

BMW Soper of Lincoln

Unlocking efficiencies across expanding dealership

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BMW Soper of Lincoln has recently expanded and modernised its 2,500 square metre BMW Soper and MINI sales and Soper Select approved used site in South Hykeham, Lincoln. Works over the last 18 months have seen the demolition of two buildings, the extension of the existing Soper Select used car showroom and workshop and the creation of a new Wash Bay and Valet building.

The extension and modernisation programme provided increased parking and display space for approved used and new vehicles. Improvements have also been made to BMW Soper's workshop for SMART (Small, Medium Area Repair Technology) repairs. The main BMW dealership was also fitted with solar panels. A facility to recycle more than a million litres of water per year was also established close to the new wash bays. The SMART repair workshop now serves both the used car showroom and the adjacent Soper BMW MINI dealership. The MINI dealership has benefitted from both an extension and redesign. Indeed, it is the first in the country to upgrade to the new MINI showroom design.

As a result of the improvements around the site, Soper of Lincoln BMW has been able to hire five additional members of staff so that they now have 104 full-time and 11 part-time employees in total. They have 40 service engineers including 15 technicians, 10 painters, seven SMART repairers and eight 'productives'; 23 salespeople; 12 managers, assistant managers and business line managers, as well as seven service advisers working across BMW, MINI and Soper Select dealerships.

Replacing Old Key System with Traka Automotive Stops Key & Key Fob Losses Dead

Following the expansion of the site, the existing key management system had been proving increasingly painful as staff began trying to move more cars, with greater speed through processes like PDI, servicing, washing and valeting and then parking ready for customer collection.

For Andrew Tullie, Head of Business at BMW Soper, it became increasingly clear that the old key management system was not keeping up with the times:

"The process of assigning keys to fobs was clunky as it included an expensive reader which required training to use. So, assigning keys to fobs took a couple of minutes each – just too long for a busy service centre which had decided not to deploy the old system at all for fear of it hitting the productivity of technicians and other servicing staff.

In addition, we were spending more than £1,000 per year just replacing key bullets which went missing (normally left on sets of keys handed back to a service customer)"

The Service Centre that previously had no key management system was losing up to six sets of keys per year. BMW key replacements were getting increasingly expensive as more technology was built into them. The latest LED digital display keys cost close to £500 each to replace, so without the new Traka system there was a potential £2,000 plus loss to the business each year through lost keys.



Andrew Tullie, Head of Business at BMW Soper



Traka Mapping & Parking Zoning Support

Once Andrew Tullie agreed to select Traka Automotive's fully networked key management system, the Traka Automotive installation team proved very helpful in mapping out the site based on a thorough understanding of the site and BMW Soper's processes.

"Traka Automotive made good recommendations in terms of siting the right-sized cabinets in the most convenient location for users. The whole site was zoned and colour-coded so that the location of a key within the cabinet could be accurately pinpointed to a specific parking zone around the enlarged site."

Traka Automotive Forms Key Part of Drive to Unlock Efficiencies

Andrew Tullie saw the expansion as an opportunity to use the very latest technology to find both water and energy usage and other operational efficiencies and tighten security right across the whole business. Selecting Traka Automotive key management to replace a different vendor's ageing key management system, became a key part of a plan to find operational efficiencies and enhance physical security site-wide.

A total of five Traka Automotive cabinets were installed with a total capacity for 1,290 sets of keys: a 360-slot key cabinet was installed in the new Valet Bay; plus, the Soper Select showroom and body shop also had a 360-slot system installed.

The main workshop for servicing and PDI of new vehicles situated behind the BMW showroom required a further 360 slot double cabinet. A 180-slot cabinet was fitted inside the extended and refurbished MINI sales centre; whilst a 30 slot S-Series cabinet was installed in the office serving the Wash Bay.

Keys were secured and tracked for the first time in the service centre and keys for the buildings themselves were also now allocated double-lockable slots within relevant Traka key cabinets.

Within three months of installation all five cabinets are operating close to capacity. The newly fitted cabinets in BMW Soper's busy Service Centre, with capacity for 360 iFob slots, have seen a total of 36,536 key movements in an out of the two cabinets there in the first three months of use. That's an average of more than 500 key movements per working day across a workshop that sees over 50 cars on and off the bays every day.

