

SERVICE DEALER

THE VOICE OF THE INDUSTRY

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2020

LOOKING AHEAD

Manufacturers and suppliers on the 10-billion-dollar question

Commercial customers

Turf professionals on the importance of their relationship with dealers

Service Dealer Digital Toolkit update

Toolkit strikes a chord with UK dealerships

The legend of Briggs & Stratton

How did it come to this?



RAISING THE PROFILE

MANITOU STRENGTHENING ITS NETWORK & SIGNING NEW PARTNERS

SHAPING THE FUTURE



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EDITOR'S MESSAGE

Welcome to September/October 2020's edition of *Service Dealer* magazine. If there's a theme across this issue, it would be a sense of cautious optimism. 2020 has, of course, done its utmost to beat us all into submission, but as ever the dealer network and the wider industry is showing resolve and its impressive ability to react and adapt.

We have a major feature this issue, hearing from a cross section of manufacturers and business service suppliers, who share their thoughts on the 10-billion-dollar question: just how will the sector fare over the coming 12 months?

Having to cope with potential waves and spikes is a worry, but hopefully as a country we will be more prepared for any setbacks. Via the honest and thoughtful answers we have gathered from our industry panel, however, a sense is gained that if prudent and measured steps are taken, the network will continue along the positive path which many have forged for themselves via the hard work undertaken this year.

Cautious optimism is also reflected via the dealers who responded to our most recent *Business Confidence Survey*. Starting on page 44, it is interesting to read the thoughts of readers regarding changes they feel they can make to give their business an advantage going forward.

Finally, at the time of writing, there is also a sense of hope for the future of one of the more iconic names in outdoor power. If Briggs & Stratton had disappeared in July, the impact would have been felt across the industry. The beginning of a new chapter for the century-old engine maker will hopefully reassure its employees, customers partners and retailers.



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Todd Teske, Chairman, President and CEO of Briggs & Stratton, pictured at October 2019's GIE+EXPO

INDUSTRY

BRIGGS & STRATTON FILES FOR BANKRUPTCY PROTECTION

Assets agreed to be acquired by KPS Capital Partners

Century-old small engine maker Briggs & Stratton, one of the industry's more iconic brands, filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection in the US Bankruptcy Court for the Eastern District of Missouri on Monday 20 July 2020.

A Chapter 11 filing in the United States means that a company and its creditors work out a reorganisation plan that enables the business to continue to operate.

In what's known as a 'stalking-horse' deal, it was also announced on the same day as the filing that a New York private equity firm called KPS Capital Partners, through a newly-formed affiliate, had entered into an asset purchase agreement with Briggs & Stratton Corporation, under which KPS will acquire substantially all of the assets of Briggs & Stratton, including equity of foreign subsidiaries, for approximately \$550 million.

In an official statement, Briggs & Stratton said it had obtained \$677.5 million of debtor-in-possession financing that would help fund operations during the bankruptcy proceedings, \$265m of that figure has been committed by KPS and the remaining \$412.5m from Briggs's existing group of lenders.

Briggs said this would mean that they would have sufficient liquidity to

continue normal operations and to meet its financial obligations during the Chapter 11 process, including the payment of employee wages and health benefits, continued servicing of customer orders and shipments, and other obligations.

Todd Teske, Briggs & Stratton's Chairman, President, and Chief Executive Officer released a statement saying, "Over the past several months we have explored multiple options with our advisers to strengthen our financial position and flexibility. The challenges we have faced during the Covid-19 pandemic have made reorganisation difficult but necessary and appropriate path forward to secure our business. It also gives us support to execute on our strategic plans to bring greater value to our customers and channel partners. Throughout this process, Briggs & Stratton products will continue to be produced, distributed, sold and fully backed by our dedicated team."

Co-founder and Co-managing Partner of KPS, Michael Psaros, released a statement saying, "KPS intends to grow the new Briggs & Stratton aggressively through strategic acquisitions".

He went on to say: "The new Briggs & Stratton will be conservatively capitalised and not encumbered by its

predecessor's significant liabilities.

"We have expended an enormous amount of effort, resources and capital on this process to date. We are confident that all of the conditions necessary to create a new thriving going concern enterprise are in place."

Local paper the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, reported that KPS had also entered into an agreement in principle with the United Steelworkers of America for a new collective bargaining agreement for Briggs' hourly employees represented by the union in the Milwaukee area. The agreement would become effective on completion of the acquisition and reorganisation.

It also reported that, in contrast, retirees are losing their supplemental health and life insurance.

The day before the Chapter 11 filing "Briggs' board of directors voted to terminate the group insurance plan for retirees," says the paper's report.

Bankruptcy proceedings appeared to be on the cards for Briggs & Stratton after the company chose not to make a \$6.7m interest payment in June, triggering a 30-day grace period before it constituted a default on a credit agreement. Before the payment was skipped the company's board of directors voted to give executives and other key employees more than \$5m in cash retention awards.

Read
Chris Biddle's
view on the Briggs &
Stratton legend on page 56

DEALERS



Managing Director Harry Barclay (left) and General Manager Garry Smith of John Deere dealership, Netherton Tractors

NETHERTON TRACTORS EXPANDS JOHN DEERE TERRITORY IN SCOTLAND

HRN Tractors loses franchise at certain branches

John Deere and dealer Netherton Tractors Ltd have announced plans to establish a new agricultural and homeowner equipment dealership outlet in the Perth and Kinross area of Scotland plus, as of 1 November 2020, the dealership will operate from two new outlets in Turriff, Aberdeenshire and Nairn, Highland. With all these expansions, dealer HRN Tractors will lose the Deere franchise in those three areas from 31 October 2020.

These changes will bring the total number of Netherton group branches to five, including the two established businesses at Forfar in Angus and Glenrothes in Fife.

When asked by *Service Dealer* if John Deere is planning on leaving their franchise with any of the remaining HRN outlets, an official spokesperson said, "John Deere is not making any further comment on this announcement at this time". HRN has branches at Balbeggie, Turriff, Kinloss, Muir of Ord and Caithness.

In an official statement, John Deere Limited Division Sales Manager Chris Meacock, said, "Since Netherton Tractors joined the John Deere agricultural dealer network in 1987, it has grown the business to become

one of our best-performing dealerships. It's well known and appreciated for delivering a very high standard of customer service and support."

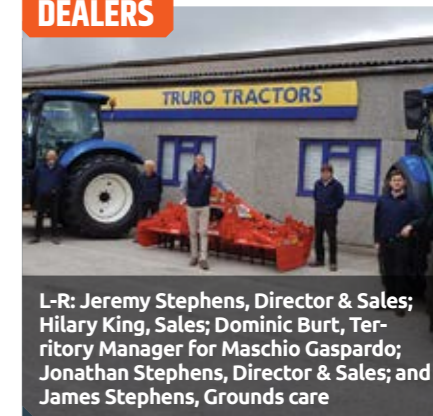
Netherton's General Manager, Garry Smith, said, "This latest expansion into the North of the country represents considerable investment in our business, and we very much look forward to establishing a positive presence in the region as soon as possible.

"We're proud of our reputation for delivering top quality after-sales and service support to our customers, across the full range of John Deere agricultural and homeowner equipment, as well as our other key franchises."

The new branch for the Perth and Kinross area is located at Units M-P, Arran Road, just north of Perth and is situated close to the A9, offering office, storage and workshop facilities. In terms of the Turriff and Nairn areas, Garry says they are actively seeking suitable premises in the areas and will be looking to recruit new and experienced staff.

At the time of going to press HRN Tractors had not commented on the changes.

DEALERS



L-R: Jeremy Stephens, Director & Sales; Hilary King, Sales; Dominic Burt, Territory Manager for Maschio Gaspardo; Jonathan Stephens, Director & Sales; and James Stephens, Grounds care

OPICO APPOINTS NEW CORNWALL DEALER

For Maschio Gaspardo

Opico Ltd has announced the appointment of Truro Tractors to its Maschio Gaspardo dealer network.

Truro Tractors has been selling and servicing agricultural and horticultural machinery to Devon and Cornwall farmers for almost 40 years and has three depots: Chacewater, near Truro, Wadebridge, and Treburley. The dealership will now be adding the full Maschio Gaspardo tillage line-up of ploughs, cultivators, drills, combination drills and rotovators, as well as the range of Maschio flail mowers.

Commenting, Charles Bedforth, Opico's Sales Manager, said of Truro Tractors, "They enjoy a hard-earned reputation for quality and honest family values, and are ideally positioned to grow the Maschio Gaspardo brand across Cornwall."

INDUSTRY

WINNERS OF USA TRIP ANNOUNCED

To visit GIE+EXPO in Louisville, Kentucky next year

Rosie Hart from WM Plant in Cumbria and Danny Lewis, Landscape Contract Manager at Manchester City Football Club, are the lucky recipients of a trip to the USA to visit GIE+EXPO, thanks to the Outdoor Power Equipment Institute.

With this year's show being forced to cancel due to the pandemic, Rosie and Danny win a ticket for themselves and their guests to enter the show at the Kentucky Exposition Centre, in October 2021. They will also be provided with travel from the UK, transfers and accommodation.

Regarding the postponement, Kris Kiser, President and CEO of OPEI, and managing partner of GIE+EXPO said, "The health and safety of our attendees and exhibitors is critical, and it is with profound regret that we announce the cancellation of our 2020 event."

"We're looking forward to 2021 and already gearing up to make our next show a dynamic and engaging experience for the entire industry."

The competition ran earlier this year across *Service Dealer* and *Turf Pro*, with a great response from



Rosie Hart of WM Plant

dealers and those working in the professional groundcare industry. The two best answers to a tie-breaker question were chosen.

PEOPLE



HONDA'S MARTIN SANDERS TO RETIRE

Spent 14 years in Power Products and ATV, as well as roles at AEA

It has been announced that after 41 years of working with Deloitte, British Airways, Volvo and over 26 years in Honda Motor Europe in a variety of senior commercial, financial and governance roles, that Martin Sanders will retire on 30 September 2020.

Martin worked directly within the Power Products and ATV business for 14 years with Honda and developed its range of Power Products including the IZY range, and introduced Honda Miimo.

Over the seven years of his AEA involvement, Martin worked on numerous projects and initiatives and

was instrumental in the development of the AEA ATV safety campaign and setting up the training scheme.

During his time with the EGMA he worked on numerous projects, especially on the regulations regarding robotic mowers.

Martin is currently Chief Audit Executive for the European Region of Honda Motor Europe Ltd.

Martin told *Service Dealer*, "I spent 14 years working directly in the Power Products Industry with Honda in the UK and Europe, which I have to say, were some of the best times in my 41-year career."

Martin joined Honda (UK) in 1994 and held senior positions of Head of Sales & Marketing for Honda (UK) Cars, General Manager Honda (UK) and Europe Power Products, CFO for Honda Motor Europe, and finally Chief Audit Executive.

Outside the office, Martin is a Trustee and Chairman of Governance of Wooden Spoon, which is the national rugby charity for supporting children who are disadvantaged physically, mentally or socially. Martin will continue his involvement with the Charity after his retirement.

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OBITUARY



Ron Smith, with son Mark, pictured in the Worcester dealership for a 2018 interview with *Service Dealer*
(Picture: Laurence Gale)

RON SMITH

Service Dealer founder Chris Biddle marks the passing of the 'ultimate self-made dealer'

Ron Smith, the founder of the garden machinery dealership that carries his name, passed away suddenly at home on 26 June at the age of 85. He leaves two children, Mark and Dawn and four grandchildren.

Mark, who runs the business today said, "It came as a complete shock. Dad passed away suddenly in the evening, having come to the business a few hours earlier to look at recently installed racking and to discuss overall business – and was looking forward to another visit soon."

Having initially worked for farm machinery dealer, JC Baker in Worcester for several years, Ron decided to set up on his own in 1967, buying a Morris Minor van with a logo designed and painted by his late wife, Gina.

His initial franchises included Westwood where he was greatly

helped by Peter Burnham, and Homelite, then run by Peter Baker who later joined STIHL as Managing Director. He sold his first ride-on in 1972, the ubiquitous Westwood Lawn Bug, for £182.

As the business grew, he invested in a Volkswagen pick-up truck to collect and deliver machines and repairs, again Gina provided the sign-writing and this time the van boasted a miniature lawnmower on the cab roof to promote his business.

In the 1980s, as the business grew, he purchased adjacent land in Worcester and opened a new showroom. He further expanded the business by opening a second branch in Hereford, and Mark joined the business in the early 1990s having been ever-present from an early age at demonstrations and shows as part of the family firm.

Over the years, Ron took every

opportunity to showcase his company to the public at shows, open days and local events, being ever-present at the Three Counties and Malvern shows. In recent years, Mark championed the use of online sales, using a selling medium that was never available to Ron in the formative days.

Mark said he will miss the constant input and advice from Ron over the years. "Even in his retirement, he took an active interest in the business right up to the end. He was the ultimate self-made businessman, a constant in the fabric of business life in Worcester – and highly regarded and respected in the garden machinery industry by suppliers and fellow dealers over many years."

A private funeral was held on Friday 17 July in Worcester, and a memorial service is being planned for next year.

INDUSTRY

KRAMP UK MOVES INTO NEW BUILDING

Larger warehouse and offices

Kramp UK has made a huge investment in a brand-new distribution centre, relocating just around the corner within the same town of Biggleswade, Bedfordshire.

The company said Monday 13 July was a momentous day for it. After remaining in its old location for the past 24 years, Kramp employees moved to the new offices and are now operating solely from the new building.

The company says the new, much larger warehouse includes upgraded technology allowing it to stock many more products and increase the stockholding of the fastest moving lines. Kramp says this will ensure an improved service and faster delivery to customers in the agricultural, forest and grass care, OEM and construction markets.

UK Sales Director, Des Boyd, said, "We've built a completely automated conveyor system that stems over three floors to improve the quality and efficiency of the warehouse. This means that items coming in will be handled a lot quicker with an easier flow to get the items



Kramp UK Sales Director Des Boyd with the keys to the new building

on stock. For orders, the conveyor system features new Kramp boxes, automatic weighing scales, quality handling stations, automatic packing and box sealing machines. This gives us less wastage, less recycling and improves the efficiency and overall quality."

Kramp describes the move as quite a large undertaking. It says the management teams and colleagues worked hard before and during the Covid-19 lockdown to keep to schedule as much as possible, responsibly, with only a three-week delay. All companies involved worked hard to make sure the transition went smoothly during this period so that business could carry on as normal.

Kramp Groep states that its long-term vision is to fully support the growing UK and Irish markets. The new site also allows room for further future expansion.



INDUSTRY PODCAST LAUNCHED

Covering farm and grasscare markets

A series of podcasts, called *Inside Agri-Turf* has been launched by Chris Biddle, the founder of *Service Dealer* and *TurfPro* magazines.

Chris says they will reflect on issues across both the agricultural and grasscare markets, and feature analysis of topical stories and conversations with those at the sharp-end of the industry.

The first regular episode to be released on the *Inside Agri-Turf* website (<https://inside-agriturf.captivate.fm/>), looked at the role of trade associations, particularly during the current pandemic. In it, Chris discusses the events of

the past few months with Ruth Bailey, CEO and Director-General of the AEA, representing manufacturers and suppliers, and Keith Christian, Director of the dealer trade association, BAGMA. Episode 2 saw Chris considering Briggs & Stratton's legacy.

Chris says, "During lockdown, I decided to teach myself the basics of podcast production and editing audio.

"Having spent a lifetime in this industry from tractor demonstrator for a manufacturer, to dealer in both ag and turfcare, and most recently as a journalist and publisher of trade magazines, I remain fascinated and in awe at the diversity of this industry and of the people who work in it. We are a traditional industry with increasing overtones of innovative technology to match any industry."

