ability to apply for roles and some of the questions they had on development and progression.

“We have opened a whole dialogue with our employees which we did not have before. We are now running more sessions on how to manage your own career better, how to seek out development opportunities, shadowing senior leaders, and more, with the aim to instil confidence and broaden exposure.”

Ford Credit is now specifically analysing gender and ethnicity throughout the organisation.

“Currently Ford Credit has a good diversity split in the UK, with 49% female and 14% BAME members within the organisation. This is fine, but we need to ensure our diverse talent flows throughout the organisation up to the most senior levels.”

Ford Credit has also initiated in-depth research over the past couple years, scrutinising their company culture. Adrian worked with the senior leadership team and focus groups to complete a culture SWOT analysis for the organisation.

“From our SWOT analysis we gained a good view of what we thought of ourselves and what we needed to improve. Culture is so big; you need to identify and take specific actions in certain areas to make a significant difference.”

Ford Credit’s culture priorities for 2020 and 2021 are to increase diversity and innovation and reduce bureaucracy

“We feel it is important to give people free reign to propose initiatives and solutions to work on our culture priorities, so we have established ‘Sprint teams’ to focus on them, and those teams will come back with some proposals in the new year. We can then implement some pilots and experiment with new ways of working to start to combat these issues. We will get a lot more buy-in across all levels of the organisation if our culture change is something that has been generated by our employees themselves.

“Overall, I think the main driver for developing change is having that prioritisation of culture and people stemming from the very top of the organisation. We maintain this at the same level of importance and focus as product and services, process and infrastructure, and customer experience. D&I is no longer a HR strategy, there is organisational ownership which has made it an integrated and effective core topic.”

Ford Credit is a leading automotive financial services company. It provides dealer and customer financing to support the sale of Ford Motor Company products around the world. Ford Credit Europe Bank is a subsidiary of Ford Credit, which is a subsidiary of Ford established in 1959.

For more information, visit [www.fcebank.com](http://www.fcebank.com).





**Jardine Motors Group (JMG), representing 16 luxury and premium brands, is justifiably proud of its reputation as an automotive industry leader when it comes to driving diversity and inclusion.**

Its efforts were recognised when it won the 'People & Culture' prize at the 2020 Auto Trader's Retailer Awards – just the latest in a string of external accolades for a company that has put D & I at the very heart of its business.

At the start of 2020, it unveiled its latest Inclusion strategy, #WeAreJMG, aimed at creating opportunities for individuals from all backgrounds and building diverse teams within an collaborate environment.

But within months of its launch, the implementation of that strategy faced an unprecedented challenge in the shape of the tumultuous COVID-19 pandemic. How do you build collaboration when your entire workforce is either furloughed or working from home?

"This was obviously true crisis management for us," says Group HR Director Clare Wright. "You can deal with fires, you can deal with other incidents that happen, but with something of this scale, when you are faced with locking down your business as per Government rules that were changing all of the time meant, you are learning on the job and had to react quickly."

With showrooms shut, some 90 per cent of the JMG workforce were put on furlough, with the remaining 10 per cent working remotely or working in workshops to support key workers with essential repairs and maintenance.

Staying true to the business' established culture and its Inclusion principles, the company's first priority was to be completely transparent in its communications to furloughed and non-furloughed staff.

"We already had every colleague's personal email address and their permission to use it, so we were able to deploy emails to everyone," says Clare. "We were doing bi-daily communications in those early days just to explain what we were doing and what was going to happen next, also to check in on colleague wellbeing. We were very clear and upfront with colleagues about when we would communicate and provide updates, and we delivered on this.

"As a leadership team, we were also having twice-daily calls to come to our decisions. It was really all about agile and collaborative working.

"We also put a collective consultation group together, which we had never had to do before, with reps from across each of the businesses.

"It was a case of 'this is where we're at, this is what

we're thinking of, have you got any good ideas?' All of that was really important so we could give colleagues a voice."

As part of the communications strategy, Chief Executive Neil Williamson recorded a series of unscripted personal video messages. As the lockdown progressed, the aim of the ongoing messaging was to address colleagues' mental wellbeing as much as to impart corporate information.

"Neil talked about how he was feeling and how he was struggling with the challenges as many others of home schooling," says Clare. "I think that personal honesty and bringing your human side to work really came to the forefront. In a time of crisis our leadership communication was about being informative but also authentic.

"Checking in with people on a personal level was also important – not just from a transactional basis but in terms of asking, 'how are you actually feeling and what can we do for you?' This really brought people a lot closer together."

The emphasis on honesty and transparency was maintained when the company, faced with lockdown losses of £5-6million a month, was forced to undertake a large restructuring process resulting in 350 job losses.

"Although we had to make tough decisions, we tried to do it with integrity," says Clare. "Things like offering outplacement support to people were really important.

