

With the exception of diagnostic systems, workshop equipment is not renowned for anything like rapid development. Yet last month's CV Show – particularly the Workshop 2014 section – was packed with updated and new equipment for garages, some of which could save you money, not only in terms of capital cost, but also operational efficiency, energy consumption and tool maintenance.

First things first, and it's worth commending efforts by the industry to clean up an image that has not always been rosy. One championed at the CV Show is 'Trade Approved' by Trade Garage Equipment. Describing it as a customer guarantee scheme, the company says the objective is to verify that workshops are using 'approved' equipment and installations. This can cover anything from single items up to entire site installations, and the firm says that validation is "by engineers with recognised trade qualifications and regular, scheduled training".

TOOLS of the TRADE

Workshop equipment is not all the same – and neither are the firms that sell and service it. Brian Tingham reviews some of the more useful offerings seen at last month's CV Show

Its certificates confirm that equipment has been installed by trained, Garage Equipment Association (GEA) accredited engineers. It also verifies that equipment installed is: CE-approved; used to standards defined by equipment manufacturers, ISO and DVSA (the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency); and supported by regular manufacturer service and calibration schedules. Members include Gott Technical Services, DMF (Wakefield), TR Bullworthy, Garage Equipment UK, Kent Hydraulics and Garage Equipment, and Guaranteed Tool Company.

This scheme is supported by the GEA and is in line with that organisation's own ethos of ensuring qualified standards and professionalism in the garage equipment industry. Effectively, it's an extension of GEA's long-standing policy of requiring members to stick to a strict code of practice.

Clearly, neither is at the same level as the IRTE's (Institute of Road Transport Engineers) Workshop Accreditation scheme, which audits CV workshops themselves. If transport operators want to buy maintenance services with complete confidence, this is the gold standard. You know that IRTE-accredited garages have been independently benchmarked, not only for their workshop equipment,



but also the competence of staff, quality of documentation and robustness of their processes.

Cost versus efficiency

However, for workshops looking for good suppliers, the GEA and schemes like Trade Approved are excellent starting points. But workshops also need to concern themselves with issues such as equipment cost, efficiency and ease of use – as well as operational considerations, including the implications of maintenance and calibration. That's one reason why Somerstotalkare attracted attention at the CV Show. Not only was the firm showing examples from its range of lifts – including its best-selling cable-free units and a new four-post, electromechanical fixed lift, available in 16–33 tonne capacities and 7–18m platform lengths – but it was also majoring on its maintenance contracts.

The big deal is fixed service and labour costs for three or five years, combined with a 30% discount on parts. "For many workshops, buying new lifts is a major investment and we want to help them protect that," explains Somerstotalkare service contract engineer George Georgiou. "Although the economy is starting to pick up, many still find budgeting a problem, and that's why we have put together options that spread the cost of maintenance and repairs, while ensuring all the service requirements of health and safety legislation are met in full." Contracts also cover call-out and on-site labour costs in the event of breakdown, and prices start at £49 per month.

What about equipment efficiency and flexibility? Clearly, battery-operated cable-less lifts that can be moved around, operated in multiples and controlled from one unit, are right up there – and there are



equipment. The latter is useful because it covers all truck and bus wheels, including twins and super singles, linking to laptop or PC vehicle databases.

ACC and EBA calibration

Similar equipment is available from Haweka, but this company also showcased its new calibration tool for ACC (adaptive cruise control) and EBA (emergency brake assist) systems on single- and twin-steers, rigids, semi-trailers and buses. Axis 200 takes less than 10 minutes to measure every angle on a truck in the as-driven position – crucial for these systems' radar sensors. The unit has magnetic feet (and grab arms for alloy hubs), and looks simple to use.

Brake testing equipment was also on show. Bowmonk, for example, focused on its BrakeCheck, a DVSA portable electronic decelerometer, designed for testing service, hand and secondary brakes on any vehicle braking system. The unit shows which

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now plenty of brands. One of the most striking was on Stertil Koni's stand. Called Earthlift, these wireless mobile hydraulic columns are claimed to set new 'green' standards, with a system that uses the load of the lifted vehicle to retrieve energy – which is then returned to the batteries.

At 8,200kg capacity, Earthlifts also simplify handling of CVs, handling anything from buses and coaches to HGVs. A set of four provides a combined capacity of more than 32 tonnes. However, when lifting heavier or longer vehicles, such as 18.6 metre-long Bendibuses, additional columns can be added up to a maximum of eight per set.

But there's more to garage equipment than lifts, and Tecalemit (which also sells Finkbeiner wireless hydraulic mobile columns) attracted visitors for a range that extends from ATF-approved DE 9700 brake testers to laser-based CV wheel alignment

side has brake problems by indicating left/right pull. Bowmonk also offers the SensorCheck diagnostic tool, claimed to take just 15 seconds to test for the six most common causes of EBS/ABS faults (correct resistance, open circuit, short circuit, pole ring tooth damage, pole ring misalignment and sensor gap) on trucks, trailers and buses.

Finally, on the subject of ATFs, visitors also found interest on MAHA's stand, which was the launch pad for its Testbox, aimed at making test lane installation as easy as possible. The firm already offers turnkey projects for ATFs around equipment, pits and epoxy floor coverings, but Testbox goes one further. It includes everything from fabrication and erection of a steel building to internal finishing, lighting, electrics, planning permission, building regulations and project management, whether extending existing facilities or erecting a standalone test hall. 

CV Show stars: Somerstotalkare and Gemco were among busy Workshop stands