The podcast is also currently available on Spotify and will be hosted on other podcast platforms.

Chris adds, "I've progressed from a pen and notebook to basic recording and editing equipment in my home office and am just loving this new challenge!"

INDUSTRY



JOHN DEERE TO EXIT WALK-BEHIND ROTARY MOWER BUSINESS

Selling SABO subsidiary

John Deere has announced that it has signed an agreement to sell its SABO Maschinenfabrik lawnmower subsidiary to another German company, Mutares SE & Co, subject to regulatory approval.

This move will see John Deere exit the walk-behind rotary lawnmower business.

Alongside the end of production of the SABO-built, John Deere-branded walk-behind rotary mowers (both domestic and commercial models), will be an end of manufacture of both John Deere Tango and SABO brand robotic mowers.

The company will, however, continue to sell its full range of Deere manufactured lawn tractors and zero-turn mowers to domestic and commercial customers, as well as its walk-behind cylinder greens mowers in the worldwide golf and sports turf markets.

Any remaining John Deere dealer inventory of these SABO-built

products in the UK and Ireland will be available for sale, and John Deere says they will continue to provide parts for 10 years. Deere's dealer network will also continue to provide parts and service in any areas where SABO-branded machines have been sold.

SABO, based in Gummersbach, Germany, has been a subsidiary of Deere & Company since 1991 and has approximately 125 employees.

Mutares, based in Munich, is a private equity firm that currently owns 13 companies in the automotive and mobility, engineering and technology, and goods and services industries.

SABO will maintain ownership of its brand assets and its operations in Gummersbach. The company will continue to produce walk-behind lawnmowers and hand-held outdoor power products, marketing those machines through its network of more than 1,100 dealers in Germany, Austria, Belgium, the Netherlands,

Slovakia and Switzerland.

According to Deere and Mutares, employees, customers, suppliers, dealers and distributors should notice little change in daily operations.

Tim Merrett, John Deere's Vice President, Turf and Compact Utility platform, said, "SABO is a leading brand for high-quality walk-behind mowers and hand-held power products in Europe, and the company is well positioned for growth with its line of battery-powered machines.

"However, Deere is shifting its focus to key production systems that will allow our machine technology to be a differentiator. Further investment in walk-behind lawnmowers was no longer a strategic fit for our global business.

"Deere is not exiting the turf care business. John Deere will continue to produce a wide range of lawn and grounds care equipment for residential, commercial and golf course maintenance use."

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**SERVICE DEALER
QUESTION TIME**
THE VOICES OF THE INDUSTRY

THE 10 BILLION DOLLAR QUESTION

We asked several major manufacturers how they see business for themselves and their dealers over the next 12 months and beyond. Editor STEVE GIBBS reports

The problem of predicting what is around the corner, for an industry so dependent on the fortunes of the weather, has always been an issue for dealers and their suppliers to contend with. This year that uncertainty has reached unparalleled levels.

When we spoke to a panel of manufacturers on a conference video call back in July, the discussion turned to how they saw business prospects. David Hart, MD of Kubota UK, summed up the feelings of many when he said, "At the moment, trying to predict what business will

be like next week is the 10 million dollar question.

"Trying to predict what it'll be like in six months . . . well, that's the 10 BILLION dollar question."

Undeterred, while of course mindful of the fact that anything could change regarding the Covid-19 situation at any point, *Service Dealer* thought it would be useful to gauge the thoughts of some key industry players. We approached a selection of manufacturers and business service providers that we have a relationship with, to find out their thoughts on a series of broad-based questions, looking ahead to what

they think the next 12 months and beyond might bring for themselves and their dealer network.

The responses we heard from our panel provided a fascinating insight into current industry thinking.

While conscious of the undeniable impact that the pandemic has had on our industry, the consensus appeared that for both their companies and vitally, those of their dealers, business will be able to adapt and move forward positively from this – as long as the correct, prudent steps are taken.

Cautious optimism is the watchword.

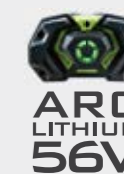
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THE PANEL



Peter Melrose
Managing Director,
EMEA, Ego



Paul Butterly
Managing Director,
FGM Claymore



Craig Hoare
Sales & Marketing Manager,
Hayter/Toro



Ken Brewster
UK Sales & Marketing
Director, Husqvarna



James Buchanan
Sales Director,
Ibcos Computers Ltd



David Withers
Managing Director,
Iseki UK & Ireland



Des Boyd
Sales Director,
Kramp UK



David Hart
Managing Director,
Kubota UK



Mark Earles
National Sales Manager,
Makita UK



Rupert Price
Managing Director,
Price Turfcare



Gary Tully
Sales & Marketing Director,
Stiga Ltd



Simon Hewitt
Head of Marketing,
STIHL UK



Mike Cameron
Systems Sales Manager,
Catalyst Computer Systems



Peter Chaloner
Managing Director,
Cobra Garden

QUESTION ONE

How do you view business prospects over the next 12 months?

Craig Hoare, Hayter/Toro

It's difficult to judge what the business prospects will be over the next 12 months. A number of industries will be adversely affected by Covid-19, including the travel and hospitality industries, and we'll see a rise in unemployment. How much this will impact on future

business prospects is hard to call – but as always with our industry, no matter what the economic environment is, weather will have the biggest impact.

Ken Brewster, Husqvarna

We are cautiously optimistic. Against expectations we grew our business

during lockdown. This was a result of demand being strong for the year to date, coupled with the agility and entrepreneurial spirit of many dealers. The economic impact of Covid-19 is predicted to be severe – how this might affect consumer spending power in lawn and garden is not yet clear.

David Withers, Iseki

It feels like the initial impact of Covid-19 is starting to fade and some confidence is returning. There is, however, a risk that as the furlough scheme and other Government interventions are wound down and unemployment spikes, that we will see a deterioration in confidence in the market. The other area I'm very concerned about is the autumn and heading into the flu season. With the inadequate testing that is taking place, how will people know if they have flu, a cold or Covid-19? On balance, I think the next 12 months will be tough.

Paul Butterly, FGM Claymore

It's difficult to call what's going to happen over the next 12 months. While the weather is on our side and people are spending more time at home, I remain optimistic for the next 12 months. We have a very diverse line-up of products and suppliers, therefore there will always be opportunities for us, whether that comes from consumers or pro users.

Gary Tully, Stiga

We can't under-estimate the impact Covid-19 has had on business confidence. In the short term it will continue to be difficult, longer term we would expect it to normalise. Weather continues to determine a season's outcome even during a pandemic.

Simon Hewitt, STIHL

2020 has been an unprecedented and unpredicted rollercoaster ride! Like other brands, our year has been very challenging as a result of Covid-19 but the exceptionally good weather and increased demand from consumers stuck at home has brought its own benefits. Our biggest concerns are the mid-long term unemployment effects and how the Brexit situation will pan out this year. Overall, it's fair to say that we're cautiously optimistic for the year ahead.

Des Boyd, Kramp

We feel the next 12 months will be a time of continued growth for Kramp in the UK. Kramp UK benefits from being part of Kramp Groep, based in The Netherlands, and across the Group we have a very stable supply chain. This has been the case even through the Covid-19 crisis. Now that we're coming out of the pandemic, almost all of our suppliers are now operating back to normal levels.

Mark Earles, Makita

During this challenging period, Makita has remained open for business and continued to invest in product development and the market. This has meant we've been able to continue with the planned launch of our new XGT battery platform, and while Covid-19 has limited some of the usual ways we would launch new products, the company has adapted to this new world to find new ways of working. We remain committed to our ongoing launch programme and the prospects are positive.

Peter Melrose, Ego

It's hard to judge the impact Covid-19 has had on our business in the UK as growth this year so far is high double-digit. The transition from petrol to battery is well underway across all user groups and we're confident that public money will be focussed more and more on cleaner battery equipment whether as direct purchases by local authorities or as a requirement from services supplied by contractors. Overall, we think the next 12 months look very promising for Ego and our dealers.

James Buchanan, Ibcos

In the next 12 months I feel that business prospects will bounce back to normal levels with some businesses benefiting from being able to pivot their standard model and adapt to the new way of working with focus on service and online retail.

David Hart, Kubota

I believe we could be up to 10% down on a normal year across ag and groundcare. This is due to a combination of Covid-19, dry weather for both industries and the uncertainty that still surrounds Brexit.

Rupert Price, Price Turfcare

I'm quite optimistic. We're back on the road, demonstrating products as vigorously as ever, but what we really need is for the hospitality sector to open up again so we can have overnight stays and not have to return home every time we do a demonstration. We had such a positive start to the year prior to Covid-19 and are only 15% down on sales compared with last year, so with a lot of hard miles, we should get back on track quite quickly.

Mike Cameron, Catalyst

Groundscare, agricultural and construction dealers around the country are continuing to search for the best ways to help boost their efficiency and help their businesses to grow. At Catalyst we have continued remotely installing new systems at dealers across the country and have just restarted on-site installations and training, while carefully following social distancing guidelines. The next 12 months will see us continue working hard to help dealers succeed with the help of Catalyst DMS.



QUESTION TWO

What permanent (or long-term) changes have you made to your business due to Covid-19?

Ken Brewster, Husqvarna

We will adopt a flexible approach to office and home working for certain employees. We anticipate operating a hybrid physical and virtual environment for communicating. We're looking to simplify and shorten supply chains. We now have an even greater focus on cash flow and liquidity across the business.

David Hart, Kubota

It's safe to say that there will be more video conferencing, that will stay. Alongside this, more home working, more efficiency in the workforce and a better online footprint.

Gary Tully, Stiga

Communication, both internally and externally, is key. The continued use of some of the technologies adopted in the past few months will be permanently implemented. Flexibility and quick reactions within our teams has come to the fore and we will continue to encourage this, it gives us a multi-dimensional edge.

Peter Melrose, Ego

We'll plan on travelling between countries less and use video conferencing more in future. Zoom has proven to be a pretty strong solution for us. As an example, we will be having a number of video conference distributor events instead of the usual distributor conference this year. Our field-based product specialists have to be more careful with regards to hygienic and social distancing factors when meeting with dealers and end-users, but other than that it's essentially business as usual.

Simon Hewitt, STIHL

The biggest shift is around home working and how effective people can be away from the traditional office environment. It's likely that we will

see more home working in future, but we also know how important face-to-face interaction is too, so we have to strike a careful balance.

David Withers, Iseki

We've changed our emphasis to more online selling techniques. We started doing our virtual demos at the height of the lockdown and while others have now copied us (though not as well!) we have had a jump start by being first out with that initiative. We will continue to invest and encourage our dealers to invest in more online and remote selling programmes.

Mike Cameron, Catalyst

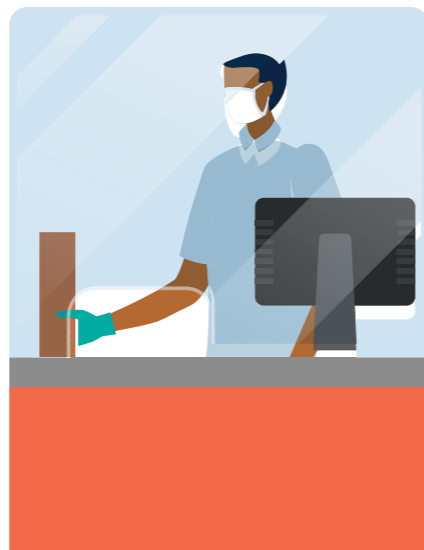
Like a lot of companies, we've made it a priority to up the ability of staff working from home, meaning we can still work at full strength during local lockdowns. This was proven recently when a local lockdown was introduced in Leicester, affecting a large portion of our staff who live within the lockdown zone. It's important to us that we are always there for customers through these unprecedented times, so we're doing everything in our abilities to ensure operations remain running at full speed, no matter what happens.

Paul Butterly, FGM Claymore

We will continue to invest in our online presence with new dedicated websites for our key brands. This year so far we have completed sites for Masport, Snapper, Simplicity & Maruyama. We will be sending offers and updates directly to dealers on a more regular basis and have a sales team on hand to take calls from customers either in the office or remotely.

Mark Earles, Makita

We've put processes and systems in place to facilitate socially-distanced working across our manufacturing facilities, training centres and office



spaces. We've also ensured that our sales managers are equipped with the correct PPE, to keep them and their customers safe – and they will only be visiting customers who have given prior approval. As guidance changes, we will continue to adapt our practices to ensure the safety of our staff and customers.

Rupert Price, Price Turfcare

I'm fortunate that I have a small team of excellent people working with me and this has helped us to be dynamic and adapt as required. My decision to keep trading through the crisis was a correct one. We had to maintain a service to our dealers and end-user customers, ensuring that we did not let anyone down. Some dealers and distributors have furloughed their staff and shut down for the duration, which has meant end-users contacting us directly. We've shipped parts to them to ensure they can continue their operations on the understanding that the invoicing would be agreed at a later date. In summary, we haven't really made any permanent changes, but that's a testament to our adaptability.

Des Boyd, Kramp

The company was quick to implement a working from home policy for almost all our internal staff. Laptops and mobile phones were given to all internal staff and they were able to access our company systems immediately. This has



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worked very well and our customers have been very pleased with the service they have received from our product specialists, customer specialists and admin staff. Moving forward, we will have a much more flexible working from home policy.

Craig Hoare, Hayter/Toro

Toro is a strong company and no major long-term or permanent changes have been made. As with every business, Toro made

temporary changes to protect its staff and business and, if anything, we've learnt how resourceful and adaptive our Toro colleagues are. This ability to adapt and work remotely may continue and make us more reactive and productive.

James Buchanan, Ibcos

We're already adapting the call ratio of our sales team. Previously we would spend 3.5 days out and 1.5 days working from home or the

office. Moving forward we will reduce to a 3:2 ratio and aim for a 50/50 split of time out mid-2021. We've added an additional Account Manager (AM) to reduce the numbers of customers in each AM's territory. To support the dealer network we're trialling a subscription to out of hours cover for post covid/harvest weekend cover, this is a new service and if successful we will consider it for future harvests.

Ken Brewster, Husqvarna

For the next 12 months new product communication will be almost exclusively digital. We've conducted some excellent internal presentations and training already. We're working on how we translate this into dealer and consumer facing activities.

Des Boyd, Kramp

New products, product promotions and innovation in services will mostly be planned virtually as it remains difficult to predict what will happen in other countries or even in specific

towns and cities within our own country. We will, of course, continually revise our strategy regarding travel policy.

James Buchanan, Ibcos

The way that we launch products will not really change as we normally do mail and online campaigns as well as webinars. We will continue to offer this service followed by remote or, where required, physical demos.

David Withers, Iseki

We will do online launches and

hopefully by next spring we can do face-to-face and hands-on events.

Mike Cameron, Catalyst

Over the next 12 months the launching of new products for us will not change. Our software development team has continued to create new ways in which our software can help dealers and we aim to continue to launch these to our users as regularly as ever before.

David Hart, Kubota

We will be using virtual methods.

QUESTION THREE
How will you practically launch new products over the coming 12 months?

Simon Hewitt, STIHL

That's a great question. We're still unsure if dealers and end customers will want to attend major shows in the first half of 2021 but hopefully this will change as a vaccine makes its way into circulation. For now, we're looking at expanding our online training even further.

Paul Butterly, FGM Claymore

It's always been difficult for us to hold events and gather dealers in one location as there is so much competition on dealer days, with dealers only having limited time they can spend away from their business. We intend to take our new products door-to-door directly to dealers so we can get the dealers hands-on in their own environment. This has been successful for us in recent years and we will continue with this format, always observing distancing and government guidelines. We're also producing a series of product presentation videos for dealers to see the features and benefits of key and improved products.