"Throughout that time, we were always talking to our colleagues, explaining how tough things were and how much we were losing. People could always reach out to us if they had any concerns or questions, whether furloughed or not.



**Claire Wright**  
Group HR Director  
Jardine Motors Group



"Keeping people up to date with what was going on and, equally, realising that there were humans involved in this and that it was not just a process was really important."

Despite the intense challenges thrown up by pandemic, Clare believes there are a number of positives that will have a lasting impact on the organisation's Inclusion strategy – not least the opportunities afforded by homeworking for non-dealership based colleagues.

"It's opened things up to more diverse groups of people who wouldn't normally think about working for us because they would think of us as a traditional business where you have to come into the workplace.

"For example, it's a great opportunity for anyone who has caring responsibilities, and it's reinforced the message about looking after yourself and your wellbeing.

"If anyone, for example, wants to go to the gym in their lunch hour and block that out of their diary, that's fine. They're in control of their own destiny. We've always talked about how our colleagues are empowered to find the solutions for themselves."

Another positive has been the way the Teams chat tool, of which Clare is a huge fan, has given greater voice to some female colleagues.

"I think some women who might not have said anything in physical meetings or who might have felt a bit uncomfortable are now using the hand function, or the chat function if they don't verbally want to say something," says Clare. "I think we've seen a renewed confidence among some of our female colleagues."

Teams has also proved beneficial in building cross-business collaboration, and Clare and her team have

used a series of 'insight sessions' to discuss approaches to D & I.

"We have a cross-section of about 30 people on each call talking about things such as how we bring to life our BAME approach, our LGBTQ approach, and how we advance social mobility. Actually, some people on the calls were saying they didn't want to be part of separate group and would rather deal with issues as a whole and acknowledge intersectionality.

"This is great because that's what I wanted people to say. I think it's just about how people from diverse backgrounds or minority groups get together to fix a bigger problem. That's what we're starting to do."

Among Clare's key learnings from the entire pandemic experience is that people can do things quickly and adapt to a new, agile way of working but that things can also go wrong. Building resilience in teams and individuals is now more important than ever.

"Our general managers / heads of business have had so much thrown at them such as reopening with very stringent COVID-safe ways of working, and we are now dealing with COVID cases in our businesses.

"The heads of business have really benefited from the mental wellbeing and resilience training they have done before, but we're now doing another round of it because there's a different dimension to it now on the back of COVID and it's really important that we maintain the open lines of communication.

**"With so much volatility and unpredictability now, it's made us look at our people strategy and examine what we now need to do differently, aligned with the world we now live in."**



Marshall



**Marshall motor holdings is the 7th largest motor dealer group in the uk with 117 franchised dealerships representing 23 brand partners across 28 counties. Marshall motor's people centric approach has been their focus since their launch in 1909.**

Publicly listed automotive retailer, Marshall Motor Group has made waves during the past decade due to their strong ethics and inclusive company culture, for which they have been recognised by both employees (11 consecutive years achieved Great Place to Work Status) and externally in the Great Place to Work rankings (6 consecutive years ranked in the best UK Workplaces).

Without a doubt, this is something that long standing Group Chief Executive Officer of Marshall Motor Holdings Plc, Daksh Gupta should feel proud of. Daksh, who took over as CEO in 2008 has had his abilities as a leader highlighted during the COVID-19 pandemic and his people centric approach has not stirred, despite economic pressures.

As Daksh himself says:

**"It is easy to be a great place to work when times are good but when times are tough and employees need help, that's when you need to stand up and be there for your people."**

So, this is exactly what Daksh did.

"When the crisis first hit, our initial thoughts were of our people. I anticipated the troubles of lockdown – people were going to be anxious, worrying about the economy and the potential negative impact on the UK, ultimately their jobs.

To combat this, my management team and I have personally filmed 37 videos for all Marshall colleagues since lockdown, each around 20 minutes long. This is a massive commitment, but we wanted to do this to keep everyone informed of what was going on. We did this at the start of lockdown by collecting over 4,000 personal emails so that we could contact every single colleague for the same reason.

Throughout lockdown, we have run competitions and had a lot of fun through music and video. We kept

employees engaged, motivated and assured, because ultimately our people are our most valuable asset."

Daksh put his money where his mouth is, quite literally, and Marshall Motor Group was one of few organisations who did not invoke the £2.5K pay cap. Daksh also enhanced his employees' furlough scheme payments throughout the lockdown period, they paid 100%, 90% and 85% through the lockdown period.

"We evidenced that it is not all about bottom line; we were able to demonstrate that we did discretionary things for our people which we did not need to do at a massive cost to the business. People will not forget this.

At the start of this crisis I said I wanted to be able to look at people when this pandemic was through and say that we made the right decisions, and we have absolutely done that."

Daksh has found many benefits and learnings from lockdown, though he believes it is not only the coronavirus which has spurred on these developments, but also the impact from events such as the Black Lives Matter movement and a whole host of other elements in the marketplace.