The newly refurbished MINI dealership saw 11,139 key movements through its new Traka Automotive key cabinets in the first two months of usage across its 360 iFob slot capacity cabinets which were installed a month later at the start of August 2019. All five cabinets offering 1,290 iFob slot capacity together saw 79,542 key movements from a total of 114 authorised users. A total of 4,635 new sets of car keys have been assigned to the system as a whole during the first quarter of usage. Only five of these users regularly access Traka Automotive via a networked desktop PC. The rest access it via Traka's mobile app from their mobile devices.

Ease of Use proves key to rapid adoption in the Service Centre

When the previous key management system had been installed across the site back in 2011, a decision had been made to not install it in the service centre because the service centre's management team had taken the view it would get in the way of rapid access to keys and negatively impact productivity. But Traka Automotive's systems, by contrast, have seen very wide take up in service centres and PDI centres because the system has been designed from the ground up with efficient dealership operations in mind. The combination of rapid yet secure key access and a full audit trail on all key movements has proved vital in helping BMW Soper of Lincoln to unlock efficiencies in the service centre and right across this state-of-the-art dealership.

Chris Appleby, General Service Manager, remarked on the merits of the new Traka system in his 15-bay Service and PDI Centre:

"Usability is the key with this system. The pairing of keys to iFobs drawing vehicle information directly from Traka's software takes one or two seconds now, rather than minutes with the old system.

I've got the Traka Automotive app on my mobile phone which enables me to find out, while standing in the car park (where the car in question is located), which cabinet its key is held in and who handled those keys last. By doing so, I know immediately what stage that car is at."

Traka System Helping to Push Up Productivity in the Service Centre

In BMW Soper's service centre they prepare or service approximately 1,200 cars per month, across 15 bays. That's 40 to 50 cars every working day. Technicians can find cars and their keys much faster with the new system. Staff get through more cars and that means they earn more money.

Chris Appleby has now targeted moving up to 60 cars serviced in an average day and thinks that recent changes, including installing the Traka Automotive key management system and zoning the car parking areas, could be freeing up between two and three hours per day across the workshop – time which could now be put to good use to move productivity up towards that new target.

"We want to be able to get to a point where customers can obtain an appointment for a service within 24-hours of requesting one. We are moving rapidly in that direction now."

The Traka mobile app has proved such a success that Andrew has decided to create a separate staff Wi-Fi network so that everyone can download the app and get access to the Traka system. The alternative is to link it to the 4G mobile network, but BMW Soper decided to go down the dedicated Wireless network route for even greater security and resilience.

For more information on Traka's specialist key management and equipment management solutions, please visit www.traka.com

Traka Automotive Key Management Integrated with Access Control

Andrew Tullie explained:

"We are using a combination of Paxton Net2 networked access control, fully-integrated with Traka Automotive's networked key cabinets access to provide an additional layer of security across the whole site and all assets we have here.

Access permissions to specific buildings, IT rooms and the Traka cabinets is now set up via Microsoft Active Directory which also controls corporate network access from all other devices used site-wide. This means that all BMW Soper staff will have access permissions appropriate to their role extending right through to the Traka key cabinets that they need to access to in order to do their jobs.

So, a service engineer can use one Paxton Access reader card to open our pedestrian gates serving the rear car park as well as relevant doors within our Service Centre and that same Reader card to access the 360-key Traka cabinet in our workshop, for example. That reader card will enable him to access new automatic sliding gates at the rear of the site and potentially turn off the intruder alarms. In the future, it will be connected to the ChargeMaster charging posts – 32 of which have recently been installed and networked across the site as part of our modernisation programme."

BMW Soper is also exploring integrating ANPR cameras with access control so that staff can access the site by car without having to use their access cards at the gate.

Andrew also talked about the merits of using the reader cards to access the key cabinets over the old cabinets which used biometrics:

"It may have been because the old system was over eight years old but our service engineers often found if they had any oil on their fingers or even a small cut or blemish, the biometric system that the old one used could deny them access – it became a frustration in the Soper Select workshop in particular where it's all about optimising the amount of cars they can complete work on in a day."

IP Cameras Over Traka Cabinets Enables 100% Traceability

An extra layer of security on all cabinets will be provided by installing IP cameras over the top of all cabinets so there is no doubt about who has accessed a cabinet and slot at a specific time if a set of keys do ever go missing. The Traka system will tell managers who has accessed the cabinet and extracted the missing key last, while the camera provides visual evidence in case someone uses someone else's card reader to access the cabinet.