Mark Earles, Makita

Of course, we always want our dealers and end users to touch and

try the products when they are launched, and we're constantly monitoring how this is safe to do so, within the latest government advice. As with our recent XGT launch in June, we're utilising digital venues more than ever to drive awareness and demand, as well as supporting our dealers with virtual training and digital communications, and we see this continuing for the future.

Peter Chaloner, Cobra

We will be developing live and recorded presentations of new products being launched for the 2021 season.

Rupert Price, Price Turfcare

In the same way as we have done in the past, by demonstrating products in front of the customer. As a prospective purchaser, you have to see the versatility of the Ventrac on your own property to fully appreciate its attributes. We know that demos equate to a ratio of sales, so that's what we'll continue to do.

Gary Tully, Stiga

Safely and adhering to all Government guidelines, we are currently exploring new and innovative ways of

bringing new products to market, again using all technological tools at our disposal. This will be key to getting our messages heard.

Peter Melrose, Ego

That's a very good question as there are quite a few exciting new products from Ego for 2021, especially for the climbing arborist. We haven't made a final decision yet and will continue to work closely with our exclusive UK distributor (Henton & Chattell) on finding the best solution for dealers.

Craig Hoare, Hayter/Toro

Nothing beats meeting your customers face-to-face, but we must be mindful of the safety of our staff and customers and follow any relevant government guidelines. We will be looking to utilise technology and have a hybrid approach to product launches, combining one-to-one meetings with customers, alongside video presenting technology.



QUESTION FOUR
Will supply of whole goods or parts be impacted?

Peter Melrose, Ego

Not to a significant degree. We suffered a few out of stocks this season but that is mainly due to unprecedented demand for our battery equipment. Our supply chain is in good order and even now we are working on forecasts and production plans for 2021 season.

Des Boyd, Kramp

We only supply parts and the supply of parts will be affected by the local conditions of our suppliers, so this is difficult to predict. However, Kramp UK has just moved into a brand new distribution centre which is three times the size of our old one. This means we can stock much more of our fastest selling products together with stocking many more products which are normally supplied from our other European warehouses. This will be key to moving to the supply of even more products and therefore enhancing our service to the customer.

Mark Earles, Makita

We want to support our merchant network as much as possible and keep stock moving. As such, we have implemented delivery procedures to

respond to high levels of demand by bringing scheduled orders forward where possible. We have planned and put the necessary measures in place to minimise the risk of a negative impact on the supply chain, while keeping staff and customers safe.

James Buchanan, Ibcos

Wuhan is the epicentre for motherboard production and produces more than 75% of the world's supply. This had an impact on specialist boards for certain hardware and extended the lead times. However, this has had minimal impact on our ability to fulfil orders as we have an implementation timeline which has also been delayed due to implementations being held off at dealers during Covid (this ramped up in July and August, though).

Craig Hoare, Hayter/Toro

As we have a UK manufacturing base, this will give us greater control over the supply of a majority of our product range. The global Toro team has been working tirelessly to ensure that all of the Toro facilities around the world continue to operate while keeping our

colleagues safe. We anticipate minimal impact on the supply of goods and parts, but as with all manufacturers in the industry, there will be unforeseen external circumstances which may have an impact on this, such as 'second waves of infection' or 'local enforced shutdowns due to spikes in infection'.

Simon Hewitt, STIHL

We have this under control but, of course, the impact of a no-deal Brexit still looms in the background. Hopefully the government will do the right thing for the sake of our industry and leave in an orderly way which negates impact on our businesses.

Ken Brewster, Husqvarna

We've experienced some interruption to the supply of components and some reduced factory output. However, the impact has been quite low to date.

Peter Chaloner, Cobra

Our factories are operating at normal levels now and we have normal contingencies in place for some delays.

David Hart, Kubota

Not in my opinion. This is due to reduced volume and then less capacity needed.

Paul Butterly, FGM Claymore

Initially we had some supply issues in March, but now most suppliers are back to normal. We generally have good stock holdings, and this has benefited us this year.

Gary Tully, Stiga

In the short term, possibly. All aspects of the supply chain have had pressure points to contend with, but we are largely through this. We will learn from the past few months and look to minimise any potential future disruption.

David Withers, Iseki

For our brands we don't anticipate that parts or product supplies will be impacted by Covid-19. Of course, the

next big question will be what happens with Brexit and any trade deals that may or may not follow?

Rupert Price, Price Turfcare

Venture Products, the manufacturer of Ventrac, have been brilliantly supportive during the crisis. I'm still receiving containers of whole goods and parts on time as previously and this has ensured we have maintained our high service levels.

QUESTION FIVE
Is or will on-going R&D projects be affected?

David Hart, Kubota

Not in my opinion. This is due to reduced volume and then less capacity needed.

Gary Tully, Stiga

We've not held back on any new products, in fact the opposite applies. Q4 will see one of the biggest product launches Stiga has undertaken. This period will be exciting for our dealers with the introduction of multi-platform, innovative products that will assist in future-proofing their businesses for years to come. Products will be available starting Q4.

David Withers, Iseki

Japan hasn't been badly affected by Covid-19 and has had a tiny fraction of the infections that we have experienced in the UK. As such we've not seen significant changes in R&D activity.

Craig Hoare, Hayter/Toro

When Covid-19 started to have an impact globally, two of Toro's main focusses were on its staff and the retention of talent, plus continued focus on product development and new innovation. As all businesses reviewed and amended budgets, Toro took the decision to leave all product development budgets unchanged. This commitment to people and product we see as key to enable Toro and its dealers to come out of Covid-19 stronger.

Rupert Price, Price Turfcare

This is a difficult question, but Venture Products is an innovative company and I doubt that it will shelve its R&D work. The pandemic might slow product development down in the short term, but I'm sure it will continue.

James Buchanan, Ibcos

R&D projects are not affected as a lot of these are in-house and under our own supply. Some manufacturer integrations could be deferred but as yet this is not the case. Our pipeline for new developments is healthy and there is a waiting list for projects at present.

David Hart, Kubota

No, and in fact as a percentage of sales, projects will go up.

Simon Hewitt, STIHL

STIHL invests extremely heavily in R&D and the pandemic should have no impact on this area of the business.

Paul Butterly, FGM Claymore

Most of our suppliers have postponed the introduction of totally new items, so for 2021 our line-up will only have minor changes with some product updates.

Peter Melrose, Ego

No. Demand for new Ego products

remains strong and while we have one of the most comprehensive ranges of battery products in the market there are always gaps to be filled and products to be improved. We can see our new product plan out to 2025 currently, with no obvious need to slow down.

Mike Cameron, Catalyst

From the beginning of the pandemic, one of our main focuses was to ensure that the development of our software kept going. We made it a priority to ensure our software development team could continue working to ensure we could continue regularly releasing new features to our users.

Peter Chaloner, Cobra

No, new product development has continued with pace. Exciting new products will be ready for the 2021 season.

Mark Earles, Makita

Continued investment into R&D for the garden machinery sector has been a priority for a long time and continues to be.

Ken Brewster, Husqvarna

No, we expect R&D to be unaffected.

Des Boyd, Kramp UK

There will be no change to any projects going ahead.

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QUESTION SIX

Do you see your dealer network being affected by recent events?

David Withers, Iseki

It is an incredibly mixed picture. The dealers who stayed as open, as they were legally allowed to, having put in place the relevant safety measures, have performed pretty well and been surprisingly resilient. The dealers who more or less shut down, have had a much tougher time and will be slower to recover.

Dealers whose core markets are golf and councils saw their demand drop significantly. The nimble ones reacted by shifting focus to estates, homeowners and contractors where the demand had not softened as much and managed to keep revenues ticking over. The future will probably bring further consolidation to importers, manufacturers and dealers.

Peter Melrose, Ego

There is no doubt that the dealer has been affected by recent events. But not always in a negative way. Whilst this pandemic has clearly hit businesses hard, it has been encouraging to witness some of the ways in which our dealers have been able to adapt their businesses to still offer a service to their customers. In some ways the service dealer has benefited from the prolonged closures of the big box shifters such as B&Q and Homebase, driving a whole

new generation of customers to them who might have hitherto not visited them. I also believe that those dealers who had e-commerce capabilities in place have been able to somewhat protect their business.

Craig Hoare, Hayter / Toro

There will be long lasting effects on the dealer network as it adjusts post Covid-19. Consumer behaviour has changed and I do not see it returning fully to the way it was pre-Covid. Consumers have been forced into a new way of shopping, either online or via click and collect and have found that this has given them more free time. Consumers will look for convenience in the future and the ability to shop in a way which adapts to their lifestyle.

Dealerships have been far more adept at adjusting to this new environment and have the ability to react quicker in comparison to national high street chains. This should be viewed as an opportunity by dealerships to create systems and services which are more personal and bespoke to consumers' needs. This is where the dealer network can offer a point of difference to generic national chains and use their knowledge, expertise, and localness to shine and prosper. The old adage 'adapt or die', has never been more relevant.

Mark Earles, Makita

As with all retail in every sector, traditional bricks and mortar sites will have been severely impacted, but we have seen many dealers embrace ecommerce and online business – some who have not ever embarked in this channel before but were quick to adapt their business, and these have had positive results.

Cordless garden product is the star that has shone brightly throughout

this situation. End users have led the way during this crisis and the dealers that have embraced the concept of cordless garden machinery and who were able remain selling have certainly been able to weather the storm during these times, thanks to continued high demand for these products. More than ever, the importance of service in all its aspects, including online, is at the forefront.

Ken Brewster, Husqvarna

Yes, the dealer network has been affected. We have seen many dealers adapt their businesses and continue to trade very effectively. Online sales have been particularly strong but creative approaches to showrooms, customer collection and dealer delivery have kept traditional sales strong as well. New consumers have discovered the dealer network. Previously they probably shopped in DIY retail. The knowledge and customer service they have experienced with a dealer will hopefully turn these consumers into loyal and returning customers.

Simon Hewitt, STIHL

Of course like all retailers, dealers have had major challenges this year. Hopefully a V-shaped economic recovery mated to favourable weather for the rest of the year will help offset the challenges already faced.

Paul Butterly, FGM Claymore

As our focus is 100% on the dealer network, we are confident that this will continue. Dealers will have to alter their showrooms to accommodate social distancing. Machines will still breakdown and need replacing. With people spending more time at home opportunities will be created for our industry.

Gary Tully, Stiga

The dealer network like all business has suffered during the pandemic, but there is more good news with our

dealers than bad. The dealers that adapted quickly and safely are reporting growth in sales. As a supplier being able to get stock to them to satisfy demand has been greatly appreciated and acknowledged.

Mike Cameron, Catalyst

A majority of our dealers have remained open throughout lockdown and have benefited from doing so. Many dealers have experienced what you might call a 'reality check' and have re-focussed, re-energised and moved forward. Simple tactical activities like phoning customers, keeping in touch and being more pro-active have returned often unexpected and greatly appreciated financial and reputation-enhancing rewards and loyalty from these customers.

Focusing on and understanding outstanding orders, work in progress, workshop efficiency, planning (and prioritising retail work over internal jobs) etc, have all resulted in higher income levels and improved cash flow for dealers.

Rupert Price, Price Turfcare

On a general industry level, I think we'll definitely see a reduction in the smaller dealers and in manufacturers' and distributors' sales teams. Once the furlough period is over at the end of September, we'll see a raft of redundancies across all sectors as companies restructure their businesses. From a Price Turfcare perspective, I'm confident that our network is sound. Like every other dealer in the country, ours have been seriously challenged, but they are strong businesses. We're still looking to expand our dealer network.

Des Boyd, Kramp

The dealer network has handled the challenges tremendously well and recent events have encouraged dealers to operate more efficiently with reduced headcount. Valuable lessons will have been learnt and productivity improved.

David Hart, Kubota

The ones that have not optimised their businesses and do not have a good online presence will go.

James Buchanan, Ibcos

Like all industries associated with agri, grounds care and construction we have seen some impact from customers either reducing in size or closing their businesses; or on the other hand some thriving in the new normal. Ibcos dealers are made up of 85% agri, therefore were trading throughout but with a lack of commitment to place orders in April and May. This is now back to normal trading levels. Although the majority of grounds care dealers closed during the early part of lockdown, we didn't see much impact from that sector.

Peter Chaloner, Cobra

We're confident that dealers are very resilient, even through the toughest of times. We will do everything possible to support our dealers with healthy retained margins and a broad range of products which are effectively marketed. There will be no change to any projects going ahead.

QUESTION SEVEN

Finally, the SWOT analysis (Strengths; Weaknesses; Opportunities; Threats) in regard to your business - or the industry as a whole:

STRENGTHS

Craig Hoare, Hayter / Toro

Dealers are resourceful and have greater ability to adapt to the changing world.

Des Boyd, Kramp

Strong distribution network with well-established customer loyalty.

Mark Earles, Makita

We have a large salesforce to support dealers, which we can adapt to different market sectors and an aggressive new product introduction programme for our cordless range and our focus remains on implementing this.

Ken Brewster, Husqvarna

Experience, knowledge and passion for the product, plus customer service levels.

David Hart, Kubota

There will always be a need for green, open spaces and food.

James Buchanan, Ibcos

Strong territory and account planning to ensure we can meet the needs of our dealers.

David Withers, Iseki

Resilient entrepreneurial people. Customer focus. Strong long term relationships.

Paul Butterly FGM Claymore

We are well established, independent and have a broad product offering.

Mike Cameron, Catalyst

A large number of dealerships managed to stay open due to be considered part of an essential service.

Gary Tully, Stiga

Staff, stock availability, our brands, our flexibility.

Rupert Price, Price Turfcare

Nimble and dynamic company.



WEAKNESSES

Mark Earles, Makita

The current environment has of course meant that supply issues can be challenging, not just for us, but across the industry. We are monitoring any potential impact and keeping merchants as informed as possible and finding ways to work together to reduce any delays.

David Withers, Iseki

Not enough long-term thinking. Too much emphasis on the urgent rather than the important.

Craig Hoare, Hayter / Toro

With a restricted selling period during the spring, will dealers have built up enough 'fat' to survive the winter?

Ken Brewster, Husqvarna

Dealers are generally in rural or semi-rural locations, often invisible to the majority of suburban consumers. Also some sectors are slow to embrace change (online, technology, battery and robotics).

Des Boyd, Kramp

Need more investment in new technologies as outdated procedures are unhelpful to future prosperity.

James Buchanan, Ibcos

Communicating the value proposition of our comprehensive system to smaller dealers in our portfolio.

Paul Butterly, FGM Claymore

So reliant on the weather conditions.

Gary Tully, Stiga

Supply chain vulnerability in some areas outside of our control.

Rupert Price, Price Turfcare

Lack of additional franchises / products.

David Hart, Kubota

Some parts of the industry can be stuck in the past.

OPPORTUNITIES

Paul Butterly, FGM Claymore

We are continuously looking for dealers who want to offer excellent products with good margins and who are not just focusing on shifting boxes, competing with online traders.

James Buchanan, Ibcos

Products are being built to look sexy and work seamlessly with the existing Ibcos Gold product helping to enhance the overall use for dealers and solve current problems.

Peter Melrose, Ego

Revitalised consumer interest in the dealer channel.

Craig Hoare, Hayter / Toro

Dealers have the ability to be more nimble than large national retailers and can create more relevant services based on changing consumer needs.

Des Boyd, Kramp

Creating more appealing retail offerings will attract a different and more varied customer base for dealers.

Ken Brewster, Husqvarna

To make the dealer network more visible and accessible to the majority of the population and to embrace change.

Mark Earles, Makita

The lockdown has forced us all to embrace new technologies and this is positive for the industry.