**Daksh Gupta**  
Group Chief Executive Officer  
Marshall Motor Holdings Plc

"Could I pinpoint it down to COVID? Probably not. But my observation of people's behaviour recently is that they have become more understanding of others. It is also amazing how you can be more efficient while working from home, and we have also seen savings in fuel and accommodation. People are now able to attend events via Zoom call, which would previously have been a whole day event including travel, and therefore not always possible.

I believe that nobody was ever brave enough to try home working on this scale before because the impact was unknown, but now we have been forced into it we are able to see that it can work."

Despite these positives, Daksh is keen to return to a 'sense of normality'.

"We will absolutely be returning people to our business when it is appropriate to do so. This will definitely be more flexible than pre-COVID, and though the details are yet to be determined I imagine we will form a blend between the two working styles."







## The McLaren Group is a global leader in luxury automotive and technology and comprises three businesses: Automotive, Racing and Applied.



Of all the positives to have emerged at McLaren Automotive from the dark days of the COVID-19 pandemic, the renewed emphasis on its people and the need to lead from a people perspective have been among the most significant.

The high-performance luxury supercar maker was, like nearly all operations, forced to lock down its McLaren Technology Centre in Woking, Surrey, as well as its McLaren Composites Technology Centre in Sheffield and its development centre in Spain.

But Mandeep Dhatt, Executive Director of HR for McLaren, has been inspired by the resilience of the workforce and the sense of togetherness and common purpose that the pandemic has engendered.

"As an organisation, the cultural strengths we have were really reinforced through the crisis," she says. "That 'we won't be defeated' kind of attitude that definitely exists within our organisation came to the fore.

"I think the closeness and humanity has also come out, and we've learned a lot from that in terms of using that to shift our culture, faster and for the better."

The resulting focus on so-called 'people topics' has put Mandeep and her HR team at the very heart of the organisation's future strategy.

"I've never been busier," says Mandeep. "It's like a

whirlwind for anyone in HR because the volume of change is just exponential and continuous.

"The role of HR has evolved so rapidly this year – from our very commercial conversations about managing cost all the way down to change management. We have been through the whole spectrum of the employee life cycle in four months."

Ten years after McLaren Automotive was founded, the focus on people and managing change within the organisation has been crystallised into a new strategy called 'Energising Our Second Decade'.

"It's very much centred around our employees but we're also using it as an opportunity to revitalise the culture of our organisation," says Mandeep. "The other strand is looking at the operational efficiency of our organisation and ensuring we have the right resource in the right areas of the business."

The plan divides into four phases, beginning with 'Reflection'.

"That phase was very much around when everyone returned to work," explains Mandeep.

"We had one-to-one restart conversations with our employees, acknowledging that they were coming from very different situations.

"As leaders, we recognised that we needed to take time out to say thank you and to reset – to give people the time to share how they were feeling both from a home and work perspective."

Once the period of reflection was over, the plan moved into second phase: 'Refocus'

"This is the phase we are in now," says Mandeep.

"It is very much about operational essentials and understanding how we operate as an organisation within our new parameters.

"Then we have 'Reinforce' – a phase of reinforcing messages that we landed in the first two phases. And then we have 'Refuel', which is about taking time out and resting. Wellbeing weaves through the whole approach because that is fundamental. We want people to look after their own wellbeing but also those people around them."

Having pioneered the idea of using community groups within the workforce to tackle issues such as mental health, first aid, diversity and respect, the organisation has also taken another step forward in its diversity and inclusion strategy by creating a network of wellbeing ambassadors.

Mandeep explains: "The crisis is such a human crisis that is impacting everyone on every level. So, we invited our employees, to take part in a forum to share their ideas around what they wanted or needed from a wellbeing perspective in terms of education, support mechanisms, and information.

"That was lovely and showed the human aspect coming out. We had pictures of people on walks with their kids, people baking. It was all about trying to create that sense of community again."

Embracing flexible working has been necessitated but something Mandeep is keen to continue to form part of the future as part of the organisation's revitalised culture.

"We're determined not to go back to where we were," she says. "We do want a blend of flexibility because we recognise that it works. People can deliver and they are productive, so where we can support it, we will. We will absolutely continue to be flexible.

"And with that flexibility, some of the conversations we've had internally are around, 'Does that open up more senior roles to women, potentially, where once we didn't think we could offer that flexibility?' Because we're moving to a more flexible place, that should no longer be a barrier.

"Although we do proudly possess a better than average gender gap within the industry, we are committed to keeping the conversation surrounding diversity and inclusion going. Within this vein, we will also always look to push the subject even further. And this is part of our commitment."

About McLaren Automotive:

McLaren Automotive is a creator of luxury, high-performance supercars.

Every vehicle is hand-assembled at the McLaren Production Centre (MPC) in Woking, Surrey, England.

