

# Fleet customer requirements 2010

## Safety first

According to the results of the Fleet Europe Barometer 2009, when we asked international fleet managers about their requirements and needs, there were three main fleet management drivers: price consistency and lease rates, development of safety features and improved fuel consumption. This third element is specifically handled in the next article. So here we will concentrate on how car manufacturers integrate price consistency and safety in their policy.

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If we take a look at the way manufacturers handle price issues, we see that influencing the Total Cost of Ownership (TCO) and in particular improving residual values, is very important. Hans-Georg Lutz, Mercedes-Benz: "Mercedes-Benz always tries to maintain a level of consistency to all fleet customers and we work hard to maintain a strong residual value manage-

ment policy to ensure the lowest TCO. When we talk about lease rates, I can confirm that we are continuously improving our financial services offers; however the target is not merely to please those who only look at lease rates. Looking at our Mercedes-Benz offers, the outstanding residual values, the usage for fleet operators and prestige for drivers alike, it becomes clear that a fleet vehicle means more than a lease rate. The service quality needs to be taken into account along with the reliability of a fleet services provider, because after all, of what use is a lease company, if it doesn't want to lease cars to the customer in times of crisis?"

### Price sustainability crucial

Elena Delgado, SEAT: "We always try to find customized solutions for all our customers in order to guarantee price consistency for their fleets. We understand that price sustainability is crucial for our customers. Improvement of the lease rates can be achieved by benchmark analyses of all the components of the TCO, especially residual value and SMR costs, along with dedicated measures to correct where we have improvement opportunities." Emil Gaynor of GM confirms this: "All our new gener-

ation cars and vans are actively designed to have lower SMR costs and improved residual values, ensuring lower operating costs. To guarantee healthy but attractive lease rates, it's important to have close interaction with the leasing industry ensuring that our products and our SMR & RV advantages are reflected in the lease rates."

### Increasing RV's

Sebastian Fuchs, Hyundai Motor Europe: "We are convinced that fleet-specific models help to maintain price parity for our fleet customers and prospects." For Toyota Motor Europe there are different ways of improving lease rates. "Our preferred way of improving lease rates is via an increase in residual values of Toyota vehicles" declares Johan Verbois. "In order to achieve the desired results, Toyota works closely with major leasing companies and other residual value influencers in the market. We also work pro-actively on our internal TCO benchmarking tool." Skoda Auto too believes in a multi-faceted approach. Rainer Mielke comments: "First of all there is central coordination of international tenders to meet customer requirements in the best possible and most consistent manner. On top of this we try to permanently improve our residual values, to offer real value for money and

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to work in close relationship with Volkswagen Financial Services as an expert on the pricing side.” Giuseppe Tommaso, KIA Motor Europe: “To guarantee price consistency, we are improving our adjusted prices by adding more fleet specifications and equipment to our models, while keeping the same list price. Today, all KIA models have more standard equipment than previous models, while the prices to fleet buyers are broadly similar. For example, from the 1st of January, all our models in Europe have the 7-Year KIA Warranty because we have such a confidence in the quality of our products.”

## Safety

It is often proclaimed that there are no longer any unsafe cars. Yet car manufacturers are constantly seeking new safety features to meet customer requirements. “Safety has become a key pillar of all our new products, and there is no clearer

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gauge of safety standards than the Euro NCAP assessment. The organization is promoting the class-leading qualities of Hyundai i20 and i30 – both five-star cars. And our new ix35 is also expected to achieve the maximum rating”, explains Sebastian Fuchs. KIA strives to increase the safety standard equipment on new models as far as possible. Giuseppe Tommaso: “All KIA models are designed with a full complement of ‘active’ and ‘passive’ safety equipment, often as standard, sometimes as



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options, depending on markets. Active systems include ESC, ABS, EBD and BAS brakes and Traction Control. Most models feature front, side and curtain airbags as well as front seatbelt pre-tensioners and load limiters.” “Renault’s proactive road safety improve-

ment policy seeks to anticipate all types of risk factors, and builds prevention right into car design. Our ‘real safety’ approach examines all potential risks, from technical issues, human error or road conditions, and develops technology to counter them. With proven results: 12 models have achieved the maximum 5-star ratings in the EuroNCAP crash tests”, says Olivier Gautier. “When it comes to both Active and Passive safety, Mercedes-Benz is the recognised leader in launching innovative safety

technologies and features”, declares Hans-Georg Lutz. Daimler AG recently won the eSafety Award in the “Industry & Technology” category awarded by the EU Commission. “We received the award for the longstanding commitment and pioneering role in the introduction of vehicle technologies designed to improve traffic safety. Furthermore accident statistics show that Mercedes-Benz drivers travel in more safety. Based on official, anonymous data provided by the Federal Statistical Office, Mercedes-Benz accident researchers have analysed accidents during the period 2003 to 2007. The results show that the risk of being seriously or fatally injured driving an E-Class is 10.4% lower than in comparable cars of other brands.”

## High on the agenda

For Toyota too, safety is high on the agenda. Johan Verbois: “The safety of our cars is our first priority. Toyota’s safety related technology and vehicle development aims to provide optimal driving support. Toyota is pursuing higher levels of safety for all stages of vehi-

cle operation through further integration of individual safety technologies and systems – based on information gathered from a variety of built-in sensors that detect ‘driver condition’, ‘vehicle condition’, ‘traffic conditions’, driver intentions – and through coordination with the road and with other vehicles in the future.” And finally Skoda also sees safety as a crucial development axis. “All our vehicles are being developed and manufactured with the main focus on safety”, says Rainer Mielke. “Our latest models - Roomster, Superb and Yeti – have NCAP 5 stars awards that can be seen as a strong proof which bear witness to our safety efforts. All of our vehicles have the option to be equipped with all of the modern standard and above standard safety equipment and systems on both active and passive safety.” So it is quite clear that even if there is a degree of complacency or skepticism on the client side from time to time, the manufacturers are working very hard to provide the best possible product both in price and in safety terms. ■