Rupert Price, Price Turfcare

Reduced spend of end-users will see investment in a versatile machine, not a dedicated machine that does a single job.

Gary Tully, Stiga

Online, technology adoption, new products.

David Withers, Iseki

Embracing new technologies.

David Hart, Kubota

Online.

THREATS

Des Boyd, Kramp

Intense competition, with the growth of virtual businesses leading that charge.

Mark Earles, Makita

There is a very real risk of a second wave of Covid-19. The underlying threat that should not be ignored, is people not learning from the first.

Ken Brewster, Husqvarna

Not adapting and evolving. Urbanisation. Climate change.

Craig Hoare, Hayter / Toro

Changing technology can be a threat to dealers if they ignore it. Robotics and battery are fast growing trends in the industry and dealers need to embrace them.

Gary Tully, Stiga

Not learning from the past three months.

Peter Melrose, Ego

Supply chain impact in the event of a 2nd wave.

James Buchanan, Ibcos

We continue working hard at improving our service levels to ensure customer issues are resolved quickly to ensure satisfaction.

Paul Butterly, FGM Claymore

Further uncertainty, weather, economy and the effects of Covid.

David Hart, Kubota

Mediocrity.

David Withers, Iseki

A chase to the bottom on price and quality.

Rupert Price, Price Turfcare

Loss of key employees.



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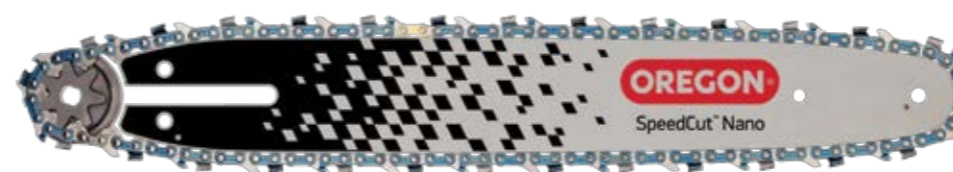
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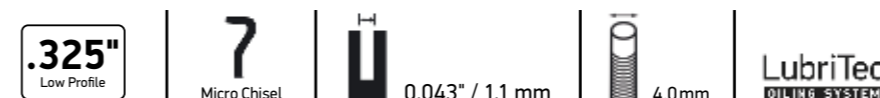
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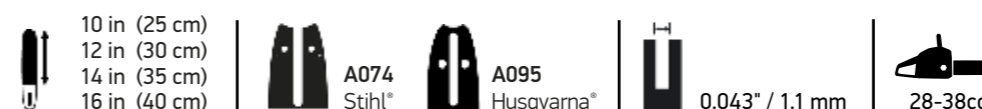
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80TXL Saw Chain



80TXL Guide Bar





A TWO-WAY STREET

Some of the fleet at Enville

For many turf professionals, working through the Covid-19 pandemic has been a trial of patience and anticipation, while attempting to carry on with their daily maintenance routines. Throughout, they relied heavily on a plethora of machinery and equipment. TurfPro Editor and Service Dealer Contributor Laurence Gale Msc, MBPR spoke to several top professionals to find out just how vital it is to have a strong relationship with their local dealer

Initially, under all the confusion of the early lockdown restrictions, no one really understood what dealerships could and could not do.

It was clearly a case for turf professionals across the country to ring up their local dealer and see what services they could offer. After a few unsettling weeks it soon became clear that the dealers were keen to offer a full range of services that complied with Government Covid-19 guidelines.

While trying to restrict

unscheduled public access, many dealerships were hoping to conduct as much trade as possible remotely.

Many dealers under lockdown found themselves offering more online sales than ever before, combined with an increase in services such as click-and-collect and local drop-offs.

Being able to carry out repairs and sell spare parts efficiently is often the mainstay of every dealership with the aim of maintaining and building their reputation and relationships with customers.

Crucially, of course, a reliable back-up service is pivotal in attracting and retaining customer loyalty – particularly with professional users. It has certainly been a tough few months for both parties, but now with restrictions being eased, everyone hopes that we should start seeing business coming back to normality.

To gauge how the professional customers have coped during the lockdown, I recently conducted several interviews with some of the UK's leading practitioners.



Leicester Tigers' Head Groundsman, Ed Mowe

LEICESTER TIGERS



First up is Ed Mowe, Head Groundsman at Leicester Tigers. Ed has been in his post for three-and-a-half years. Prior to that he worked at St George's Park and Leicester City Football Club.

The Tigers' famous Welford Road stadium regularly houses 20,000 plus fans roaring on their team with its pitch often bearing the brunt of a busy and bruising rugby season. Ed and his staff of three also look after the seating and terracing areas at the ground as well as all the surrounding car parks and public access ways. When you add into this the training pitches and facilities at Oval Park too, you start to get a feel for the mammoth task they face on a daily basis.

Ed told me he currently uses Platts Harris and Farol, who are their local machinery suppliers. Ed is also fortunate that the club are sponsored by STIHL, which provides it with a range of products directly.

In the past five years, Platts Harris has supplied the club with several pieces of kit – namely two Dennis Pro 34 rotary mowers, one Dennis G860 and a Team Electric sprayer. As for Farol, it has provided some great second-hand machinery consisting of a battery-powered John Deere Gator, Weidemann Terra Spike and three Allett RM34s.

Ed has also recently purchased two new Club Cadet Infinity electric



Tigers use Platts Harris and Farol

cylinder cassette mowers.

Ed said, "I feel it's important to buy from reputable, reliable, local dealers who can respond quickly and provide great back-up on servicing and parts. It's so important to have a good working relationship and to keep in touch on a regular basis.

"As for servicing," Ed continued, "with the machinery we tend to do the basic tasks ourselves and call upon our dealers when we need specialist help or major repairs.

"Working during the lockdown was somewhat eerie with hardly anyone about. However, it was reassuring to know that we could call on these dealers when needed."

DURHAM COUNTY CRICKET CLUB



I also spoke to Vic Demain, Head Groundsman at Durham County Cricket Club.

Vic told me he uses two dealers, Thomas Sherriff Grounds care and Shorts of Whitburn Turf Machinery. For servicing and sharpening he uses Anthony Chambers of Shorts, who comes out to site to work on the machines.

In the past five years, Vic says the club bought a Dennis 34D and a Dennis Razor Ultra from Sherriff's, both for use as part of the preparations for last year's ICC Cricket World Cup.

Vic said, "For general repairs and servicing I moved to Shorts after Anthony visited the ground and

promised good service at a better price than the main dealerships. Having the machines repaired on site rather than being taken away is far more convenient for us as it lessens the down time and saves on transport charges."

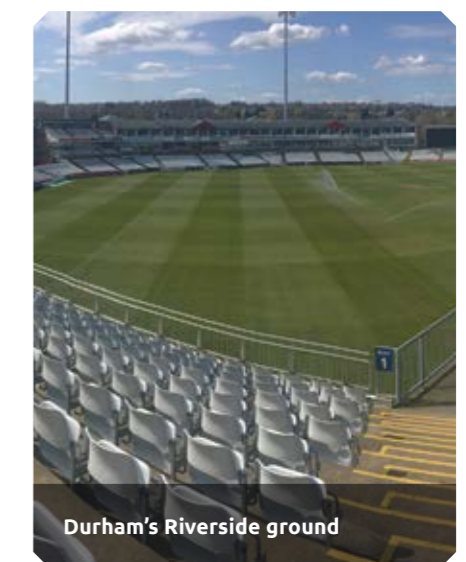
During lockdown, Vic said that thankfully nothing broke down or required work. "As the venue was completely closed down," he said, "no one would have been allowed on site."

Vic does say that on occasion he has bought smaller purchases from online retailers, such as a tractor-mounted sprayer, but for the bigger items he would always prefer to buy from dealers or direct from the company.

He also says that they carry out minor maintenance in house. "But for the bigger jobs," he confirms, "we prefer to get dealers in as it saves on our working hours being used up."



Vic Demain, right



Durham's Riverside ground



The Rugby School team with an Infinicut



Rugby School's James Mead

RUGBY SCHOOL

Another high-profile Head Groundsman I spoke to was James Mead, who has been in charge at Rugby School for nearly 15 years. Prior to that James was Head Groundsman at Millfield School.

Rugby School is one of the older independent schools in Britain, offering coeducational day and boarding schooling in Warwickshire. The school grounds and vast sporting facilities total some 250 acres.

Like many top fee-paying public schools, its reputation is always quantified by its academic, cultural

and sporting successes. There is, however, no doubt in my mind that much of this success is being driven by the provision of high-quality horticultural standards and the provision of top-quality playing surfaces.

The improvement to the playing surfaces, particularly the rugby and cricket pitches located at the Close, has attracted a lot of interest with several professional teams using the grounds for matches and training.

Since arriving at the school some 13 years ago James has, over time, convinced the school to invest resources into recruiting more staff and new machinery, while at the same time increasing maintenance and renovation budgets. The net results are the transformed state and appearance of the school grounds.

One of James's longer-serving staff members, Graham Lloyd, with nearly 50 years' service, has seen many of the beneficial changes resulting from this investment, particularly from the purchase of new machinery.

Graham is the school's dedicated mechanic, responsible for maintaining the large fleet of machinery, with over 70 mower pieces to maintain.

The school has always had a policy of buying machinery outright and James always involves his staff when choosing new equipment as they are the ones who will be using it on a daily basis.

James says he likes to buy from local dealerships, namely The Mowershop (Northampton) Ltd based in West Haddon; Browns at Daventry; Murley Agriculture & Garden Machinery based in Warwick; and TH White's Redditch branch. "Over the years," James told me, "these dealers have got to understand my needs and expectations."

As for spares and repairs, James has always relied on the good working relationship he has built up with the dealers, knowing nine times out of ten they can complete the work and deliver spare parts within 48 hours.

"There will always be a need to replace and upgrade old machinery," he said. "In recent years we have begun looking at trialling and buying into new hybrid technology and battery-powered machinery."

He has already invested in some battery-powered STIHL equipment and has trialled the Infinicut battery-powered mowers.



Jacob Shellis of Farol with Enville Golf Club Course Manager Andy Wood (and Leo)



Enville Golf Club

ENVILLE GOLF CLUB



On the whole, golf clubs tend to spend and invest the most money on machinery. As such they expect a lot for their money. They often tend to buy in bulk, enlisting the help of their local dealers to come up with the most appealing and appropriate deals.

The choice of machinery is often down to a number of deciding factors – the head greenkeeper's preference, what the current condition of the machinery they own is like and what financial deals the clubs are part of.

In 2019, I attended the official handover of a large fleet of John Deere machinery supplied by Farols to Enville Golf Club. It was a culmination of two years' work by the club's Course Manager Andy Wood, backed by the forward-thinking board. Andy was keen to point out the decision to invest in John Deere equipment was based on several commercial benefits the club will gain from the partnership.

Andy has had a long relationship with John Deere, having worked closely with the company at his three previous clubs, Robin Hood, Cosby and the Belfry. Andy said, "It's all about relationships and the back-up and servicing of the machinery we are investing in."

Like all golf clubs, Enville goes through machinery cycles, and when

these cycles come to an end, it is often time for the club to reflect and look at new opportunities.

In Andy's case, with Toro their previous main supplier, their deal was coming to an end, so the club took the opportunity last year to start the process of looking at what the three leading suppliers (Ransomes, Toro and Deere) could offer. A range of demos took place and after a long debate the club decided to go with John Deere.

It was not necessarily about price, but more about the back-up, warranty and service John Deere offered along with the support given by Jacob Shellis from Farol.

"For me, it's always been about building a good, sound relationship and trust in the supplier, its products and the dealer, and that people deliver on their promises, especially through the tender process," said Andy. "Farol has always supported me very well on the service side with warranty claims, tournament support, training programmes and the like.

"Things like cut quality should be a given at this level," he added. "More important is that should any problems or issues arise, they get dealt with straight away and we're not left stranded with broken down machines and unnecessary downtime."

In total the club has invested in 28 John Deere machines that include mowers, Gators, trailers and tractors. This is coupled with the fact that Farol was able to supply additional required equipment such as Sisis Veemo MK2,

Trilo BL400, Fleming four-tonne trailer and the ever popular Ventrac 4500 with five attachments.

Andy, took on the role of Course Manager at Enville in June 2017 and since his appointment has worked tirelessly with his 15 staff to improve the condition of the course by improving the playing surfaces, opening areas up for regenerating heather and improving the golfing experience at the club.

PLAYING SURFACE PRESSURE

Across all sports, the investment in machinery must be at an all-time high. There is so much pressure on our turf professionals to produce consistently high-quality playing surfaces. Staff must be efficient and flexible. This was clearly evidenced during the recent lockdown when many clubs and facilities kept up maintenance regimes with a skeleton staff. Now sport is up and running again, the relationship which turf professionals have with their local dealer is more important than ever.

Turf Pros are lucky to have so many dedicated machinery dealers and specialist manufacturers in the UK who go beyond the pale to help ensure they have the best customer service and access to a wide choice of machinery. There's no doubt the servicing dealers of the country contribute significantly to making the working lives of our grounds professionals that much easier.

NEW OWNERS, NEW PRODUCTS



Walterscheid's new two-stage gearbox is a key element of recent ultra high-density baler introductions from Case IH and New Holland

It's three years since Service Dealer profiled the history, facilities and products of drive component supplier Walterscheid. Last autumn MARTIN RICKATSON revisited the German firm to learn more about its new owners and new launches

There have been some significant developments at German driveshaft component specialist Walterscheid since *Service Dealer's* last visit back in 2017. While many dealers who stock its PTO shafts, hitch components and other ancillaries will perhaps have noticed relatively few changes, the

company, which was then shortly to celebrate its centenary (2019) and had been part of manufacturing conglomerate GKN since 1966, underwent some major changes in the months after our last article.

In early January 2018 its parent firm, with component manufacturing interests spanning the vehicle sector, from cars to aircraft to tractors,

attracted the attentions of an investor which felt the array of individual businesses that made up GKN could potentially be more profitable as separate concerns. After making a number of offers to the firm's shareholders, the investment firm, Melrose, a London-based company founded in 2003 that specialises in boosting the performance of

businesses it acquires, bought GKN in March 2018 for £8.1 billion.

One year later, Melrose announced it had agreed to split Walterscheid from GKN and sell the business unit to private equity firm One Equity Partners for US\$262.7 million (approximately £200m). Under the new owner, and the continued leadership of CEO Wolfgang Lemser, Walterscheid Powertrain Group was established to operate as an independent business.

"Walterscheid Powertrain Group will further enhance its global position as a customer-oriented and innovative company with a clear focus on technological leadership, quality, and sustainability," said Mr Lemser.

"It is our strategy to grow the business and develop the next generation of smart, connected powertrain systems according to our customers' needs."

NEW GROUP FORMATION

The new Walterscheid Powertrain Group also encompasses the Mechanics Driveshafts, Rockford Fan Clutches and Uni-Cardan brands and product lines. Other members of the group include Aquadrive, which is involved in marine drive systems, and the Off-Highway Powertrain Services unit,



which provides industry with a variety of services including support, maintenance and drive system monitoring.

"This makes the group a global supplier of interconnected and intelligent powertrain solutions, and provides a platform for substantial synergies with regard to technology and innovation transfer," suggested Mr Lemser.

Ahead of last autumn's Agritechnica, Walterscheid revealed multiple new products and developments, many mirroring the general trend in agricultural technology towards enhanced power density as well as greater efficiency and productivity.

"In almost every piece of agricultural machinery, powertrains nowadays are expected to deliver more power within an unchanged installation space," Mr Lemser pointed out.

"We have targeted these demands not only with our drive shafts, but also with our attachment systems and PTO clutches."