Launched in 2010, the company is now the largest part of the McLaren Group.

The company's product portfolio of GT, Supercar, Motorsport and Ultimate models are retailed through over 85 retailers in 40 markets around the world.

McLaren is a pioneer that continuously pushes the

boundaries. In 1981, it introduced lightweight and strong carbon fibre chassis into Formula 1 with the McLaren MP4/1.

Then in 1993 it designed and built the McLaren F1 road car – the company has not built a car without a carbon fibre chassis since. As part of the Ultimate Series, McLaren was the first to deliver a hybrid hypercar, the McLaren P1™.

2019 saw McLaren launch the 600LT Spider as well as the new GT, the track-only Senna GTR and unveiled the 620R and the McLaren Elva.

In 2020, McLaren launched the 765LT. In addition, it unveiled the all-new lightweight architecture innovated and manufactured at the £50m McLaren Composites Technology Centre opened in the Sheffield region in the North of England that will underpin the next decade of McLaren's electrified future.

To support the development, engineering and manufacture of its range of innovative sportscars and supercars, McLaren Automotive partners with world leading companies to provide specialist expertise, technology and solutions. These include AkzoNobel, Ashurst, Dell Technologies, Pirelli, Richard Mille and Tumi.



**Mandeep Dhatt**  
Executive Director of HR  
McLaren





## Mercedes-Benz Retail Group

Wholly owned subsidiary of Mercedes-Benz AG, Mercedes-Benz Retail Group, took advantage of the lockdown pause to establish and develop their diversity and inclusion strategy, for example in the form of a company-wide newsletter and a collaborative approach.

Angela Shepherd, CEO of the Mercedes-Benz Retail Group said, "12 months ago we hadn't fully developed our strategy and it certainly wasn't written down and shared with the leadership community across the entire organisation.

"As odd as it sounds, when the pandemic hit it gave us time to reflect on the inclusive actions we needed to take.

"This industry is so focussed on hitting monthly and quarterly targets that it can be easy to have a written strategy which ends up taking second place to other priorities.

"Lockdown gave us the opportunity to identify the key actions we could realistically achieve. There were a lot of HR and D&I focused projects to work on collaboratively as part of this and so we set up a regular monthly people and culture meeting, with the first one held in March."

These meetings aim to transform the wider HR and D&I strategy within Mercedes-Benz Retail Group and

roll it into a people and culture discussion with agreed actions and targets across the organisation.

Angela said, "COVID-19 brought D&I into focus and accelerated the discussion around this topic in relation to our business. At Mercedes-Benz Retail Group we are very diverse in some areas, but less so in others.

"A tangible development which came from these meetings is a new employee newsletter, sharing information on employees and their individual stories. The pandemic lent itself to this because our colleagues were doing all sorts of things, including volunteering, supporting food banks, or continuing to work at the after sales sites which remained open.

"In addition, we are introducing further aspects of D&I, such as mental health first aiders. The pandemic and the increase in news around mental health brought this to the front of the queue of priorities and after speaking with colleagues and discussing the impact of COVID-19, a stronger mental health focus became a necessity in the business. This was something we were able to implement and it is already having tangible positive effects.

"We now have a number of Mental Health First Aiders that colleagues can chose to reach out to. These individuals are volunteers who simply have a desire to help people or who have an interest in mental health. Before reaching out to colleagues, we wrote a job description so that our first aiders"- understood completely what their role would be before signing

up. We wanted to emphasise that they would not be counsellors and their job was to act as a sign post towards helpful resources or back to line management if there was a business issue.

"We named and celebrated our mental health first aiders in the company newsletter and we are aiming to continue to engage with people and promote people-oriented messaging to really connect with individuals.

"Our organisation is diverse in many ways; for example we have different age groups, ethnicities, genders, cultures, religions, and job roles - making the need to appeal to everyone quite a challenge! Through this newsletter we are giving everyone a voice and being really democratic to make things interesting."

Mercedes-Benz Retail Group is a collaborative organisation at both a leadership and structural level. To facilitate this, Angela implemented a cross-functional task group to develop and roll out solutions to current issues.

Angela said, "This was an interesting exercise function and while there was a bit of confusion at first, everyone very quickly grasped how they could participate, even if the project was not within their specialist area.

"We are continuing to drive that collaboration as we move forward, which is the best approach for the whole business. For this reason, we are encouraging continued engagement by encouraging people to speak up and raise questions or issues with senior management. We have kept in regular touch with everyone on furlough

via their personal email addresses, allowing them to ask questions either directly or anonymously depending on their preference.

"A further benefit showed there is relatively easy access to the CEO and the rest of the leadership team. I believe that if you share things people are more open to give feedback and ask questions. It opens up an authentic line of communication and I hope people find us much more accessible now."

"Channelling change through honest and transparent communication has allowed us to become diverse and inclusive as a natural consequence. Of course, there is no magic solution to the different issues that come up and each resolution will not work for every colleague, but you can always develop trust, which ultimately puts you in a much better position."

