



Toyotas Snowball in Car-Wash Company

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Toyota Avensis cars and Hiace vans are becoming the vehicles of choice for the UK's leading manufacturer of car-washing machines, Valetmatic Ltd. The company, which is based in Farnborough in Hampshire, installs and maintains its car and jet washing equipment for clients, which include oil companies operating filling-stations, commercial organisations and bus companies.

Valetmatic has a team of more than 50 service engineers and regional managers working mainly from home, covering up to 40,000 miles a year throughout the UK and Ireland. Its fleet of 35 vans has traditionally centred on Citroëns, while the company's 20 cars are selected by the users but in line with company recommendations.

When a regional manager was supplied with a Toyota Avensis 1.8-litre CDX, a number of his colleagues quickly followed suit. "It just snowballed," says Valetmatic's Operations Director Mick Ramsey. A total of 10 Avensis have so far been delivered including 1.8-litre GS estates as well as GLS and CDX models.

Meanwhile, with the engineers requiring larger vans, five standard Toyota Hiace vans have been supplied, including one long-wheelbase model. Special racking has been fitted: "We need rigid stowage suitable for heavy parts, which could cause serious damage if they were loose," says Mr Ramsey.

Mick Ramsey originally evaluated both cars and vans, with an eye to competitive whole-life costs, specification levels and reliability.

"The drivers were looking for comfort and performance and the vehicles have been absolutely fine - we've had no issues whatsoever," he says.

"The vans are just the tool for the job and the trim levels on the Avensis are fantastic, with lots of useful gadgets. Being able simply to punch in the details of your destination with the sat nav has been proving particularly useful."

Mr Ramsey was also influenced in recommending Toyota by his high opinion of the Fleet department at local dealer Sandhurst Toyota, which he said had provided "superb service levels" when individual Toyota cars had been specified in the past.

All the vehicles are funded through Toyota Contract Hire on 36-month full-maintenance agreements. "More Toyotas will join the fleet as vehicles come up for replacement," says Mick Ramsey.

The arrangement with Valetmatic followed presentations by a representative from Toyota's Fleet Business Development team, set up to advise fleet managers running fleets of fewer than 100 vehicles, working alongside Sandhurst. "Toyota's Regional Business Manager didn't go over the top but simply provided the cost justification - he did a superb job," says Mick Ramsey.

"Our Fleet Business Development team has a wide and competitive model line-up and the considerable resources of Toyota Financial Services behind it," says Toyota Fleet's General Manager Jon Pollock. "Our managers' job is to listen carefully to the customer's requirements and carry out a detailed audit to find the best solutions, whether in terms of model choice or finance package.

"Working closely with a Fleet Specialist dealership, the team is expected to provide the highest standards of attention, and I'm very pleased that Valetmatic has found that to be the case."

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