Among developments in the latter category, the firm's new K65/6 damping clutch is suited to power outputs developing torque in excess of 3,000Nm, and is said to be the first micro-sized damping clutch capable of delivering this level of performance. It does not require any maintenance or lubricants, helping operators to reduce costs, says Walterscheid.

NEW TWO-STAGE TRANSMISSION FEATURES IN CNHI BIG BALERS

Walterscheid has recently grown its activities as a development partner for drive system

technologies destined for agricultural implements, focusing on developing customised drive concepts and then producing all the relevant components on behalf of the end product manufacturer. At Agritechnica, Walterscheid presented a number of new technologies arising from this type of collaboration, including a two-speed powershift gearbox for ultra high density big balers.

The new gearbox is a key element of the recently introduced New Holland BigBaler 1290 High Density model and its Case IH equivalent in the CNH Industrial stable, the LB436 HD. The new machines are claimed to pack up to 22% more material into each bale compared with the previous standard configuration balers in their respective ranges with the same bale section dimensions.

Walterscheid's contribution to the balers' design included the development of the balers' transmission with gearshift overload protection, said to enable high power transfer and ensure driveline safety. To begin baling, the tractor PTO is engaged at 850rpm and the baler flywheel then speeds up in two stages, from 0-684rpm and then from 684-1,244rpm. A message displayed on the tractor's ISOBUS display then indicates that second gear can be engaged and tractor engine speed can be increased to bring the PTO speed to 1,000rpm, raising the speed of the baler flywheel to its maximum 1,445rpm. In this way maximum power can be achieved with minimal shock loading on the driveline, suggests Walterscheid.

To begin baling, the tractor PTO is engaged at 850 rpm and the baler flywheel then speeds up in two stages, from 0-684rpm and from 684-1,244rpm



Previewed at Agritechnica 2017, Walterscheid has now put into commercial production its DS 2.0 hydraulic top link with integral hydraulic shock absorber

HYDRAULIC STABILISER DEVELOPMENTS

The last generation of Walterscheid's HGST hydraulic stabilisers is its primary new product in the tractor attachment department, with the new units designed to minimise mounted implement impact on the tractor whether at work or on the road. An active transition between floating and rigid positions is achieved irrespective of lift height or link arm length.

The new HGST stabilisers, which feature a larger hydraulic piston diameter for improved performance, incorporate a number of product developments, including a stroke limiter development that can be set to prevent collision between the lower links and the tractor tyres in situations where the user has switched from a Category 2

implement to one with a Category 3 hitch. The new HGST units have been designed to enable easy exchange with previous models, says Walterscheid.

CAPTURING DATA

Beyond increasing power output, the company's powertrain engineers have been turning their attention to capturing load and status data. The Smart & Connected technology developed by Walterscheid Powertrain Group allows sensors capable of capturing and delivering live data from within the powertrain to be integrated in critical drive components. By adding tailored sensor systems to the range of drive components, the technology paves the way for the powertrain to be interconnected to the vehicle control system, for example, or to a remote maintenance diagnostic system, says Walterscheid. Using special

analysis algorithms, the load-based sensor data obtained from the powertrain are able to help increase drive efficiency by recognising excessive loads and helping provide early detection and avoidance of wear-related downtime. This, says the firm, improves reliability, and allows the drive components to be serviced according to the loads to which they are exposed. The technology is compatible with an array of Walterscheid's products and applications.

HYDRAULIC TOP LINK DEVELOPMENT NOW AVAILABLE

Previewed at the last Walterscheid international press meeting and at Agritechnica 2017, the firm has now put into commercial production its DS 2.0 hydraulic top link, which incorporates an integral hydraulic shock absorber, allowing the unit

DS top link benefits are said to include enhanced driving safety, better grip, higher productivity, reduced wear and improved float capability



HGST hydraulic stabilisers are designed to minimise mounted implement impact on the tractor



The K65/6 damping clutch is said to be the first micro-sized unit suited to power outputs developing torque in excess of 3,000Nm



to absorb shock loads rather than transferring them to the tractor.

The DS 2.0 top link is a suitable replacement for any standard top link, says Walterscheid. The key advantage is during transport, when the tractor/implement combination's driving performance is enhanced because contact between the front

wheels and the ground is much improved, claims the firm. Among the positive consequences are said to be enhanced safety in all driving situations, better grip and higher overall productivity. Components are also subject to reduced wear.

The design principle is also said to result in improved float

capability for the attached implement, courtesy of the vacuum generated in the cylinder.

In practice, the implement can adopt a variety of tilt angles relative to the tractor's longitudinal axis, and therefore is better able to adjust to changing ground contours.



RESEARCH REVEALS READINESS OF CONSUMERS TO SPEND WITH DEALERS



Kate Godber

Research from gardentrader.co.uk has found that site users have been looking to purchase new garden equipment from their local dealership, despite reports that the retail industry is struggling post-lockdown writes Kate Godber of GardenTrader

This research was conducted between February and July this year to identify the effectiveness of Garden Trader in the sales & marketing process.

Garden Trader found that 77.4% of users were either extremely likely or likely to visit the independent dealer they had found through the site. This data suggests Garden Trader is responsible for 5,871 new customers for the site's subscribed dealers over the period of the research, so on average, the site is sending 37 new customers to each registered dealer.

Kate Godber, site manager for

Garden Trader said, "The BRC reported a 40% decrease in footfall in July. This is not good news for the high street, however it is encouraging to see consumers are still looking to purchase garden machinery. With gardening being the perfect activity to do when you have more time at home, as well as the overall health and wellbeing benefits, we are glad people have been looking to support their local dealers as they take on new gardening projects."

"For dealers, the results highlight the importance of having a presence online through the likes of Garden Trader. With 79% of users finding the

site extremely helpful or helpful, we are confident that it's a useful resource for consumers looking to purchase and dealers looking to sell."

Garden Trader is now in its fourth year and continues its success thanks to sustained support from dealers and manufacturers. The Garden Trader Forum, for dealers only, also recently launched, allowing dealers to share experiences in confidence.

Dealers not already listed on the site can set up their profile, for as little as £96 +VAT per year, by visiting www.gardentrader.co.uk



HOW TALLIS AMOS GROUP (TAG) CONTINUES TO THRIVE AS A BUSINESS DURING DIFFICULT TIMES

The pandemic has had a major impact on all industries, and unfortunately, the agricultural equipment sector is no exception. According to the figures from the Agricultural Engineers' Association (AEA), the total tractor registrations in May 2020 were almost 42 percent lower than they were at the same time last year, which is an alarming sign.

That's why it's so vital for dealers today to deliver value across all aspects of their business, particularly service. To find out how a dealership can thrive during such a difficult time, we've reached out to Richard Allard, the Group Service Manager from Tallis Amos Group (TAG), who sets the strategy for TAG's service department and has a manager reporting to him from every depot. He shared a few interesting tips with us.

Why TAG Continues to Succeed

Founded in 2012, TAG is one of the largest John Deere dealerships in the UK, with four main branches in Evesham, Bibury, Leominster and Narberth. Its facilities and services cover the Cotswolds, the West Midlands, Bristol, Welsh Borders, down to South and West Wales.

When asked why TAG has such a prominent presence in the farming industry, Richard boiled it down to three major factors – customer service, technology adoption and diversification.

"We have always been a family business," said Richard, "so our customers can expect care, response, and friendly help."

When it comes to technology adoption, Richard went on to say that TAG has had its "own John Deere Ag Management Solutions consultants for a number of years, long before any other dealership in the area." Today, TAG also works with Ibcos, a major dealership management software supplier in the UK, to keep itself current on all the latest technologies.

"We're also quite a diverse business," Richard continued. "We work with vegetable growers, solid crop growers, and biogas businesses in the area. As you move across our trading area, we also help farming businesses ranging from potatoes to dairy and livestock."

Thanks to this forward-thinking approach, TAG was able to not just retain steady operations during the pandemic, but to keep advancing as well.

Boosting Service Efficiency by Moving Away from Paper

Just a few years ago, most of TAG's depots relied almost entirely on paper-based processes for service.

"That means timesheets and paper scanners," said Richard. "Then we would have to switch that over and input it into an electronic system."

This changed in 2018, when TAG became one of the first dealers in the UK to implement the Ibcos Gold Service mobile app.

"We had been looking for a solution for a long time," said Richard. "We wanted something that was mobile phone-based and had the ability to record hours."

"The link to our dealership management system was what stood out. Gold Service will put the hours straight onto the job card. If we had gone with any of the other systems, we would've needed an employee to get that information into our system. That repetition of effort was not much further forward than running paper timesheets."

"That is where we've managed to see a massive improvement in terms of efficiency."

This technology has also allowed technicians to submit their job cards and time sheets in a timely manner.

"Historically, it was the technicians who were the biggest hold-up, getting their job cards written up and their time sheets in," said Richard. "That created a bottleneck because we were invoicing monthly, and we ended up with a big workload towards month end."

"Now we have a much more consistent workload, and the technicians are no longer a bottleneck. As soon as they finish their job, they are prompted to complete the job in the system."

Because of this level of efficiency, TAG is now able to invoice its customers on a weekly basis instead of doing so monthly, which means that the business can get paid sooner.

Final Word

Ultimately, by increasing service efficiency, TAG was able to make cuts that freed up some additional cash, which is vital in today's unpredictable economy.

"We have been able to reduce our administration staff," said Richard. "Now, with all our depots, we are running with just two administrators, and their tasks include warranties and service work."

If you'd like to learn more about TAG and its ongoing successes, be sure to see our full interview with Richard Allard at www.ibcos.co.uk/dealer-success-stories.

To learn more about Ibcos visit: www.ibcos.co.uk or call +44 (0) 1202 714200



a Constellation Software Company

RAISING THE PROFILE

The retail arrangements of materials handler makers are coming under pressure as full-line tractor firms lean on dealers to focus on the machines they make or market. Manufacturers, though, are taking the opportunity to strengthen their networks and sign new partners.
MARTIN RICKATSON reports on developments at Manitou



Earlier this year Manitou signed RW Crawford as its dealer for Essex, Kent, Sussex and Hampshire, with a sub-dealer arrangement for Suffolk

While most farmers have a number of tractors, many have only one materials handler, and it may well work every day of the year on a livestock or mixed farm, and many hours of the day during the busiest periods on an arable enterprise. Back in the 1970s, farmers in the UK were some of the first in Europe to adopt the rough terrain forklift from construction and industry to carry out farm tasks, and early in the next decade also began to lead the way in adoption of telescopic handlers.

It is a trend that has never wavered, with the UK continuing to be one of the strongest markets in Europe for telescopic handlers in particular. While specialist materials handler makers such as Manitou, Merlo and JCB have long dominated the market, tractor manufacturers are increasingly keen on a slice of the action, with the likes of New Holland, Case IH, Massey Ferguson and Claas being joined more recently by Fendt, all offering machines made in-house or built to their specification, while John Deere has a marketing alliance with Kramer.



Dedication to both the customer and the brand are qualities Manitou is seeking in its dealers, says Mark Ormond



Gordon Himsworth and Ivor Binns founded Manitou's first subsidiary at Chandlers Ford, near Southampton Docks

The upshot of all this has been recent franchise movement, with some manufacturers choosing to change dealers in certain areas, while in other cases dealers have themselves sought out new franchises. French maker Manitou, whose UK operation has announced a number of new dealer appointments over the past year or so, is among those firms which have restructured elements of their networks.

CHANGES IN EAST AND SOUTH-EAST ENGLAND

Among the bigger recent changes the manufacturer has made has been the agricultural sector replacement of long-time East Anglia and South-East England multi-branch dealer agricultural and construction dealer Ernest Doe with Essex-based RW Crawford, which has expanded its business in recent years by opening new depots near Ashford in Kent and at Billingshurst in West Sussex, to cover that county and Hampshire. An AGCO dealer for Massey Ferguson, Fendt and Valtra in Essex, and for the latter two brands in Kent and Sussex, despite the presence of a telehandler in the MF product line – and more recently in the Fendt one – it has traditionally always had an additional handler franchise.

“The opportunity to hold the agricultural franchise for Manitou was a prestigious moment for us as a family-run business commencing our 40th year, and our sales, service and parts departments promptly underwent Manitou training to enable us to quickly get up to speed,” said Wes Crawford, managing director, at the time of the company’s appointment back in January.

“We pride ourselves on offering the best service across our territory, with 28 fully-equipped vans and each depot being centrally located. Working closely with Manitou, we set out to quickly ensure we could provide the same level of service for Manitou users, including those with machines already on-farm under warranty contracts. We also ensured that our territory sales managers were quickly up to speed on the product range to enable them to put the products’ advantages over to potential and existing customers.”

RW Crawford has built new branches at all its locations over recent years, creating two new depots to cover its new AGCO territories in Kent and Sussex, and building a new headquarters in Essex close to Writtle College. With its East Anglian territory for Manitou stretching much further north into Suffolk, though, Crawfords and Manitou came to an agreement with Pakenham-based Suffolk Agri Centre for the latter to act as a sub-dealer to Crawfords, with responsibility for sales and after-sales support in the county.

“Staff from our three branches and from Suffolk Agri Centre attended extensive sales and service training courses at Manitou during December 2019 to ensure they were ready to support customers from January 2020, with spare parts and wholegoods stock delivered to depots during the first week of January,” explains Wes Crawford.

NEW DEALER FOR NORTH WALES

Meanwhile, Manitou has recently made a new dealer appointment in north Wales, where Glyn Lloyd and Sons has been appointed as the company’s agricultural and construction dealer. The business was founded as a farm diversification in 1979, but is now the primary part of the Lloyd family business. Until recently, the Abergele-based concern has focused on the construction machinery sector, selling and supporting a range of products for the sector, such as Takeuchi mini excavators.

“We like our dealers to focus on our brand and on providing exceptional customer service,” says Mark Ormond, managing director of Manitou’s UK business.

“Glyn Lloyd carries a good stock of machines and spare parts, and ensures its service staff have the knowledge to maintain the machines they sell. This is an important part of our UK territory, and this appointment will strengthen our ability to support customers here.”

COMPACT EQUIPMENT DEALER

Having launched an extended range of compact equipment product (CEP) machines at LAMMA 2019, Manitou’s UK arm has also appointed specialist (CEP)



In 1980 the UK business moved to larger premises just over the Dorset border, at Verwood, where it remains

“WE LIKE OUR DEALERS TO FOCUS ON OUR BRAND AND ON PROVIDING EXCEPTIONAL CUSTOMER SERVICE”

dealers in certain areas, including mid Wales, where Ryan Martin Agricultural Sales Ltd is its new agent. The firm's CEP offering has been extended in recent years to include skid-steer loaders, tracked loaders and articulated loaders, largely inherited and developed from Manitou's purchase of US firm Gehl's handling products.

Ryan Martin founded his business in 2010, focusing on sales and after-sales support of used agricultural machinery. Today the company sells and supports 150 used machines each year from its base in Trefeglwys, Caerswmsmost, in mid Wales.

"We were enormously impressed with the customer dedication of this young business," says Mark Ormond.

"When we saw how much Ryan and his team have achieved since the company was founded only 10 years ago, it became clear they would quickly prove their ability to sell and support new machines."

With a significant population of livestock farmers in the area having compact handler requirements, the firm had been looking for a supplier that would suit its customer base, explains Ryan.

"The Manitou CEP line fits that requirement. We signed an agreement late last year, and parts and machine stock started arriving in Trefeglyws during the first week of January."