**Mercedes-Benz Retail Group is driven by one simple goal: to be the very best at all things Mercedes-Benz.**

**It is a wholly owned subsidiary of Mercedes-Benz AG and specialists in Mercedes-Benz passenger cars, vans and smart and a full range of ownership services. With locations throughout London, Mercedes-Benz Retail Group is dedicated to supporting its customer base all over the UK. The UK's largest supplier of Mercedes-Benz New and Approved Used cars.**

**Mercedes-Benz Retail Group has the ability to provide vehicles from one of the industry's most respected brands, at great value.**



Angela Shepherd  
CEO  
Mercedes-Benz Retail Group

*"We love to celebrate success and diversity within our organisation."*





# SIEMENS



William Wilson  
CEO  
Siemens Mobility Ltd

Industry leader in smart mobility solutions, Siemens Mobility, have managed the combination of home and essential working among their people with impressive adaptability and forward thinking.

Will Wilson, CEO of Siemens Mobility Ltd, held responsibility for the move of 3,000 remote workers while ensuring the safety of a further 2,000 as they continued their essential work.

Will said, "One of the first learnings we had was that with any sort of change you also have uncertainty. We initially focused on the changes brought by working from home, but in actual fact there was more uncertainty among the people who had to remain in the workplace, particularly within factory environments.

"Siemens is unusual in that we have a lot of frontline workers who are needed to keep Britain going. We therefore need to ensure the wellbeing of these people too. To increase morale, we had huge contests on safety signage between locations. There was a giant halfmoon mat at one place where, if someone was having a cup of coffee, other workers could not go onto the mat. We encouraged little things like that and shared best practise while maintaining great communication among all staff."

Claire Newby, Diversity Inclusion and Community Manager added, "At the beginning of COVID there was a lot of confusion and lack of understanding. We sent surveys out to all employees to gain an understanding of people's specific queries and concerns.

"The first survey was sent out at the beginning of April and thankfully we can now see that factory workers

are no longer having these same concerns they had previously, and that they understand their role is vital. Our essential workers are absolutely making a real contribution to our society and the country as a whole."

Additionally, as many organisations have found, new home working environments have led to a wealth of unexpected wellbeing issues among the workforce.

Will said, "We are tackling problems such as longer work hours and screen time on a daily basis. However, being an international company, it is hard to allocate a specific time frame to ensure people take a lunch break, as different countries are on different timelines.

"We learnt a huge lesson in engagement and communication. We knew we were not going to have a huge amount of interaction face to face, but what I pushed was the need to go over and above in other methods of communication. It was therefore essential to ensure IT facilities at home were in place for those working remotely."

Claire added, "We are also running drop-in sessions for people to have a chat as well as targeted sessions based on feedback and questions we have received from those surveys mentioned earlier. These cover all sorts of topics, from resilience and happiness to parenting and home schooling.

"We recognised that it was really tough for parents managing the balance of home schooling alongside their day job. Working from home brought a different set of issues, including childcare responsibilities. We previously had a lot of roles which were not flexible which now are. This has been a real positive change for us as a result of the impact of COVID-19.

"So, to help facilitate the drop ins, we arranged for two consultants to be present. One is a physiotherapist and the other is a resilience coach, so they were really beneficial in explaining the science behind our natural responses to this new environment; how an increase in adrenaline or cortisol can have an effect on us and how we cope with situations that are out of our control. Most importantly, it is ok to have a 6/10 day once in a while - you do not have to be 10/10 every day.

"Another session surrounded 'managing meetings before they manage you'; ensuring meetings are inclusive and effective, whether that is virtual or not. As an organisation and among industry professionals as a whole, you are never really taught how to be in a meeting and what to do.

"Since the start of lockdown, the overall perception of working from home has massively improved and the feelings of isolation have reduced. We are now seeing a massive shift towards people being much more confident in this environment with the tools provided."

During lockdown, Will felt it important to travel to Siemens' facilities in Lincoln and along the South Coast to engage with the workforces there.

When discussing this Will said, "What really struck me was the comradery. These teams understood their importance in keeping Britain moving.



**"It is great to see that if you put your trust in people, they put their trust in you."**

"I revisited these same facilities about three months after the initial lockdown. Many workers were genuinely happy to be among the chosen ones who got to continue coming to work. We had a real hands-on approach for our essential workers and did a lot of work with specialised projects.

"While it is tragic to endure a pandemic, I am a believer that opportunity comes from everything. We must be agile and adaptable to whatever is thrown at us."

As part of this agility, Siemens ensures and welcomes a diverse and inclusive workforce.

Will said, "My HR team looked at the attractiveness of Siemens Mobility as an employer to someone outside of the industry, particularly in terms of inclusivity. As many of our D&I events for this year had been cancelled due to the pandemic, we had a virtual pride week which was a huge success.

