

D & G Autocare come to Edinburgh



CAPITAL GROWTH STRETCHING OVER THE FORTH – D&G AUTOCARE – EXPANSION OF THE FRIENDLY GARAGE AS NEW OUTLET OPENS IN THE CAPITAL

It's been eight years since the first D&G Autocare opened for business in Fife. An independent garage co-owned by Fifiers, George Simpson and David Hunter, D&G quickly made a name for itself in this highly competitive price led industry. The marketing and branding strategy presented [D&G](#) as "The Friendly Garage" with customers seeing the same faces every time they brought in their vehicles. The customer was always central to the services offered – as well as offering extremely competitive prices in the teeth of a recession, [D&G](#) recognised that it was the little things that contributed to customer loyalty – hence taking clients back to their homes after they had dropped off their cars for repair and making sure that customers had detailed feedback from one point of contact on what repairs a vehicle actually needed before they were carried out. Pricing initiatives designed to help the motorist out during the recession included the highly successful Cost-U-Less policy as well as MOT's from just £25.

The concept was a success and the business grew quickly to cover nine locations across the Central Belt with four garages in Fife including a Fast Fit Garage at Pitreavie Industrial Estate in Dunfermline. An online tyre company, Net-A-Tyre, was formed in 2008 whereby customers could order tyres online and opt to have them fitted at one of D&G's UK wide network of independent fitting agents.

"We recognised early on in the business that online tyre

retailing was a growing market and a quick and convenient way of buying everything from food to insurance,” said D&G’s George Simpson. “Net-A-Tyre is more personal however as it also has a Dedicated Tyre Team at the end of the line, offering impartial help and advice to potential buyers who can then order over the phone instead of the web if they prefer. They may not have ordered tyres before on the internet or they may be unsure of what their requirements are. The Tyre Team advises customers and works within their budgets.”

The D&G Group now employs nearly sixty staff and has a turnover of £4 million. Recent highlights have been winning a trademark battle with Italian fashion giants Dolce & Gabbana and the launch of a Mobile Tyre Fitting Service for the ultimate convenience.

Now the garage group has just entered the competitive Edinburgh market with a new garage at Stevenson Road, Murrayfield. Entering this lucrative but tough market is expected to boost turnover by a further half million in its first year of operation. Much of the first year’s turnover and profits will be absorbed by start up costs and high running costs with rent and rates being far higher in the Capital. The second year of trading is expected to turn over £600,000 with year three’s figure being over £750,000.

“The exposure during this three year period will be a catalyst for the rest of the Group to increase turnover,” said George. “A highlighted marketing effort from Edinburgh will compliment our other sites in the Central Belt, hopefully increasing turnover in the Group by 5 to 10%.”

Although both David & George are ex-Kwik Fit Managers and learned their trade with what was the premier fast fit garage group at the time, they now do not see Kwik Fit as a competitor to their own business. Says George Simpson:- “We don’t see Kwik Fit as a direct competitor as we differ from them in many ways, chiefly our staff structure and working

operations. We are not restricted to a Fast Fit operation as we operate a “one stop shop” garage with fully trained motor mechanics – not just fitters – that operate in all areas of vehicle maintenance and repairs.”

“We don’t hold with regimented working practises either and have a very low staff turnover rate so that our customers do get to know the staff they see every time they visit us. It’s a flexible work ethic that works well for us.”

Added George: “ And unlike some of the larger chains we don’t have a bonus system to pressurise staff into making sales for financial gain, there is no such culture here at D&G.”

And with the recession lingering, does George believe that his company is expanding at just the right rate?

“We are happy with how we have grown, it’s very much organic growth. We choose our new locations carefully by doing market research and then finding the best location. We then make sure our marketing strategies are effective and bring in enough leads to sustain a new garage as it grows and builds a customer base.”

George is keen to stress the importance of the team at a local level: “It’s the team that makes the whole thing come together. [D&G Autocare](#) is a very proactive company – we are very active in the local community where our garages are – we use local tradesmen, businesses and professionals. Through organisations such as the BNI and other business networking groups we have weekly meetings with local business people and companies. We are here to be part of the local community for the long haul and we put a lot of good back into the communities through sponsorship and other charitable work. It works well for us.”

The move into the Capital is an exciting one for D&G.

“The new Edinburgh garage is in a good location and will

really help the D&G brand which we have protected in our recent trademark battle with Dolce & Gabbana – to get noticed at a much higher level and over a bigger spectrum of people and businesses,” said George’s partner David Hunter. “We will be easier to access and be more convenient for our customers in Edinburgh that already use our Fife and Livingston garages ,also for the legions of Fifiers who work in Edinburgh. The introduction of our Mobile Tyre service will also mean that we have a great “Base and Station” to cover the whole of the Capital!”

For further details on D&G Autocare check out the website at www.dangautocare.co.uk