A POTTED HISTORY

Manitou lays claim to creating one of the first masted forklifts of its type, putting such a machine into commercial production just over 60 years ago, in 1958. The origins of the company can be traced back to 1870, when Alexandre Braud was born in the north-western French town of Petit Auverne. By 1898 he had founded an agricultural engineering business, repairing equipment and later manufacturing horse treadmill threshing machines. His sons Alexandre, born in 1900, and Marcel, three years younger, later joined the company. The former inherited the business, while Marcel moved to the nearby town of Ancenis, where he founded the Braud livestock feed business. The interruption of the Second World War meant this was mothballed for a time, and he went to work for an engineering company in Nantes, before later returning home. Here, under cover from

occupying forces, he began designing machines such as concrete block presses, concrete mixers, small tower cranes and trailers to help the post-war rebuilding of France.

Ancenis was liberated on 5 August 1944, but that same day Marcel Braud was shot by German soldiers. His widow, Andrée, decided to carry on the work he had begun, driven partly by the aptitude her 13 year-old son, Marcel junior, was showing for engineering. With the help of four staff, and the retrieval of some squirrelled-away machine tools, production of Marcel senior's inventions began.

In 1953, agricultural engineer Henri Faucheux, who had begun his own concrete mixer business but lacked the space for full-scale manufacturing, joined the firm as managing director, buying a 25% shareholding, with the business renamed Braud et Faucheux. The following year Marcel Braud junior completed his studies and joined the family firm. Seeking ways to make the business more efficient, he suggested the company purchase a hand-propelled masted handler, and it was from the success of this that the idea for the first Manitou forklift was conceived.

In 1958, a McCormick International Farmall Super Cub was purchased, its differential reversed, a 500kg-capacity mast mounted on the rear, a counterweight installed and power steering later added. The finished design, the MC5, was subsequently patented and the name Manitou, a blend of 'manutention' (handling) and 'tout' (all/everything), was registered. Production of the first rough terrain forklifts then commenced.

The company began to develop a dealer network largely through International Harvester agents, and co-operation with IH and the designers at its factory in St Dizier, close to Paris, saw an upgraded MC6 model, based on the larger, longer McCormick 137 tractor, soon designed.

In 1969 the firm's acquisition and adaptation of a 4wd Deutz tractor led to the design of the first 4wd Manitou forklifts, the 4RM 20D and the later 4RM 25D. That year Manitou produced its 10,000th forklift, while a year

later, Henri Faucheux left the company, his shares being bought by the Braud family. With forklift production growing rapidly, manufacturing of cranes and concrete mixers ceased. In 1973, Braud et Faucheux began planning its first purpose-built factory in Ancenis.

Although small numbers of Manitou machines were being sold through agents in Germany, Belgium and Portugal, Marcel Braud junior, promoted in 1970 to head the family business, decided to boost export potential by creating subsidiaries in markets with the greatest potential. His sister Jacqueline had married an Englishman, Gordon Himsforth, and it was he who helped create a UK arm. After showing three machines at the 1971 International Building and Construction Exhibition in London's Olympia, the following year Gordon, along with fellow Englishman Ivor Binns, led the foundation of Manitou UK, the group's first subsidiary, at Chandlers Ford, near Southampton Docks. Creation of a further 25 global subsidiaries followed, while in 1980 the UK business moved to larger premises just over the Dorset border, at Verwood, where it remains.

After retailing 50 machines in its inaugural year, Manitou (Site Lift) UK appointed John Iles as its first managing director. By 1975 Manitou machines accounted for almost half the UK total forklift market, on the back of new MB20C and MB25C models that introduced double-acting hydraulics. New sales had been targeted chiefly at the construction sector, but used units were increasingly finding their way onto farms, and a more robust version, the MB25P, was developed in 1974 to target new sales in the ag sector.

Led by John Walker, promoted from northern area manager to the UK business's first national agricultural manager, a number of Manitou agricultural specialist dealers were appointed under regional agents that included Milbro in the south-west, Maplin Plant in the east, Vales Plant north of London and Claude Fenton in the south. Dealers included both Maundrills and Brewer and Co in Wiltshire, Lott and Walne in Dorset,



Glyn Lloyd and Sons has been appointed as Manitou's agricultural and construction dealer for north Wales



The 1989 launch of the Manireach introduced a number of new design principles to Manitou telescopic handlers



Manitou forklifts began to become part of the UK farm scene in the late 1970s



Manitou's first telescopic boom handler, the Maniscopic, was launched in 1981



Marcel Braud operating one of the first Manitou forklifts, an MCS based on an International Farmall Cub

John Wilder in Berkshire and Oxfordshire, John A Seale in Hampshire, AT Oliver and Sons in Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire, John Riches (Agricultural) in Norfolk and Overland Machinery in Suffolk. Boulters of Banwell retailed the marque from Weston-Super-Mare, as did Old Square Tractors from Haverfordwest, and Rupert Bassett and Co at Ashton Keynes. R Lloyd (Tractors) looked after Cumbria and Dumfries, WM Rose was responsible for Peebleshire, and Agricar sold Manitou in Forfar.

As the 1980s began, masted forklift popularity on farms began to grow, as farmers identified forklifts' benefits of leading large traction wheels, improved manoeuvrability from rear-wheel steering, closer proximity of the operator to the load and higher lift capacity and height. In the UK, Manitou soon claimed half the agricultural forklift market, although stiff competition came from home firms such as Sanderson and Coventry Climax, plus other European makers.

Manitou's first telescopic boom handler, the Maniscopic,

was launched in 1981. Designed primarily for the construction industry, it also gradually found a home in farming, as dealers began to show more farmers the advantages of a telescopic boom over a mast. But being built with the construction market in mind, it was lacking some of the features more important in agriculture, such as good all-round vision, manoeuvrability and high traction.

As the decade progressed, and demand for telehandlers grew, Manitou's design engineers began work on a dedicated agricultural model. Launched in 1989, the Manireach 2600 featured a rear-mounted engine, mid-mounted boom pivot, equal-sized wheels, selectable rear/front/four-wheel and crab steering, and a cab with more glazing sited between the axles rather than over the front nearside wheel. While it has advanced considerably, and a side-engined design is now favoured, the basic principles of that design hold true today. Most recently, Manitou innovations have included its JSM (JoyStick and Move) joystick-mounted shuttle.

SERVICE DEALER DIGITAL TOOLKIT

UPDATE...

servicedealer.co.uk/dealer-digital-toolkit

NEARLY 200 DEALERS SIGN UP TO THE SERVICE DEALER DIGITAL TOOLKIT

Toolkit strikes a chord with UK dealerships

Since launching in June, the free Service Dealer Digital Toolkit has proven very popular with dealers trying to improve their presence online and through social media. Nearly 200 dealers have now signed up to it.

The toolkit, which has been created by content, social and web specialists The Ad Plain (TAP), with support from across the industry, shares practical tools and tips, specifically for dealerships, in order to improve their online footprint and ultimately lead to more sales.

Service Dealer owner, Duncan Murray-Clarke said, "We couldn't be happier to see dealers making use of the toolkit. We released modules bit by bit so that it was easier to digest and wasn't too daunting for

those dealers that lack confidence in this area. We hope dealers and their staff continue to dip in and out of it, to update their knowledge and inspire their communications with their customers and also potential customers."

Craig Walker, Group Sales Manager at Ross Agri Services Ltd, which has 2 branches in Scotland said, "I had a good read through the toolkit and found it informative. We've been able to implement a few changes in our communications to customers as a result and we are working on some other developments too."

With modules covering everything from getting the basics right when setting up your social media channels to tips on improving the SEO of your website, The Ad Plain

(TAP) has worked with dealers to ensure the

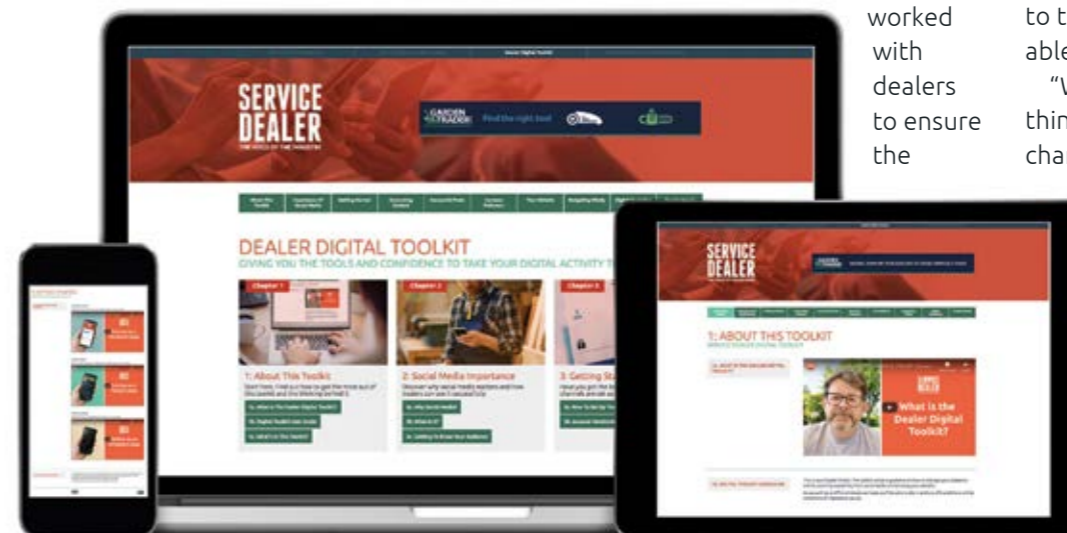
guidance is relevant, useful and easy to follow.

James Hayes from Hayes Machinery, Chris Gibson from GGM Groundscare and Pete McArthur from Strathbogie Forest & Garden all contributed to the toolkit and shared their top tips and expertise throughout. They even recorded videos during lockdown to demonstrate how they were taking advantage of the digital opportunity.

Duncan Murray-Clarke who also owns The Ad Plain (TAP) said, "We wanted the toolkit to be led by dealers and so we engaged with them from the very beginning. As a result, we've been able to develop resources that support different levels of marketing expertise, from complete beginners to those that want to take their communications to the next level. Every dealer will be able to take something away from it."

"We will also be adding to it, as things in the digital world are always changing. If there is something you would like to see in the toolkit please let us know, so that we can continue to support you."

If you haven't already benefited from using the toolkit, you can register for free at: Servicedealer.co.uk/dealer-digital-toolkit



PARTS DEPARTMENT MARKETING

Sara Hey, Vice President of Operations and Development at Bob Clements Inc, the dealership development company based in Missouri, shares the insights she offers US dealers with Service Dealer's UK readership every issue. This issue, the importance of marketing by department in your dealership



Each department in your dealership requires a different marketing plan. While some of your customers may cross over from department to department, the fact remains that each department offers a unique product. While all of the marketing in your dealership needs to be cohesive, we also have to understand what we are trying to market by department.

What should you market?

When we think about what we are marketing in our parts department, we have to focus on what we hope our customers will say when they leave the dealership. As we work with dealerships, our goal is for customers to leave saying: "They have great prices and seem to have everything I need."

This means that every piece of marketing we produce for the department needs to flow back to this statement. How do you help your customers know that you have great prices? Are you telling them how your fill rate out of stocking inventory is in the 90% range? In this example, we are trying to communicate that 9/10 times we will have exactly what you need, and the price is right.

How do we market parts?

Now that we know what we are trying to communicate through our marketing, the question you need to ask is: "How do you do it?"

It starts with knowing where your typical customers are. Depending on your lines, your area, and a number of other variables, this will be different for each person. What we do know is that if you identify where you can find your typical customer, there will be other people who fit the same mould right around them. This is because people like people who are like themselves. You typically surround yourself with people who are like you.

Facebook understood this concept and put together an option for business pages where you can market to "look-alike" audiences. They identified people who had the same likes and interests as your current followers and, for a fee, you can reach this group.

Implement a plan

One thing we see that is incredibly effective is a direct mail piece about a parts special you are having and then following it up with a phone call to make sure

the customer saw the piece. In addition, if you have a group of high-volume customers who buy parts, our goal is to get and keep more of their parts business. Some of our dealers put a programme together for these customers giving them a cheque back of 1% or 2% of their total money spent when they've spent a certain threshold on parts. They typically send these cheques out around the first of December and have a loyal customer for the next year. This 1% or 2% is typically a discount most of our dealers would give these customers already, so it's no additional money out of your pocket, it's just being delivered differently.

One last thing to keep in mind about your parts marketing is that typically you are your own best-kept secret. You have great prices and the parts in stock, but you never tell anyone about it. By simply putting a part on your counter with a sign that reads: "Check out our prices" and showing how well some of your parts are priced, you will move parts in your dealership and have your customers walking away from the parts counter saying, "Wow!".

SORRY, OUT OF STOCK!



Pete McArthur

Post-lockdown, demand in store and online has been high, says Pete McArthur of Strathbogie Forest & Garden

The store is now fully operational with hand sanitiser, signage and, of course, the face mask! It looks like we led the way on this one, north of the border. There are still very much mixed feelings about this though, with one farmer summing it up as closing the gate once the cows have bolted! In some sense I agree with this sentiment, thinking perhaps we should have worn face coverings back in February/March which might have prevented the spread and potentially the catastrophic effect on the economy – which no doubt we will be left to pay for over coming generations.

Looking back to when we opened the store, it was gleaming with fully-stocked shelves and shiny new products – which lasted about a week. Demand was high on all products, which was great until we came to restocking, which was a minefield. The problem does not seem unique to one manufacturer, where spare parts are taking longer to get delivered or even manufactured, and new products are now forecast for 2021!

All equipment lines seem to be moving, with battery particularly gaining momentum and the faithful Automower business booming.

The workshop is in full flow as well, with strong grass growth this year pushing some machines to their

limits and often the workshop too. This time of year, we normally see a little levelling out of demand due to holidays, but this year again has surprised us with demand in full flow.

Something that has been very welcome this year is the prompt payment from our account customers, which I think is a great sign of appreciation of our business and responsive service.

I think we all agree that business has most definitely changed this year in so many ways. We have all had to adapt very quickly. I think the use of social media has proven the best tool for interaction with our customer base. My only issue is keeping this consistent due to demand in store and online. At the start of Covid-19, customers seemed to be very patient and understanding, but as we exit lockdown, I think patience is starting to waiver. Customers assume you should have these items always in stock and ask, "why is it taking so long?"

Now the focus is starting to shift to autumn, with manufacturers showing their promos which always look good on paper, but we all know margins will get squeezed straight away.

The other phrase that's getting dropped into conversations is the Pre-Season Orders for 2021. Initially I thought this was going to be a tough order to compile, but I've somewhat changed my mindset on

this. The one thorn in our side this year has been rear-collecting ride-on mowers, where we've had limited uptake – whereas people are more than willing to purchase the more expensive front-deck riders and Automower sales have more than doubled, with enquiries still rolling in.

When having discussions with customers about which type of mower they're looking for it always seems to end up with "We're fed up with collecting grass and would like to try mulching". We're blessed to have such a large area to the front of the shop where we have two Husqvarna 450X Automowers running and a Husqvarna 535X AWD running on a steeply sloped area close to the shop, which normally answers all questions.

I think the robot market is just kicking off, even though we have more than 12 years under our belt. We still aim at full RRP and installation charge, which gives great margin on these products to allow re-investment, but have noticed lately that there seems to be a little give now on prices to gain the sale which I really don't understand. Why would you give on price then complain about margins to your manufacturers?

One thing that has been enjoyable over this period has been the healthy diet of red grapes, but in liquid form! Makes me appreciate all those vineyards.



A CAUTIOUS OPTIMISM

Dealers who responded to our Business Confidence survey showed resolve and pragmatism

The results of our most recent dealer survey, which canvassed readers on their business confidence in this most unusual of years, reflected what we had been hearing anecdotally. When asked to sum up how confident they were for their business's prospects for the rest of the year, a clear majority of respondents (56%) described themselves as 'cautiously optimistic'.

It could be read as a positive sign, perhaps, that only 5% of respondents described themselves as worried for the business, with zero saying they were 'not confident' going forward.