"We have also just had black awareness month where we had a series of guest speakers discuss the topic, leading to really innovative and thoughtful discussions."

When looking at Siemens' wider people strategy, the organisation is unusual in maintaining their intake of apprentices and graduates. Some of Siemens' first meetings post the lockdown relaxation surrounded introducing and inducting those trainees into the organisation to ensure they could continue the program.

Will said, "We have a training facility in Northampton which holds 200 trainees at any one time. Within four weeks of lockdown we had managed to convert 32 of these courses virtual."

"A lot of our current focus is centred around keeping our workforce motivated and working out what we can do in an accelerated way, for less, while supporting our customers. By introducing different skill sets and accelerating digital, we aim to keep both our workforce and consumers happy."

Claire said, "People have on the whole, a strong sense of a psychological contract with the employer. As long as the employer is fulfilling their side of the contract then you can fulfil yours. I think that is what we have seen as a result of all this. There are so many benefits in developing people and having them on board."

**Siemens Mobility is meeting the need for smart mobility solutions and is setting the benchmark for tomorrow's mobility – today.**

**Siemens Mobility provides answers to all mobility questions through its comprehensive portfolio; because modern, interconnected and IT-based mobility is the core competency of its five business units: Rail Infrastructure, Turnkey, Rolling Stock, Customer Services and Intelligent Traffic Systems.**



# VOLKSWAGEN

GROUP UNITED KINGDOM LTD

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted Volkswagen Group UK and its employees in many different ways. To support their employees in an environment of uncertainty and change, the organisation has focused on raising the importance of creating an inclusive working environment and culture.

During this challenging time, the wholly owned subsidiary of Europe's largest carmaker has worked hard to support, communicate, and engage their employees during one of the most uncertain times in recent history.

Penny Weatherup, HR Director says: "Some of our response to the pandemic had to be very reactive of course. When lockdown was announced on 21 March 2020 the majority of us moved from primarily office based to remote home working in the space of a day.

"To manage this effectively, we focused on ensuring colleagues had access to the right technology and equipment. We all had to adapt quickly to different ways of working using platforms such as Skype and FaceTime. Our colleagues responded magnificently to the challenge and we quickly settled in to a preferred cadence of virtual meeting timings and structures to make sure we all kept in touch even more frequently than before. This included regular video updates with our MD, Alex Smith.

In terms of the short-term impact for Volkswagen Group UK, given the dramatic reduction of vehicles sales to almost zero, the organisation furloughed a proportion of the workforce while ensuring support for key workers was maintained. We implemented a top up to 100% of salary to ensure there was no negative financial impact for those employees.

"Our decision to furlough some of our colleagues due to the dramatically diminished car market and consequent impact on work activity, created some additional uncertainty for people to understand and accept. To support this change we focused on really clear messaging to our teams to help them understand why we needed to do what we were doing and how we were commercially activating a positive response to the impact of the pandemic. It was also a really important to include colleagues on furlough in our communications ensuring that we did so within the guidelines. It was a really important balance to maintain so that people who were still on furlough continued to feel part of the team, while those in the office felt recognised and appreciated as they supported the business during a very uncertain and challenging time."

Volkswagen Group UK have also kept employee wellbeing high on the agenda; both mental health and physical wellbeing.

"The COVID-19 pandemic has promoted a greater acceptance socially and at work for people to talk about the importance of mental health. To emphasise how seriously we are taking this, Volkswagen Group UK were recently the first automotive company to sign Mind's Mental Health at Work Commitment. We want to ensure that we maintain a strong culture that promotes mental health issues. To support this we have 46 mental health first aiders. This increased from 30 during the lockdown period as more people came forward and volunteered for the necessary training. The response has really demonstrated the commitment of our employees to support their colleagues in challenging times."

Additionally, Penny says, "The period of lockdown and the continued uncertainty has also dialled into people's emotional sensibilities around volunteering and charitable work. Many of our people got involved in supporting their local communities and volunteered to support charities.