Andrew Tullie adds:

"We will be able to play back the recorded and time-stamped video if there is any doubt if we do have any incidence of lost keys or misuse of Paxton cards. Now that cameras are also placed over the cabinets, we have total traceability of who had a set of keys last. Before you could have the scenario that one person could hold the key cabinet door for another and therefore an iFob's removal could be attributed to the wrong user if keys go missing.



Now everyone knows that with the Traka Automotive key system, Paxton access control and time-stamped IP surveillance there is 100% traceability on who last had some keys – it changes behaviour knowing that there is quite literally nowhere to hide and it has definitely helped us get rapid and total adoption of the Traka system by all staff."

Traka Enhances Move to Digital Job Cards with Integrated Key & Car Location Data

BMW Soper is also going paperless in the service centre. So, they will be moving shortly to digital only job cards provided by their Dealer Management System CDK DRIVE. The plan is for a technician to log into the digital job card in DRIVE and, with its integration with Traka Automotive, it will be possible to show which zone of the car park that car is in and which slot has been assigned to that car key in the Service Centre or Soper Select workshop's Traka cabinet.

Chris Appleby adds:

"Traka Automotive's system has also enabled us to scrap the physical key label which the service advisers used to write out before handing the keys over to the technician. That's more paper taken out of the business and one less manual process to worry about. It also adds to the security of vehicles when on site. It all adds up."

Traka Dashboard Reports Assist Managers Keep on Top of Work & Stock Movement

"The reports provided within the Traka Automotive system is also helpful. At the end of the day I can check who is still holding keys. All of them should be left in a cabinet unless they are offsite for some reason" adds Chris Appleby.

The Traka online dashboard also tells senior managers who took that Traka iFobs out last. Andrew has been able to charge staff £25 at the end of each month if the records shows they lost a Traka iFob. As a result, permanent fob loss simply stopped happening.





Smooth & Rapid Adoption

Andrew Tullie adds:

“The roll out has been so swift and successful that it prompted one senior technician to remark that it was ‘the best change he’s ever seen in systems and processes over more than 15 years of operations in the service centre’.

Change can be difficult when you are used to doing things a certain way but the speed of adoption of the new Traka system could be measured in hours rather than weeks or months. Everyone likes it and everyone uses it.

The great thing is that the system has enabled all staff to be able to move all cars regardless of which part of the business they are based in. It’s enabled us to start doing something we’ve never been able to do before – clearing the visitors car park in front of the BMW showroom every evening ready for visitors’ cars the following day.

It ensures that when you get that early morning rush of service customers, they have lots of parking spaces to choose from in the same zone of the site. They don’t have to start their day hunting for a space and service engineers now know where most new service cars are going to be parked. It improves the look and feel of the site and it enhances the customer experience while helping our technicians locate cars.”

The Traka guys have been very easy to work with. We’ve had a few small issues and the response rates and technical know how they’ve given us has been superb.”

Trade Plate Tracking & Security

The next enhancement which BMW Soper is exploring with Traka is to use their system to also control trade plate access. It’s a question of attaching the plates to iFobs so they can track who has each of them as they have a limited number, like all dealerships.

In Summary

Andrew Tullie summarises:

“At the end of the day if you were to ask me ‘have we got value for money from the Traka Automotive system move?’ I would say yes. Have we got everything we’ve asked for? Yes, we have. Do we get the service we expected? Yes, every bit of it from my perspective. The hardware is robust; the software and management dashboard work well for the service centre, sales and the rest of our dealership.

Upgrading to Traka Automotive has proved to be more than just replacing an old key cabinet system – it’s become an integrated aspect of how we conduct business. So much so that we’re saving several hours of time each week across each and every department that uses it – and it has improved morale which is further boosting productivity.

The system has only been in a few months but already we are seeing the merits of it in terms of helping us improve productivity in the service centre and elsewhere. Fundamentally, we now have a place for all cars and a place in the most convenient Traka key cabinet for all our cars’ keys. So even when the site is at absolute capacity in plate change months, staff can still marry keys to cars in the shortest possible time and customers can find a parking space when they come to drop off their vehicle.”

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