

Jaguar Land Rover pursues more simplified client experience

 By [Naresh Maharaj](#)

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It's all about making the client experience simpler and better. Keeping it simple. And those dealerships who have nailed this aspect always enjoy customers who come back again and again. And let's face it, price transparency is the biggest benefit for clients. It just makes the buying experience better and without that unnecessary anxiety.



Sybella van Niekerk, finance director at Jaguar Land Rover | image supplied

With this in mind delegates at the Salesforce World Tour Essentials conference held earlier this month at Kyalami Grand Prix Circuit, in Johannesburg, which I attended virtually, got an insider's view of the recently announced transformation of Jaguar Land Rover's (JLR) operating model in South Africa to that of a direct sales model. Yes, there have been global changes on the JLR front but how did that impact its SA operations?

The conference provided a platform for an interchange of information and experiences among business executives who sought new ways to lower costs, increase productivity, and drive efficient growth for their organisation.

Among those invited to speak was Sybella van Niekerk, finance director at JLR South Africa, who played a key role in JLR South Africa's transition to a direct sales model. The direct sales approach is a relatively new concept in the automotive sector where the manufacturer becomes more involved in the relationship with the customer throughout the vehicle buying process, including both online and in-person purchases. The dealership acts more as an agent to interact with the customer, while the rest of the sales process is managed by the manufacturer themselves.

Speaking as a panellist, van Niekerk said: “The biggest beneficiary in this new way of doing business is the customer. As we aim to deliver a modern luxury purchasing experience, it is critical that we ensure transparent pricing. This was highlighted in a recent Deloitte study in which more than 50% of respondents listed transparency as one of the top three requirements when purchasing a new vehicle. And nowhere does this matter more than in pricing.

“Through our new retail model, we are able to deliver consistent and transparent new vehicle pricing, irrespective of a customer’s preferred sales channel – online or in-person at a dealer - and regardless of which dealer the client chooses to buy from,” she explained.

Van Niekerk also explained how the new approach has significantly simplified the buying process for clients. “The entire buying process had to be simplified, which meant developing a brand-new online platform that comprised not only a catalogue of vehicles available but an ability to process finance applications. It also required the development of a clear blueprint for the type of personal experience a client would receive if they preferred to deal directly with a dealer.”



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According to van Niekerk, the new system enables JLR clients to view the automaker’s entire new vehicle inventory available nationwide. “This includes the latest vehicles available in stock at all dealers. It is also possible to reserve vehicles set for future manufacturing dates and track the build commencement, production progress, shipping schedules, expected arrival in the market, and final delivery date,” she said.

“The greatest benefit of an online purchasing platform is that we can use data to develop customer intimacy, which will enable us to provide a bespoke and personalised experience for each client.

“Until now, our focus has been on the new car market,” she pointed out. “The next step is to ensure a consistent client experience throughout the entire ownership journey, including aftersales and the pre-owned vehicle space. With input from our clients, we will continue to work closely with all our partners and dealers to ensure we achieve this ideal,” concluded van Niekerk.

And there you have it. Keep it simple. A better and simpler client experience together with price transparency and you got a client for a long time.

ABOUT NARESH MAHARAJ

Naresh Maharaj is a petrol head who loves cars and writing about them. He is also a Member of the SA Guild of Motoring Journalists. Naresh is also an international sports correspondent and an acclaimed corporate MC and voice-over artist. Naresh is a sports/news producer for community radio stations and also an award-winning sports journalist.
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