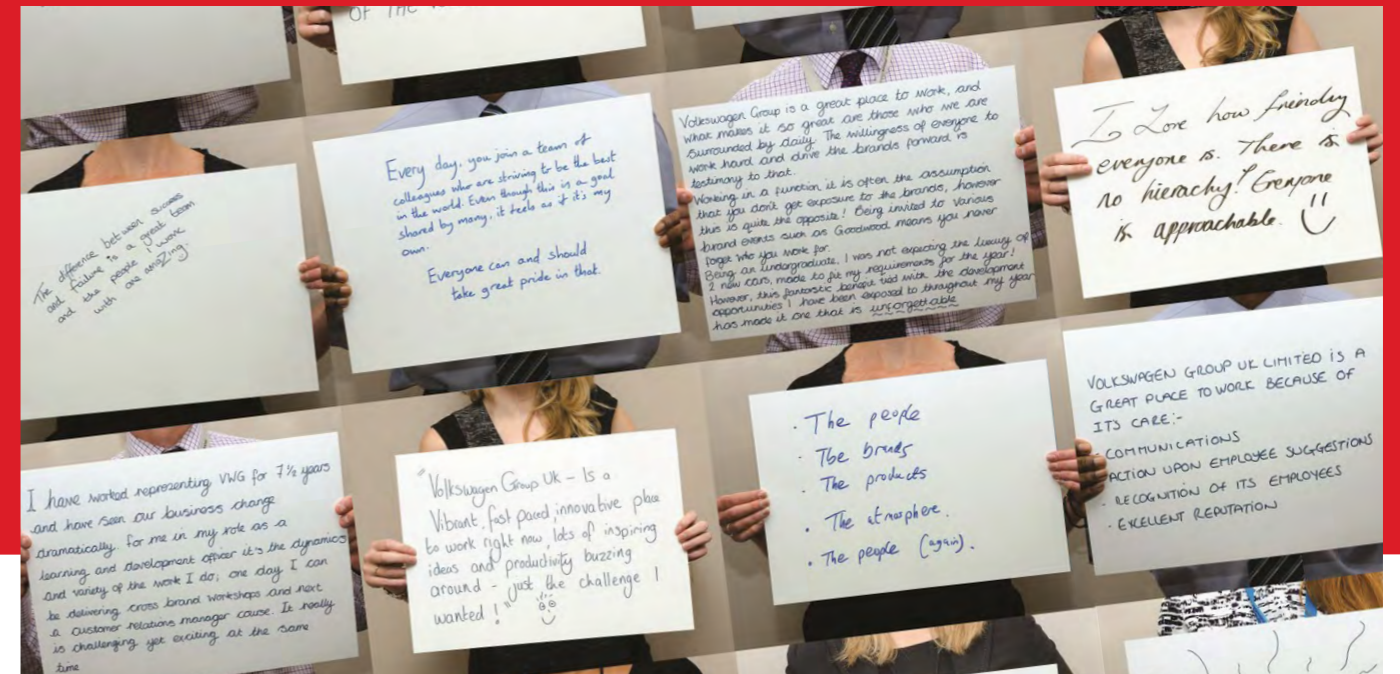
"For instance, a few of us got involved with the MacMillan Telephone Buddy programme which supports people who have cancer diagnoses and have been on their own during lockdown - or have simply needed support. Other colleagues set up shops in local communities, volunteered for and raised money for charities."

In Penny's opinion, a further impact of the pandemic has been an even greater focus on talking about the importance of an inclusive workplace culture. She feels that people are now beginning to appreciate and understand the breadth of the true meaning of inclusivity in the workplace.

"A simple but over-looked example of every day



**Penny Weatherup,**  
Volkswagen Group,  
UK HR Director



inclusivity has, at times, been demonstrated in our new hybrid way of working from both the office and remotely from home. It can be easy for those meeting in the office to forget about colleagues not present in the room. The chair of the meeting needs to remember those dialled in remotely and colleagues in the office must remember to consciously include those dialling in. Our focus on diversity and inclusion has also meant that we have accelerated our consideration of all areas of diversity: for instance, it has been reported that members of the BAME community have been more severely impacted by COVID than non-BAME community members. There is also more data that is demonstrating long-COVID may affect women more than men. As these updates come through, our communications have reflected them, and our D&I strategy has consequently evolved."

During the lockdown period, there has been further influences on Volkswagen's diversity and inclusion messaging.

Penny said, "Some of the recent events such as the Black Lives Matter movement and the tragic events surrounding George Floyd's death have increased employee network engagement with our BAME community. Through all our employee network groups, whether it's LGBTQ+ or our parents and carers group, people are having a much more raised and well-informed view about what inclusivity means. Sometimes talking about what matters and providing a safe environment to do so can make a real difference to people"

Penny went on, "We received feedback from our employees suggesting that we had not responded to or

recognised the tragic circumstances of George Floyd's death.

"Our BAME employee network group gave us feedback that by not making any overt acknowledgement of this event it had appeared as though we were ignoring a topic that was very important to all of us. This showed that we had a gap, and so we shifted up a gear to address it.

"There are certain world events that happen which carry such a significance that you have to acknowledge it; you cannot turn a blind eye to them. Our MD, Alex Smith talked about the importance of fairness and equality in his weekly blog and Andrew Savvas, Volkswagen Passenger Car Brand Director also wrote a personal message to our employees which recognised that we need to "do better".

We are all learning how to work together, collaborate better and consciously recognise our differences."

Volkswagen Group UK is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Europe's largest carmaker and one of the world's leading automobile manufacturers.