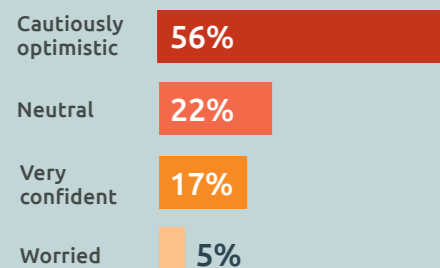
Also interesting was that most dealers who responded (61%) said their levels of business confidence hadn't actually changed during the course of 2020 – although a not insignificant 28% said their confidence levels had dropped.

Clearly the events of this year were not encouraging the dealers who answered our survey to think about expanding their business in any way. A large majority answered negatively to questions regarding were they going to take on more staff (88%) or whether they were going to take on more apprentices (78%).

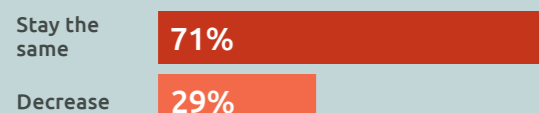
This lack of expansion plans was also repeated by all respondents telling us they had no plans to increase the number of franchises they held; 71% said they would be staying the same and 29% said they would be looking to decrease the brands in their stores.

Finally, there was a clear winner for where new customers were being acquired this year: word-of-mouth won with 61% citing this as their most important method. Somewhat surprisingly, only 7% singled out social media as being valuable in this regard.

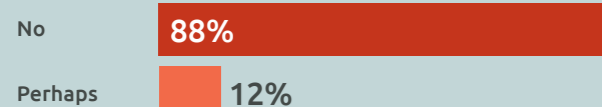
How confident are you for your business's prospects for the rest of the year?



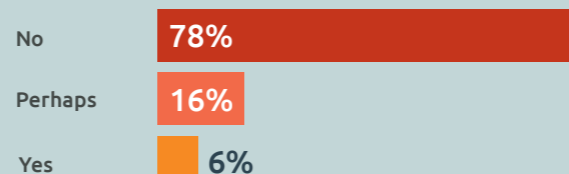
Do you plan to change the number of franchises you hold over the next 12 months?



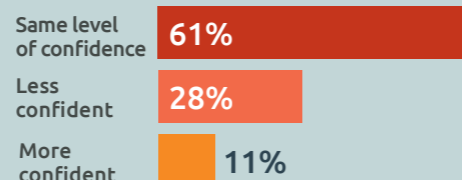
Are you considering employing staff in the next 12 months?



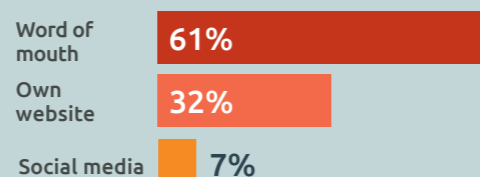
Are you planning on taking on any new apprentices this year?



In terms of any change in business confidence this year, would you say you are...



What method have you found the most effective for picking up new customers this year?



YOUR SAY...

We asked you, that considering all that's happened this year, what changes, if any, do you see as necessary for your business to prosper in the future?

- Expand our LOCAL e-commerce offering. People will be isolating again this autumn/winter and we need to make it as easy as possible for them to buy from us and have products and services delivered to their homes by our experienced team.
- As well as being a dealer we also contract grass cutting and grounds maintenance and it is this side of the business that has been busy. When lockdown was announced we began to operate an appointments system for the machinery/workshop. All calls are now diverted to either our home phone or mobile. We now have the freedom to carry out the grounds maintenance, so rather than turn work away we will continue as we are, without the need to man the showroom and workshop all day. Most of our machinery enquiries come via the phone, email or social media. Sadly, we have had to make our apprentice in the workshop redundant as we cannot be there to supervise him every day. This way we can work with the weather, rather than it working against us, as its the weather that drives the machinery and contracting business after all.
- Reduce the amount of stock we hold, specifically less winter stock.
- Tighten our belts and take a deep breath.
- Stop taking in unbranded machines purchased from online retailers for repair and servicing – too much time wasted on this! We will try a different approach to booking repairs in and will keep on top of cleanliness.
- We have been open all through the Covid-19 outbreak as we could easily socially distance with only three of us here. We installed a solid barrier attached to the counter, which was the most important feature. We only allow one person or one couple in the shop at a time and have been as busy as usual.
- Watch the stock levels and look hard at what brings in the customers.
- Reducing business rates.
- Value our team, focus on the work that is profitable and don't get distracted by the noise of negativity.
- Adapt to new working practices as needed to enable continuation of sales.
- More website development.
- I took over this business in 2018 – I just want a bloody 'normal year'!

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Edited by Adam Bernstein

LEGAL AGREEMENTS

CONTRACT KILLERS

Deals are done every minute of the day and every day of the week. Most are carried out seamlessly, but there are occasions when agreements fall apart leading to acrimony, writes SME Digest Editor, Adam Bernstein. It's at times like this that contracts take centre stage to check on exactly what was agreed

It's all elementary

Paul Herbert, Technology and Media Partner at London law firm Goodman Derrick LLP, makes it plain that "whilst there are a range of exceptions and caveats, there are basic principles of contract law".

In essence, he says there must be an offer where A has to make an offer to B. An acceptance where B needs to accept the offer. Thirdly, there must be a consideration which involves B needing to give A something (usually money) in return for what is offered. An intention to create legal relations which involves each side actually intending to create a contract. And lastly, there must be certainty of terms meaning that the material terms of the contract need to be clear.

You might think that the point at which a contract is formed is easy to establish, but, says James Crayton, Head of Commercial at Walker Morris LLP, "some of these essential elements are common sources of dispute".

He says that one particular area of contention is whether a response to an offer constitutes an acceptance or a counter-offer – "this can be crucial because it can determine on whose terms a business deal proceeds, or on what terms a dispute is settled. Going

back to legal basics, if a supposed acceptance does not match the terms of the offer, then no contract is formed and, instead, a counter-offer has been made."

Friction points

Another element of friction is where a party thinks there's a contract in place when in reality there isn't. As Crayton has seen, "a party may have invested significant time and money in a project on the understanding that its opposite number was contractually bound to the same, only to find that no binding obligations are actually in effect and that its opponent can walk away scot-free. Similarly, a party may be operating under the assumption that key terms are still to be agreed, only to find that their conduct, or something they said, has committed them contractually to what is now an unfavourable deal."

How can this happen? Possibly because the parties signed a preliminary document not realising it would be binding on them, or because of the language they used during negotiations. Herbert points to another factor – conduct: "How businesses act can also create a contract if it evidences an intention to be bound by a contract... for example,

if they start providing goods or services before a contract is finalised."

Companies can also be forced to honour the actions of employees if those individuals appear to a third party to have apparent authority and the third party enters into the contract in good faith. It's for this reason that Herbert advises businesses to "keep a written list of individuals authorised to bind the company... and ensure that employees know what they can and cannot do when it comes to negotiating on behalf of the company and committing it to contractual obligations".

THE DIGITAL AGE

It doesn't take a neurosurgeon to realise that the digital age has not left contract law untouched by change. Remarkably, it still surprises some that contracts do not have to be in writing. As Herbert outlines, a face-to-face agreement or a verbal contract which includes the characteristics mentioned earlier will still make a valid contract – "and barring limited exceptions, contracts can also be made over social media, via email, fax or even made in the behaviour or course of dealings by the parties".

The battle of the forms

In any situation where two businesses negotiate the terms of a contract there

will always be a desire from one side to win over the other.

Crayton explains that this process where one side trumps the other, that uses the last set of terms despatched before performance – the 'last shot' approach, will prevail.

And Herbert agrees. He gives the example of Company A offering to buy goods from Company B, but on A's standard terms. However, Company B attempts to accept Company A's offer but on the basis of their own standard terms as they are more favourable to them. So, who wins? The answer, says Herbert, is simple – the last party to put forward terms and conditions that were not explicitly rejected by the recipient.

The only solution to avoid any uncertainties as to which terms apply is for the parties to expressly agree whose terms apply before they start work.

Locking the door

Of course, there are steps that firms can take to stop contracts from accidentally being formed, but before detailing them it's important, according to Herbert, to note that "disputes in this area normally revolve around the intent of the parties. Courts will not lightly infer the existence of a contract unless they can firmly conclude that the parties intended there to be one".

Herbert says that if negotiating via email, businesses should be careful when using certain terms such as 'I accept' and 'I agree'. He also says to consider inserting 'subject to contract' at the very top of each new email "so as to make it clear that the content of the email is not intended to be binding and that the intention is to enter into a specific written contract at a later date."

And Crayton advises even stronger disclaimer language, for example "we have no intention to enter into a binding agreement until both parties sign an agreement in writing".

Summary

Contract law is a quagmire ready and waiting to swallow up all who enter into it. That's not to say that every contract will lead to catastrophe, but good advice, common sense and forward planning can minimise the risk of a commercial falling out.

WORKPLACE SEXUAL HARASSMENT

A RISKY BUSINESS

Any employer who has ever had to deal with a harassment complaint, grievance or employment tribunal claim will know that they can be unsettling and a major (costly) headache for all involved, writes SME Digest Editor Adam Bernstein

Harassment complaints are bad for business, bringing in their wake potential reputational damage, legal expense, management time, issues with stakeholders and with the wider workforce.

Andrew Rayment, a Partner in the Employment Team at law firm Walker Morris LLP, says that since the #MeToo campaign "there has been real shift in what is seen to be acceptable and unacceptable both in society and the workplace. Gone are the days when incidents might have been 'brushed under the carpet' or a 'quiet word' had with offenders". He reckons the spotlight is focused on the issue and it requires employers to take a proactive stance.

Changes to the law

The government is to introduce tougher legislation on workplace harassment. As Rayment explains, there were a number of reviews culminating in a public consultation during 2019 on proposed new measures including "introducing a mandatory duty on employers to prevent harassment at work and increasing the time limit to bring a harassment Employment Tribunal claim from three to six months".

As part of this drive, the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) is to publish a statutory Code of Practice on harassment at some point during 2020. This code, reckons Rayment, "will have similar 'teeth' to the ACAS Code of Practice on disciplinary and grievance procedures in that Employment Tribunals will be obliged to take an employer's non-observance of the code into account when ruling on a claim".

Why does this matter?

The rules on statutory Codes of Practice are clear. Breach of the provisions in a statutory code is a matter that an Employment Tribunal

must, by law, take into consideration. This means that a breach or non-observance could, at worst, put a serious hole in an employer's Employment Tribunal defence. At the very least, it could have a negative impact on the employer's credibility in the eyes of the tribunal and lead to negative publicity.

New guidance

Meanwhile, the EHRC has published new technical guidance on sexual and other harassment at work which is described as, "the authoritative and comprehensive guide to the law and best practice in tackling harassment". Rayment says "employers ignore it at their peril as while the guidance does not have statutory status, it can still be used as evidence in tribunal proceedings". He adds that in practice, Employment Tribunals are likely to expect employers to demonstrate a sound working awareness of the guidance and compliance with its recommendations where practicable. Conversely, non-compliant employers are likely to find that it is used as a stick to beat them with during tribunal proceedings.

A business risk

Employers may be surprised by the high degree of pro-activity that is now expected of them. They may want to consider flagging this as a point to be included in 'business risk' discussions. The key take-away, says Rayment, is that "it is no longer good enough to simply have a policy on anti-harassment that gets dusted off every once in a while. Employers are expected to consider and address the issue at a strategic level".

The bottom line is that there is now an expectation that employers put the legwork in to actively root out harassment throughout their organisation, from shop floor to board room.

EMPLOYMENT LAW

WHAT'S CHANGING FOR EMPLOYERS OF EU NATIONALS?

The UK left the European Union at the end of January, some 10 months later than originally planned, and while there has been much debate about how such a historic event will be marked, many employers will be wondering what happens next, says Gareth Edwards, partner in the employment team at VWV. The simple answer is nothing. Yet

The transitional period

Following Brexit, the UK entered a transitional period which will last until the end of 2020. During this time the UK will continue to comply with EU law, which from an employer's perspective means that:

- **EU free movement rules will continue until 31 December 2020**
- **There will be no changes to the Right of Work checks employers conduct on EU, European Economic Area (EEA) and Swiss nationals and their family members until 1 January 2021**
- **EU, EEA and Swiss nationals (and their non-EEA family members) resident in the UK by 31 December 2020 will be eligible to apply for settled or pre-settled status under the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS)**
- **The deadline for applications to the EUSS is 30 June 2021**

The government plans to introduce a new immigration system that will come into force as the transitional period ends. The Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) published a report at the end of January on minimum salary levels and how the UK might learn from points-based immigration systems in other countries, which the government will consider when designing its new system.

The government announced in mid-February that low-skilled migrants won't get visas and that visa applicants will need 70 points plus to work in the UK.

In the meantime, recruitment activity this year will be largely unaffected by Brexit, except for those situations where new employees will not start work until 2021, in which case anyone who is not a British or Irish citizen will need to prove that they have been granted immigration permission to work in the UK. For EU, EEA and Swiss nationals this might be status under the EUSS, but for those who arrive in the UK from 1 January 2021, they will be subject to the new immigration system, along with the rest of the world.

What employers should do now

Although there is no requirement to do so, it is best practice for employers to inform employees about the EUSS to ensure maximum awareness that some will need to make an application in order to continue living in the UK.

The government has an Employer Toolkit that has been specially designed for employers who want to provide information to their employees about the EUSS. The Toolkit

(www.gov.uk/government/collections/eu-settlement-scheme-employer-toolkit) contains leaflets, briefing packs and factsheets to help employers communicate accurate information on the EUSS to their employees and can be either circulated electronically or printed out and placed in communal workplaces.

Additional information that might be worth circulating to employees can be found on the government's website including a link to the EUSS application form.

Some firms may have employees who do not need to apply themselves, but have family members who will need to apply, so it is suggested that information should be circulated to all members of staff regardless.

Conduct an audit of the workforce

The difficulties which employers face if current members of staff are no longer able to work do not need spelling out here. For those employers who have not already done so, it is recommended that they conduct an audit of their workforce to identify those members of staff who are EU, EEA and Swiss nationals. To ensure that those who need to apply do so, employers should ask members of staff to provide them with confirmation that they have been granted status under the EUSS. Company records can then be updated and – as the deadline approaches – steps can be taken to remind employees who have not applied of the requirement to do so. This is one way employers can have some comfort that there will be minimal disruption to the workforce as 2021 approaches.

Employers should think about the most appropriate way of conducting such a review and communication in ways which do not fall foul of any accusations of discrimination or victimisation.

The future

From the MAC's report and what the government has said so far, it seems likely that employer sponsorship – similar to the current Tier 2 immigration arrangements – will continue to form the backbone of the UK's work visa routes. Employers without a sponsor licence may wish to consider applying for one now, particularly those who are likely to continue recruiting EU nationals in the future.

For those employers with a Tier 2 licence, they would be advised to review current compliance to ensure that their licence is not at risk and that it can continue to be used when the new immigration system comes into force.

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COMMERCIAL

HUSQVARNA'S TEAM OF ROBOTS KICKS OFF

Automower Club Solution launched

Automower Club Solution

Husqvarna has announced the launch of its new solution for the mowing of sports turf, Automower Club Solution.

Designed for sports turf applications, the new system allows multiple Automower 550 robotic mowers to be used simultaneously on one pitch without wires intersecting the playing surface.

With the system, two or three robots can mow the area simultaneously, with only a single boundary wire outside the playing surface. The company says this eliminates the risk of a damaged boundary wire during turf treatment such as aeration or scarification.

