



clayfield industrial estate

doncaster, dn4 8qg

**telephone:**

+44 (0)1302 856 121

**e-mail:**

info@encircle-marketing.com

**website:**

www.encircle-marketing.com

**company house:**

6246113

## **PRESS RELEASE – TYRE TRADE NEWS – APRIL, 2009**

### **How Good are Your Staff at Keeping 'Customers Happy'**

Following on from data exclusively provided to Tyre Trade News from Encircle Marketing last month on the Independent channel. We were keen to understand more from the leading tyre market research specialist on how the retail sector as a whole is performing at keeping the “customer happy” and providing excellent telephone customer service.

As previously detailed, Encircle Marketing independently research the tyre market, conducting almost 3,000 channel representative “mystery” calls every month.

Each call is carefully selected in terms of region with “Callers” located throughout the UK and selected based upon local knowledge/ accent in order to increase the “genuine feel/ nature” of the call and minimise the risk of detection by centre staff.

Pre-determined guidelines are used such as scenarios, vehicle fitments, budgets to spend etc. in order to understand how these subtle differences can affect engagement by a garage and ultimately an overall mystery shopping score.

Each call is scored out of 100%. Scores are attributed to the 7 defined stages of a call; Accessibility, Introduction, Information Gathering, Appointment Setting, Selling Performance, Closing the Call and General Impressions.

These stages are measured across all the key distributional channels to ensure like-for-like performance measurement.

If we take a look at these various stages across the entire retail market we can easily see who is performing the best in class, who needs to show improvement and where as a market generally, everyone could do much better.

Let's start with Accessibility, here Encircle score a centre based upon the ease of making contact (the number of attempts) and how many rings before the call was answered. If a centre hits the desired criteria (number of attempts and amount of rings) they are then awarded maximum score for this section.

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Here as an industry, everyone performs well with an overall score of 82.96% in March (Encircle had made over 2,500 calls in March as we went to print). The spread of scores for this section was a little under 10% with the Car Dealership channel scores the least (77.75%) and Regional Independents scoring the highest at (86.41%).

The next Encircle stage is Introduction. For this section, a centre is scored based upon 7 criteria ranging from a basic welcome through to mannerisms, garage response and whether the Caller was at anytime during the call put on hold. Again scores are awarded based upon a defined set of criteria and here is where we start to see some notable variation. Top of the class would be the Fast Fits, with 85.63% of all centres called scoring maximum in this section. Must do better would be the Local Independents with only 66.64% of all centres achieving maximum marks. Elsewhere, again the variation is slight (Autocentres 2nd on 84.31%).

Stage 3 is Information Gathering. A critical stage where centres must ask the correct questions in order to fully understand a potential customers requirements. Here again the Fast Fits are the shining light but scores generally are much lower than the first 2 stages. The top performer (Fast Fits) scores 47.8%.

Onto Stage 4 – Appointment Setting. Here Encircle award maximum scores if a centre encourages a booking in order to fully diagnose the vehicle, secures an appointment and makes it at a convenient time for the customer. As a whole the industry report card would read “must do better”. The overall market average is a low 17.85% with Fast Fits the best performers at 27.5% (Regional Independents 2nd at 21.94%).

Selling Performance is Stage 5 and scored based upon the garage offering a choice of brands/ options to the potential customer and additionally taking the time/ effort to educate on the specifications of each product and advise of any current in-store promotions. Here we see everyone take a positive step forward. Fast Fits and Autocentres jostle for top spot with 62.27% and 61.79% respectively. Lowest somewhat surprisingly perhaps are the Car Dealerships at 44.69%.

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The penultimate stage is Closing the Call (offering directions/ taking down the customers details etc.). Fast Fits again come out on top at 32.05% with Autocentres close behind once more (31.20%). As detailed last month, Local Independents score below the market average for this stage.

Finally General Impressions allow Encircle to illustrate the softer aspects of the call and “shed light” on the person the Caller actually spoke to. They score a garage based upon traits such as helpfulness, knowledge, professionalism etc. The spread here is approx 20% with Regional Independents actually the top performers on 63.68%, followed by Fast Fits (58.90%), Autocentres (55.14%), Local Independents (46.66%) and bring up the rear Car Dealers (46.05%).

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