From its UK headquarters in Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire, it manages the sourcing, marketing and distribution of all vehicles and parts in the UK for Volkswagen Group vehicles, including Volkswagen Passenger Cars, Volkswagen Commercial Vehicles, Audi, SEAT and ŠKODA. In 2019, the Volkswagen Group sold more than 520,000 vehicles in the UK.

The Group directly employs around 900 people in the UK, with many more working within its network of more than 600 dealerships. The variety of roles within the Group range from sales, marketing, PR and technical to human resources, legal and finance among others.



V O L V O

Volvo Car UK has introduced ground-breaking D&I initiatives throughout its organisational history. When we spoke with the company last year, it had introduced unconventional measures in paternity leave and were resetting the image of the modern family. These initiatives were truly unique within the UK automotive sector at the time.

This year has of course brought unprecedented change and like many organisations Volvo Car UK has adapted to the difficulties brought by COVID-19 with forward thinking and agility.

On the topic of mental health, Kristian Elvefors, Managing Director of Volvo Car UK, said, "Inevitably, people started to feel a little bit alone when working from home. There was stress around whether they could go on vacation or visit family members.

"We are now finding that lockdown was actually easier to manage in April and May when the sun was shining, and everybody was painting their houses and enjoying long walks. Now we are in November and the same distractions are no longer possible, with additional distress caused by longing to see family in the run up to Christmas."

Volvo Car UK is combatting these concerns with regular communications and management training in employee wellbeing.

Additionally, Kristian said, "When government guidance allows, we are also welcoming those who wish to come back to the workplace. Though this is absolutely not mandatory, we are ensuring that for those who do want to return, our workplaces are COVID-safe and facilities are open.

**"I think you should continuously challenge the status quo, because it will not be the same tomorrow as it is today."**

"To guarantee our people's safety and peace of mind, we have introduced certain measures to our offices. For example, individuals must pre-book their desk, though this is of course still fully flexible. Also, as an additional comfort for our employees, we have reopened the canteens and provided complimentary meals for all workers. This is a real help and encouragement for people to have dialogue with colleagues again.

"Due to these measures, we can now say that 100% of staff are coming into the workplace as they please. Our people are finding that it is possible to be at the workplace in a safe and secure way."

Despite the challenges of these past several months, Volvo Cars has successfully launched its new Care by Volvo subscription service in the UK.

Kristian said, "I am delighted to say that Care by Volvo is ahead of what was forecasted. Also, the pace of

innovation has been four times faster than I expected; implementation has been quick and seamless, which has really benefited everyone. These initiatives are in place to generate new automation and new ways of working.

"Looking back since March, we have done more in the last six months than in the previous two years. This speed is something I wish to maintain as we move forward."

Kristian's driven attitude and leadership approach always has individuals' best interests and an honest and fair company culture at heart.

"Feedback, alignment, objectives and common strategies are more important than ever because you do not have time to think through things like you did before. Messages need to be crystal clear and underperformance cannot be tolerated. This is beneficial long term because issues are solved immediately as opposed to being dragged out.

"Throughout my 15-plus years' experience as a managing director, I have had many difficult discussions and have always felt they were ultimately beneficial to the individuals. The majority of people do not want change and it is difficult to talk about, especially during difficult or uncertain times. However, we needed to make some difficult discussions, and everyone left with good jobs and good opportunities.

"I think you need to deal with issues because it is important for the culture you are trying to create. So, a lot of ongoing problems have now been resolved. It has been a tough time for a lot of people, and for their managers to handle those situations, because it is so unusual. The original management team has been hugely restructured, but as a result the team actually



**Kristian Elvefors**  
Managing Director  
Volvo Car UK

Among all these changes, Volvo Car UK's diversity and inclusion strategy is also evolving. Kristian discussed this strategy acceleration which he feels was already transforming pre-COVID.

"I think the main acceleration stems from an age group and gender perspective. I am not saying we are finished in those areas, and there are still some priorities within them, but we are working on fixing these last few elements. Additionally, from the diversity perspective of religions and different backgrounds, I think there is more to be done.

"Gender balance is a real benefit because you build a better culture and a better working climate. I am sure there are also advantages to bringing more cultures into the organisation and in creating a broader and more diverse environment. This is where our focus will be."

When reflecting on the past year, Kristian discussed

the learnings he has had. "I think you should never make promises you cannot keep. In terms of retail, for instance, it is hard to promise that used cars and service areas will be the same and that they can relax. I think we fool ourselves if we do that.

"In my opinion, I think times of uncertainty can be transformational, but we are all in it together. That must be the most important message."

**Volvo Cars began production of its automobiles in Sweden in 1927. Today it is a truly global company, with sales in around 100 countries.**

**One of Volvo's aims is for at least 25% of the plastic in its newly launched cars to be made from recycled materials by 2025.**

**Volvo Car UK continues to set new benchmarks in automotive safety and connectivity. An increasingly strong player in the premium segment, it has won numerous awards for both its products and its brand strategy over recent years.**





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