

FOUR BRAND VALUE

IAIN ROBERTSON
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Brand awareness is something about which marketing people can blether all day but Iain Robertson has just met a young Lincolnshire man, who can read more into branding than might befit his tender years.

Not wishing to turn Andy Bower's business, Lincolnshire Volkswagen Specialists Ltd, into a 'freak show', I would still urge you to drop into Unit 27, in the Evans Business Centre, Gateway Park, North Hykeham, without a moment's hesitation. Ladies and gentlemen, if you want to see the perfect example of an old head on young shoulders, make your way there now and mind the parking.

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When I am asked to compile a profile on a local business, while I never intend to follow a pattern, it is inevitable that one is created. To meet Andy Bower is one of life's great experiences. He is a young chap, of that there is no doubt. Yet, despite having met some of the most focussed people in business, social and sporting endeavours, I have seldom met a time-served mechanic, who possesses such single-mindedness about his business and its sense of direction that it has rocked my perception of an individual.

Andy has a very broad sense of humour, of that I have no doubt. Yet, he possesses an innate sense of balance, judgement and observational skills of which some of the most astute of entrepreneurs would be envious. Interestingly, envy is not one of his failings. In fact, in a 'live and let live' world, he is a well-practised exponent. I have always stated that it is people, who make the world go around and Andy Bower is very good people, so I hope you will allow me to tell you a little more about his business.

His intrinsic knowledge about the Volkswagen brand is his major selling point. He understands the VW ethos inside-out. As anybody 'in the know' will comprehend, Volkswagen is a multi-brand marque, consisting of Seat, Skoda, the luxury Audi and itself. However, it has further reaching brand responsibilities, in that both Lamborghini and Bugatti are included in a portfolio that is headed by Bentley. There is even a positive link to Porsche. Although Andy fully understands that owners of products of the four latter brands are unlikely to consider his business as a primary string to their bows, he does work on several local examples, although, as he states, "Bugatti has escaped my attention up to now, but I look forward to the day I can be of assistance!".

With his working life of up to two and a half years ago being crammed with VW Main Dealer experience and his fascination encapsulated by working on the four key brands in the VW Group, Lincoln VW Specialists was set-up 30 months ago to satisfy both the service and economic needs of VW Group customers. The firm's present location gives a positive clue to clients seeking value-for-money, which his business can deliver in spades, not least because his hourly maintenance rate is anything up to half that of the franchised outlet.

However, step inside and see for yourself that Andy and his colleagues, James Kinsey (service reception), Stephen Marston (mechanic) and Andy Sayer (mechanic), work in a professional environment that is presented in every bit as slick a state as any high-quality main dealership might be. From its easy-clean slate tiles on the floor of the workshop, to the immaculately stacked tool towers, the neatly racked parts store on the mezzanine floor and even the contract carpeted and leather sofa'd reception area, Lincoln VW Specialists is a thoughtfully clean, quietly effective and proficiently cool environment in which to have your VW branded product catered for.

However, it is not all superficial 'gloss' without substance, as Andy has worked tirelessly and expanded his business in an organic fashion to its current status, with two 'wheels-free' hoists, the full complement of plug-in diagnostics, tyre fitting equipment and MoT preparation facilities. "To be frank, I need another unit into which I can further expand the business," he insists. "I want to open a dedicated VW products MoT Centre and to develop the retail side of my business. Oh, yes. Then there is the 'fun' aspect to the business, in serious VW vehicle tuning and enhancement, all of which my company can handle but which needs just a little bit more space to do so." Yet, it is a service orientated business, in which client satisfaction is, in his eyes, the be all and end all. No less than total satisfaction is his promise. The company even backs it up with no quibble support and two immaculate pool cars, should leaving your pride and joy be an essential requirement. "For the past two and a half years, we have been providing the equivalent of main dealer quality services,

at back street trader prices. We shall not deviate from that position. However, while the main dealers are experiencing a lot of pain at the moment, we are not, which means that we do not attempt to make profit, where none exists."

As I stated up front, Andy Bower is one-in-a-million, a chap that knows his own mind, who concentrates on internal training and refining and making 100% certain that no stone is left unturned in providing total customer satisfaction. His company tag-line is 'Proud To Be Independent' and I believe that he has every right to be so.