A higher cutting disc speed is featured to improve the mowers' performance on turf which has a high grass growth. Husqvarna believes a great benefit of the system to a club is the ability to redeploy groundsmen on other important and time-consuming tasks.

There are no guide wires needed with the system, and each mower at work on the pitch has its own specified

charging station. The robotic mowers will follow the boundary wire placed around the field back to its charging position. To avoid collisions between the mowers when searching for their individual stations, the Automower 550 mowers will always follow the boundary wire in a clockwise direction.

Kevin Ashmore, UK Manager – Husqvarna Professional said: "As a company we are constantly striving to develop smart solutions that meet and exceed the expectations of our commercial customers. Husqvarna Fleet Services, a standard feature on all commercial Automower models, allow a fleet of machines to be tracked and controlled remotely using a smart phone, tablet or desktop."

A special installation is required with Automower Club Solution, along with the latest firmware, a new charging station board and a special configuration in Autocheck.

A full sales aid containing order details and set-up is available from Husqvarna UK.

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John Deere
7R 350

UPDATES TO JOHN DEERE'S 7R SERIES

7R 350 offers power to weight ratio of 29kg/hp

Eight months after launching its new generation 7R Series tractors at Agritechnica 2019, John Deere has announced another significant update to the range. The company says the new flagship 7R 350 model offers a power to weight ratio of 29kg/hp to deliver acceleration and transport efficiency.

The 7R Series models introduced in Hanover last November received a major upgrade with a new luxury cab, the CommandPRO joystick, a top-quality seat with massage function, DAB+ touchscreen radio with Apple CarPlay compatibility and a 6.1 speaker

system, plus enhanced Precision Ag technology features.

Featuring the stepless AutoPowr transmission as standard, the new top-of-the-range 7R 350 tractor completes the 7R Series and develops up to 388hp with Intelligent Power Management. With a minimum shipping weight of 11.4 tonnes, this latest model boasts a power to weight ratio of 29kg/hp.

At the same time, on all 7R Series tractors equipped with a 40kph transmission and front axle brakes, payload has been increased by two tonnes to match the maximum

permissible weight of 18 tonnes. More flotation is also offered with the new availability of IF650/60R34 front tyres and up to IF900/60R42 rear tyres.

John Deere has also expanded its digital offering. Complementary to the established Wireless Data Transfer between the tractor's CommandCentre display and the remote computerised Operations Centre, the latest MyOperations app can now serve as a digital field record. Using the app, operators can document any task and know that the data will be stored in their personal Operations Centre account.



Agri-Longer G11

A LONGER CUT FROM KUHN

Upgrades to farm and amenity hedge cutter range

Kuhn Farm Machinery has added the Agri-Longer G11 to its range of hedge and grass cutting equipment.

Positioned as a compact 'go-anywhere' farmer-owned and amenity sector machine, the Agri-Longer G11 has a straight arm format with the main boom structure welded from ultra-high strength steel for the best flexibility-to-robustness ratio. It is available in two models offering a horizontal reach of 4.3m (4345 ML) or 4.8m (4845 ML).

In addition to the new feature of pendulum link mechanical safety, the key differences between the G11 models and earlier Agri-Longer

machines include increased hydraulic rotor circuit power (up from 34hp to 40hp) and electric joystick control as standard.

As with earlier models, the hedge cutters have a 1.2m direct drive flail head with 220-degree flail head rotation. The cutting head, which can work directly behind the tractor wheel, has a removable wear plate and a reversible rotor that can be turned around to optimise lug wear. The rotor has 24 boot flails mounted on 12mm shackles.

Vertical reach for the two models is 5.21m and 5.74m respectively, while maximum hedge height is 3.59m and 3.98m respectively.



STIHL'S MOST POWERFUL CORDLESS BLOWER

BGA 200 for cleaning large areas

With a blowing force of 21 Newtons, STIHL's new BGA 200 cordless blower is the most powerful in its range and features a high air speed for coping with wet leaves.

The blower is described by the company as exceptionally easy to handle, due to its newly-developed comfort carrying system. This feature allows the tool to be used in different ways depending on the application: hand-held in confined working areas, or suspended in the carrying system for larger-scale cleaning work.

Due to its low-noise operation, the unit can also be operated without restriction in noise-sensitive areas and can be used without hearing protection.

The blowing force has three different settings, selected by a switch, while the user can easily adjust the length of the nozzle to meet different requirements and operating situations using a quick adjustment system.

A 36V lithium-ion battery from the STIHL PRO cordless system powers the BGA 200.

The batteries can be carried either by a belt bag or a backpack system (STIHL AP series).

COMMERCIAL/DOMESTIC

EGO GETS ATTACHED

Rear roller and mulching kits available

Ego has added two new attachments for its battery-powered mowers – a rear roller kit and a mulching kit.

The AR1700/AR1900 rear roller kit weighs around 8kg and features a design that clips over the rear wheel axle of the company's LM1700E, LM1700E-SP and LM1900E-SP battery-powered mowers. It is available in two sizes.

The ABP1700/ABP1900 mulching kit features a factory-sharpened steel blade and a mulching plug. Compatible with the LM1700E, LM1700E-SP and LM1900E-SP mowers, the mulching kit can help keep lawns healthy all year round. It works by double-cutting the grass, making it easy to create and distribute mulch.

Available now, the rear roller AR1700 retails at £49.99 and the AR1900 at £57.99, with the mulching kit ABP1700 at £34.99 and the ABP1900 at £37.99.



AGRICULTURAL



U-drill MD disc

KVERNELAND OFFERS MINIMUM DISTURBANCE

New cultivation disc for u-drill

A new design of cultivation disc is available for the u-drill, to suit those looking to minimise soil disturbance.

Called the MD disc, it is an alternative to the u-drill's short disc harrow. Previously known as the Great Plains Turbo Coulter, the MD disc design is one that can work as part of a conservation tillage system, or within a conventional crop establishment process.

The 430mm-diameter straight disc has a fluted profile around its circumference which assists with removing

surface trash, reducing the risk of hair-pinning. The disc's flutes also lightly prepare soil in a narrow 30-50mm strip. Each disc also aligns perfectly with the u-drill's CD coulters, enabling seed to be placed in the soil strip, delivering a row spacing of 16.67cm.

Each MD disc is individually mounted using the proven 3D auto-reset rubber-mounting system, allowing it to follow ground contours, but also to deflect on-contact with any in-field obstructions.

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THE LEGEND OF BRIGGS & STRATTON

Chris Biddle charts the events that underpinned the collapse of the world's biggest manufacturer of small engines

During a visit to the US in the mid-1990s, I was given a lavishly illustrated, hugely detailed book entitled *The Legend of Briggs & Stratton*. It is a fascinating account of a pair of entrepreneurial engineers, Stephen Briggs and Harold Stratton, who in 1908 combined their talents to manufacture a six-cylinder, two-stroke engine. Briggs was the hands-on engineer, while Stratton invested an eye-watering \$50,000 in the project.

The engine proved too expensive to manufacture, let alone mass-produce, so the pair turned to manufacturing a car, the Superior, assembled from components and parts sourced from wherever they could obtain them. Only three cars were ever built. Again, manufacturing costs were too high, and Stratton had run out of money.

Undeterred, they decided to focus on designing and manufacturing components for cars, such as switches and locks. This time their timing was spot-on. By 1915, sales of switches alone were almost \$180,000 a year.

There followed further projects including motorised bicycles, and in 1920 Briggs and Stratton designed and built their first stationary or portable engine. This was the

modest beginning of a journey to becoming the world's largest manufacturer of small engines.

The book, published in 1995, only chronicles the Briggs & Stratton story to the end of the 20th century when its committed policy was to supply the power for other manufacturers' equipment.

Shortly after the Millennium, the policy changed – and arguably was a contributory factor in the company going bankrupt in July 2020 and seeking the protection of the US Chapter 11 legislation.

BRANDS

Certain brand names transcend the industry they serve, they are recognisable world-wide, even if their products are not widely known. In the agri-turf sector, the Briggs & Stratton brand and logo certainly fall into that category, which is strange, because the company has never marketed a lawnmower under its own name. Yet many homeowners will claim that they own a Briggs & Stratton lawnmower.

They are, if you like, the INTEL of the outdoor power equipment market – with millions upon millions of engines used worldwide on an extraordinary array of equipment.

The company's claim to be the world's biggest manufacturer

of small engines can hardly be challenged. It has had stable management, only four CEO's since it started engine making, its erstwhile Chairman, Fred Stratton Jr, was the grandson of the founder.

So, how did it come to the verge of virtual wipe-out from such a dominant position?

It isn't for a lack of ingenuity, innovation, marketing or engineering prowess, that's for sure.

COVID-19 was a contributory factor in applying for Chapter 11 protection, but the difficulties faced by Briggs & Stratton over the years date back many decades

The 1950s was a boom time for lawnmowers and Briggs & Stratton capitalised by coming up with the design of a light-weight aluminium engine to replace the much heavier cast-iron casings.

Between 1955 and 1959, sales more than doubled from \$40 million to \$90m, sold and serviced by thousands of independent sales and service dealers.

But the 1950s was also a time when serious labour issues were rife, as powerful unions exerted pressure on companies such as Briggs & Stratton to increase wages. The first major stoppage took place in January 1950 when the unions called a major strike that lasted 15 weeks. It got nasty, with many employees

physically intimidated. It was resolved at considerable cost to the company, but at least it bought them a decade or so of stability.

As they moved into the 1970s and '80s, the market was undergoing huge change. Big box stores, with huge purchasing power, were starting to dominate. The independent servicing dealer was in retreat.

Price was king, and this placed enormous pressure on manufacturing costs.

In 1971, the company only narrowly avoided conflict by agreeing a 25% pay increase for each of the following three years. In 1974, the union again upped its demands and called a three-week strike which was only settled when Briggs & Stratton agreed a staggering 32.5% pay increase over three years.

In 1977, the unions again came back with similar demands, which the company reluctantly agreed to so as to avoid further strike action.

All this resulted in Briggs & Stratton paying workers 25% more than US competitors – and 50% more than foreign engine makers.

The crunch came in 1983, when the local union refused the company's request for a pay freeze and called its 7,600 members out on strike for three months.

Fred Stratton and his colleagues responded by threatening to replace all strikers with non-union labour.

"We should not be held to ransom like that, and I vowed then to never let it happen again," he said

It was to be a turning point and set in motion an operational shift in production facilities away from the union hot-bed of Milwaukee.

There was an urgent need to reduce manufacturing costs to meet the escalating bargaining power of the big-box stores, as well as the growing costs involved in producing engines to meet increasingly stringent noise and emission controls.

Crucially, the company also had to combat the growing challenge of

manufacturers from the Far East who had a powerful marketing message – that of a single brand name for engine and machine. Honda was first out of the blocks with an established name, followed by Yamaha, which ultimately decided the market was not for them.

POWER PRODUCTS

The company decided to move south, first to Kentucky in 1986, then to Poplar Bluff in Missouri in 1989. Both locations were non-union, both offered development grants, had a willing workforce and could also attract a pool of eager, college-educated students for part-time or seasonal work.

During the 1990s, further plants were established in Alabama and Georgia which fitted the company's new criteria, which also included being nearer many of its major customers such as Murray and MTD.

By 1997, 2,000 jobs had been lost, roughly 37% of the Milwaukee work-force.

It would have been tough on those at the heart of the Briggs & Stratton Milwaukee 'family'. The company had been a major employer in the city for over 80 years. Management had been passed down through family connections, and many of the work-force had been employed across the generations.

For Fred Stratton, it was a strange time. "On one hand, I was loathed by the unions and many in my home town; on the other, I was the darling of Wall Street as investors suddenly saw a bright future for the company after all the tough measures we'd taken."

One quality that Briggs & Stratton has never been short of is innovation. Over the years it has redesigned and re-engineered products to meet changing needs and conditions.

Engineering ingenuity has been in the Briggs & Stratton DNA for ever.

Arguably where the current problems stemmed from was the decision in the early 2000s to enter the whole goods market, first with generators through the purchase of

the Generac brand, which seemed to make sense at the time. That was followed in 2004 by the purchase of Ferris, a year later by Snapper and Simplicity. There followed the purchase of Australian heritage brand Victa in 2008, and in 2015 of Billy Goat.

With all these acquisitions, Briggs had become a rival to many of its customers. It meant Briggs had lost focus from its core purpose and it seems it was also unable to capitalise when its main rivals, first Tecumseh and then Kohler, exited the small engine market.

CEO Todd Teske and his colleagues will have been wrestling with tough trading conditions for years and realised that refocussing the business was the only way forward. After all, the signs were plain to see, from a high of \$40 a share in 2005, to less than a dollar this year, the clock was ticking, which is why Briggs had already announced plans to sell off the power products line early this year.

That may have happened had not the epidemic forced much of industry to shut down, which left little wiggle-room and resulted in the recent move into the protection of Chapter 11.

I'm writing this column just a week after Briggs & Stratton accepted financial support from investment company KPS Capital Partners to enable them to trade 'as normal'. What the 'price' will be for this lifeline is still unclear, although KPS appears to have a good track-record in turning around manufacturing concerns.

Both Briggs & Stratton and KPS are making positive noises, and I'm sure everyone in the outdoor power market hopes that the Legend of Briggs & Stratton doesn't become the Legacy of Briggs & Stratton.



EVENTS 2020

Status of the events listed below was correct at the time of going to press, but due to the ongoing Covid-19 situation, we advise checking with organisers' websites and social media channels

SEPTEMBER 2020

- 6-8 spoga-gafa 2020, Cologne
www.spogagafa.com
POSTPONED TO 30/06-1/06 2021
- 5 Alresford Show
www.alresfordshow.co.uk
CANCELLED
- 6-9 Autumn Fair, Birmingham NEC
www.autumnfair.com
CANCELLED
- 10-15 Hampton Court Flower Show
www.rhs.org.uk/shows-events/rhs-hampton-court-palace-flower-show
CANCELLED
- 12 Usk Show
www.uskshow.co.uk
CANCELLED
- 12 Romsey Show
www.romseyshow.co.uk
CANCELLED
- 15-17 Glee 2020
www.gleebirmingham.com
CANCELLED
- 18-20 The Game Fair, Hatfield House, Hertfordshire
www.thegamefair.org
POSTPONED TO 23-25/07 2021
- 23 Tillage Live, Down Ampney
www.tillage-live.com
CANCELLED
- 24-26 APF Exhibition 2020, Ragely Estate
www.apfexhibition.co.uk
CANCELLED
- 30 Cranleigh Show
www.cranleighshow.co.uk
POSTPONED TO 4/07 2021

OCTOBER 2020

- 7 The Dairy Show, Bath & West Showground
www.bathandwest.com/the-dairy-show
- 24-25 Countryside Live, Harrogate
www.countrysidelive.co.uk
- 21-23 Green Industry & Equipment Expo 2020, Louisville, USA
<http://gie-expo.com>
POSTPONED TO 20/10-22/10 2021

NOVEMBER 2020

- 4-5 IOG Saltex 2020, Birmingham NEC
www.iogsaltex.com
POSTPONED TO 3-4/03 2021
- 8-12 SIMA, Paris Nord Villepinte, France
www.en.simaonline.com/
CANCELLED
- 11-15 EIMA International, Bologna
www.eima.it/en
CANCELLED
- 18-19 Midlands Machinery Show, Newark Showground
www.midlandsmachineryshow.com/
CANCELLED
- 18 AgriScot, The Royal Highland Ctr
www.agriscot.co.uk
CANCELLED
- 19 Service Dealer Conference & Awards
www.servicedealer.co.uk
CANCELLED
- 25-26 CropTec 2020, East of England Showground
www.croptecshow.com
- 30-1/12 Royal Welsh Winter Fair
www.rwas.wales/winter-fair

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