



Mark Kenworthy

*Automotive Retail, Business Development & Leadership Ennis & Co Investment team*

#### SKILLS

- Retail strategy
- Retail operation
- Sales management
- Aftersales management
- Strategic Planning
- Pricing
- Distribution
- Network development

#### EDUCATION

Staffordshire University  
HNC, Mechanical Engineering

*Mark is a people-focussed business leader with experience across international automotive retail, OEM & distribution. He has previously held roles with Harley Davidson, Toyota (Inchcape), Aston Martin and other international automotive groups*

#### What made you choose a career in the automotive sector?

I originally started my career training to be a mechanical engineer, and working for the Michelin tire company so I've really been in automotive all along. I have always really been interested in cars, so it was a natural step.

I started in automotive retail with a company who sold high value sports cars, including the TVR which at the time was a very sought after brand. So, not only was I working with a product that I really liked, but also I was in a people focussed role, which I loved. I stayed there for around ten years and ended up working with the owner of the business on an expansion programme, taking on different brands and multiple sites.

#### You've also had OEM experience, how did your skillset transfer over from retail?

It's unusual, as people tend to stay in one area of automotive but yes, I did move over to Mitsubishi, one of the brands I'd previously represented in retail. They approached me for a project to develop a dealer support programme. So I was bringing the people and leadership skills I'd learned in my retail progression into a new environment.

It can be quite a sensitive situation, because often you're going in to a close knit family run business, as the big scary OEM. There are certain skills you need to make people feel at ease and open to discussing their business; I always used to refer to it as getting on the same side of the desk as them, so that they would be willing to talk to me about how they really felt and give me the information I needed so that I could really help them.

A large area of concern for OEMs is also geographical representation, ensuring you maintain coverage in areas where you have strong competition from other brands, so it was important to support the business owners through any challenges they may face. It was probably one of the first programmes of its kind in the UK and was very successful and also really rewarding both for the OEM and the dealers.

#### And from there, you went international?

I was approached by an organisation who were working on behalf of a client in the Middle East, looking for a senior leader who had worked within Mitsubishi.

I went out to be the general manager of the business, which at the time involved anything that had a Mitsubishi logo on it; everything from cars to trucks, to materials and generators, and more. So it was quite a broad breadth of products. And I stayed with them for about three and a half years, in charge of the brand, but I was also tasked with business development and travelled to China and Taiwan and Singapore, bringing in new brands that today are very familiar in the region.

I then worked for Aston Martin, setting up dealerships in Mumbai, Delhi, Oman and Istanbul, later moving back to the UK to run the UK and South Africa operations, including a full restructure of the UK. I've also spent time in Germany and Belgium, so I suppose you could say I'm quite well travelled.

#### As technology evolves and distribution models are changing, what are the core skills that automotive leaders need?

The automotive industry is a people industry, and even though the new age of digital has certainly revolutionised this - with its impact on the purchase journey with things like online sales, there will always be the need for leaders to be good coaches and I don't think that will change irrespective of how technology advances. . As a leader, you have a respon-

sibility to make sure that the job has some kind of development for members of your team. The leaders who recognise that and who are prepared to nurture people with no restriction on sharing knowledge, I think are the ones that will endure the transformation of the industry.

#### As a consultant to the industry you bring both retail and manufacturer distribution experience to clients. Can you tell me a bit more about the projects you have been involved with as a consultant?

I'm currently working on a very interesting project based in the US. I enjoy it because it's different from any other project I've been involved with. Everything I seem to work on has either four or two wheels and an engine or a motor, so to do something that's in the world of air purification is outside of my comfort zone, and has been quite challenging but equally interesting.

#### What's next for you?

The hardest part for me about consultancy is missing out on the people aspect of working within a team, I have always enjoyed working in an environment where you can share knowledge and provide opportunities for growth to your team. I think that working alongside the Ennis & Co Group team, especially on the Investment side of the business, is something that allows me to have that team experience again, and I actively seek that out when considering future projects.

