



# ATA goes public with 10,000 technicians

## Media campaign leads awareness drive

By Tim Rose

A media campaign has begun for the Automotive Technician Accreditation initiative, with the aim of reaching five million consumers by the end of March 2009.

Two years after ATA's launch to the motor industry, and with more than 10,000 technicians accredited, the Institute of the Motor Industry (IMI) has decided it is ready to drive the scheme into the public's awareness.

ATA also wants to gain more members from independent garages, as membership is dominated by manufacturers' franchised networks.

Although independents such as Nationwide Autocentres, the RAC and Unipart have been on board since launch, only around 20% of ATA technicians work in that segment.

Nigel Beaven, the IMI's head of marketing, said the media campaign takes care not to say that non-accredited technicians are bad and ATA-accredited ones are good. Under the strapline 'You Know You're OK With ATA', it will explain that ATA is a

voluntary scheme which tests the competence of technicians and requires them to abide by an ethical code of conduct.

The awareness drive began with a stand at the British International Motor Show promoting the scheme and its consumer website, [www.okwithata.com](http://www.okwithata.com). That is being followed this month by online activity, such as with the *Top Gear* website and the *Which?* Local network. From September, ATA will target consumer groups and fleets through regional press and radio adverts, focused on high-population areas.

All ATA technicians are being supplied with a poster and window sticker to highlight their accreditation at their workplace.

"If we all get behind it and drive it well, it should do good things for our technicians and our industry," said Beaven. He hopes the campaign will draw trade interest, as more garages see the value in the ATA stamp of approval.

Ultimately, the IMI wants nation-



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wide coverage from ATA members.

IMI chief executive Sarah Sillars added: "We're trying to put some trust and confidence in the consumers who don't know how to choose a garage, by suggesting they look for the ATA logo."

Independent research by BMG found that 65% of employers of ATA technicians thought it had improved the image of their business, and more than half saw an improvement in customer satisfaction and business efficiency.

## R2RC calls for BER renewal

The Right To Repair Campaign (R2RC) has launched a Europe-wide petition to lobby for the renewal of the Motor Vehicle Block Exemption Regulation.

R2RC is inviting both the trade and consumers to sign the petition on its website to maintain sector-specific exemptions which, it believes, create more competition in the aftermarket. It aims to present the petition to the European Commission.

R2RC is also providing templates of letters for businesses and con-

sumers to send to their local MPs and MEPs.

A spokesman said: "The R2RC alliance maintains that the Motor Vehicle Block Exemption Regulation has so far guaranteed freedom of choice for consumers and furthered the creation of a level playing field for all operators in the automotive sector. Simply applying the general rules as currently worded in the Vertical Restraints Block Exemption Regulation to the automotive sector would be no equivalent alternative."

## Diagnostic range launched

Diagnostic and test equipment maker Omitec has a new simplified diagnostics range aimed at letting independent garages compete more closely with franchised retailers.

Its OmiNspec range has been designed as 'plug and play', so that independents will not need to visit a franchised dealer for warning light and ECU resets.

"OmiNspec diagnostic tools are great news for garages starting out in diagnostics, as they are so easy to operate," said a spokesman.

"They also provide a cost-effective solution for busy workshops that

have existing diagnostics tools but need extra diagnostic capacity."

The range comprises six single application diagnostic tools: one to programme the tyre pressure monitoring system and register new valves; one to operate brake callipers on vehicles with electronic handbrakes; one to reset service lights on systems for BMWs, Mercedes-Benz, Fiat and Volkswagen Group; a climate control fault reader; an electronic on-board diagnostic scan tool; and an airbag tool to read faults and reset airbag and SBS warning lights.



## Good Garage Scheme site targets consumers

The Good Garage Scheme has launched a web-based maintenance and MoT service for consumers.

It allows customers to enter their vehicle details as well as the date their car needs maintenance or a service.

The service, part of a newly-designed website, will then send a

text message or email as a reminder.

The organisation, which aims to help self regulation of independent car workshops and MoT test centres, hopes to "significantly increase" its web traffic, which currently stands at 700 hits a day.

The website, which has more than 2,500 members, sets out what con-

sumers can expect from a Good Garage Scheme member, as well as a feedback page on each garage's profile.

Angelo Chillari, Good Garage Scheme administrator, said that a "professional internet presence for garages was no longer a luxury, but a real necessity".