

Feature.

# Darren Sinclair

**MODIX:** Managing director is convinced 2018 will be a great year for our industry.

## What opportunities will 2018 present?

The biggest opportunity for dealers in 2018 will be to transform the experience they offer their customers, using technology to make it more personal and interactive. I expect to see new technology change the market, so that we really start to re-imagine core aspects of the customer journey like test-drives and home delivery.

## What do you regard as the biggest threat to the motor industry in 2018?

Brexit has been described as the biggest threat to the automotive industry in a generation, and although the outcome is not yet clear, there is no doubt it will have an impact. With talk of a potential levy on car exports, there is understandable nervousness in the industry.

We must also acknowledge the impact legislation and tax will have on the diesel market for new and used vehicles. We all know that taxes on new diesel cars will rise, and company car drivers will also have to pay more to drive a diesel. Cox Automotive data shows that there's been a shift in consumer searches for diesel cars, but in the wholesale market we've yet to see it fully translate. No doubt this picture will become clearer in 2018.

## Are there any reasons to be cheerful?

Plenty! In a shifting and dynamic market, there are endless opportunities for those agile and forward-thinking enough to embrace them. I find all the possibilities exciting and feel that Modix is perfectly placed to help dealers navigate their way through these changes.

## What are you most excited about right now?

Modix have a very exciting 2018 to look forward to. As we continue to build our end-to-end digital

retailing platform, we have some incredibly exciting solutions that form the core of that integrated platform.

We also have Modix AdBox, our search tool that uses a dealer's live inventory to deliver targeted and relevant Google ads to customers in their local area. And, we recently announced our innovative Modix 360 website imagery solution – an easy way for dealers to take and present high-quality 360-degree images and video.

## 2017 has been tough – will this continue?

It's been an interesting year, with various challenges surfacing, and, in particular, we've seen a shift in consumer confidence around new car purchasing. I don't think that confidence will be rebuilt overnight, but every year brings with it change, some positive and some less so.

## Do you think the motor industry needs to change? If so, in what way?

We need to look at other industries, such as retail, where the customer is at the very heart of the experience – whether that be on or offline. Think about Uber. It's taken a very stagnant market and completely changed the way we experience this service. There are lessons here for our industry that we'd be wise to learn from and at Modix, we are already looking to do this.

## What should dealers be focusing on to ensure growth and a sustained future in 2018?

Dealers need to embrace the opportunity that digital, and in particular online, presents. Consumers want to do more themselves, online, and earlier in the process. They want to spend less of their time in the dealership doing paperwork when they expect and want to be able to do more of that earlier in the process.

## Mini CV

**Darren Sinclair, MD of Modix, which is part of Cox Automotive**

**Lives:** Basingstoke.

**Drives:** Porsche 911 C4S.

**Family:** Married with three children.

**Education:** MBA.

**Career:** 25 years-plus automotive experience with expertise in transforming operations, sales and service in B2B/B2C within FTSE250, private equity and SMB companies. Darren has been with Cox Automotive in his role as MD of Modix for nearly two years and prior to this held a variety of senior roles at Auto Trader.

## Brexit – hard or soft option preferred?

Hard Brexit (with the right trade deals in place for our industry as part of this!).

## A weekend away – countryside calm or a busy city break?

It has to be a busy city break in Barcelona – great food, great sights, great architecture. I love Gaudi.

**You've won the lottery – what's your first purchase?** Something for my wife, probably a handbag by Hermes.

## Is there any habit that dealers should leave behind in their working lives?

Anything that is preventing them from embracing a digital future that's focused on the customer experience. We need to learn lessons from other successful retailers to engage with and immerse customers in an exciting and easy-to-navigate world, particularly in the dealership itself.

## If you had a final word of advice for our readers, what would it be?

Focus on the consumer. Use technology to create seamless, integrated, consumer-focused experiences and embrace change. 2018 will be a great year and I'm excited that Modix can play a major role in this. [CO]

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