



REVOLUTIONISING THE TYRE MARKET

St Helens' Stone Tyres is making the trade sit up and take notice

Customer service and reputation is everything in business and with social media's hold on the world in which we live in today, you only have one chance to make a good impression.

Customers are very quick to leave negative feedback on the smallest of problems, so it is a great testament to the work that John Stone and his team at Stone Tyres in St Helens have done that they have never received a negative review. Speaking to Scots Auto Scene, John Said: "I came into the motor trade five years ago selling vans and required premises to carry out repairs and general maintenance prior to selling the vehicles, so shared a workshop with a mechanic. He only lasted three months before he decided he could no longer be self-employed, and I was left with the whole lease and wondering what to do. Out the back of the workshop were 200 used tyres all laced-up ready to be disposed of and I thought to myself: if the mechanic could sell 200 tyres in three months without even trying, then I could make a go of this. I offered him £1000 for his tyre changing equipment and the rest is history as they say."

Having been frustrated with the old-fashioned way of how tyres were being sold in the St Helens area, John decided to take the bull



by the horns and shake things up with some innovative ideas that were initially scoffed at but have since been replicated by many in the trade. John added: "Just because someone opens their shutters in the morning and has some tyres on display is no guarantee that motorists in need of tyres will stop on the forecourt and come in to make a purchase. One idea I brought in that I started doing three years ago was free puncture repairs for all budget, midrange and premium tyres that I had sold. People told me I was crazy, asking me how I could possibly make money on it but it wasn't just about making money. It was about customer retention and the

customer experience. If the customer is having their tyre repaired free of charge and coming back, they become a customer for life because they're getting an added-value service that they wouldn't get elsewhere.

"Another service I offered was the no-credit check finance. Again, people said I was crazy but now everybody is jumping on the bandwagon!

"I just try to have a completely open and transparent business in the way I do things. When you're buying from an independent, you're buying from a person and a personal touch is guaranteed. Our reviews really do

speak for themselves; touch wood, I've never had a bad review for this reason."

Cutting edge equipment

Stone Tyres has invested in a TreadReader drive over ramp from Sigmavision allowing for accurate tread depth readings to be made that can reveal bad or uneven wear on tyres. Every car that visits Stone Tyres is driven over the TreadReader. Less than a minute later, the driver is presented with an A4 colour print-out that objectively depicts the condition of their tyres.

"I've had customers who go to the high-street garages and they've been told that they need four new tyres," commented John. "They then visit myself and the team here and I take pleasure in disproving the other chains and showing that they actually only need two replacements."

Stone Tyres has also recently purchased the Hunter Elite TD wheel alignment system from Pro-Align to elevate their wheel alignment offering. John opted for this top-of-the-range piece of equipment because he had seen garages attempt to use tracking gauges and spirit levels with little to no success.

"But if a customer comes to us, I want to be able to give them total transparency; I want to be able to show them what their tyre alignment was prior to and after work has been carried out," said John. "Transparency in this way is a key priority for us."

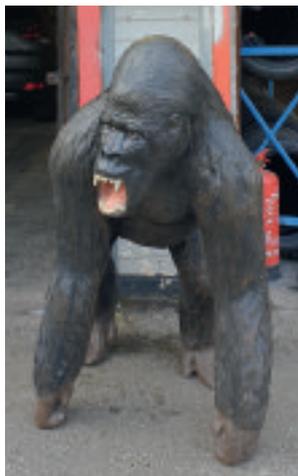
It's all about the experience

John's overall aim is to make purchasing tyres from Stone Tyres a pleasurable experience.

"I've lost count of the amount of garages I've driven past where I've seen customers standing outside in the pouring rain, as many of the garages don't even have a waiting room. That's not a good experience so we have a warm waiting room with a coffee machine for our customers to use."

Stone Tyres also does not fit the stereotypical mould of

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being a male-dominated environment.

"One thing is for sure, there are no lewd calendars up in my business, which has been received really well by customers," added John. "We are known as a family-friendly business and have worked hard to make Stone Tyres a welcoming environment for all."

Go big or go home

John has big plans for the future of Stone Tyres.

"We are soon going to be opening a second site in either Liverpool or Wigan. The goal for Stone Tyres is that we will have a hub of business in the northwest that will one day go national."

"As an additional string to our bow, we operate Gorilla Tyres, our mobile fitting arm. All of our vans are fully equipped with top-of-the-range tyre fitting and balancing equipment, meaning we can fit new tyres to any vehicle. We are also Nexen and Riken key dealers and work with all the major tyre wholesalers in the country to ensure we offer the best prices. My mark-up stays the same so any reduction in price that I get, so do my customers."

Stone Tyres has already enjoyed notable success but is only in the nascent stages of its development. John and his team are certainly ones to keep an eye on for the future as Stone Tyres spreads its wings and reaches the next level.

For more information: www.stonetyres.net

