



Live and let diagnos

PMM recently made the trip to Wheatley, Oxfordshire after being invited to take part in a training course run by software engineering company Autologic Diagnostics.

After doing a couple of laps around Wheatley and several suspicious glances at our bossy Sat Nav which insisted we'd reached our destination pretty much at the checkout point in the local Asda, we eventually arrived at the mercifully green fleece-free Autologic House!

The module we were participating in was concentrated on fault finding and electrical testing of the Mercedes-Benz. Indeed the course handbook clearly lays out the intent of the training. It decrees that the expressed purpose of the course is to 'equip attendees with the knowledge and method process to form a diagnostic path, which you can apply to any problem relating to Mercedes-Benz vehicles, and to provide a practical application of a diagnosis guide for testing.'

Expert tuition

The course was taken by Mickey Syrota, Mercedes Support Technician at the company. Mickey used to work as a diagnostic

technician for a Mercedes dealership, so his credentials are excellent. Indeed, his vast technical knowledge shines through right from the outset of the course, as he has the ability to not only relay the information in a clear, precise fashion, but also to provide examples drawn from his own experience to illustrate the theory. This anecdotal approach is a good style to adopt on such courses as not only does it show that the course leader has plenty of knowledge in the 'real world', it means the delivery avoids becoming a read-through of the manual, which can become quite tedious.

Mickey, through his work with Autologic, clearly knew some of the technicians on the course and as such the atmosphere wasn't too formal and didn't feel like we were in a classroom. This led to a bit of banter throughout the day and a couple of attendees attempted to dispute some of the information he relayed. It was testimony to Mickey's prowess that he was able to rebuff any objections he received with a counter-

argument. The fact that debate was encouraged made for a more interesting day in any-case, and obviously provided attendees with the chance to ask him questions which they wouldn't have been able to over the phone.

'C' it to believe it

A recurrent theme of the day was the three C's: complaint, cause and cure. It is this procedural thought process which Mickey encouraged attendees to always adopt when approaching a diagnostic repair.

The morning was dedicated to theory and establishing the first two aspects of the diagnostic holy triumvirate: complaint and cause. Aspects covered included the TIPS system – an up-to-date service information database that is used by Mercedes-Benz workshops worldwide and WIS net, which stands for Workshop Information System and provides a plethora of useful resources such as: maintenance and repair instructions, wiring diagrams and test and adjustment

values. Mickey also advocated the need for a comprehensive toolkit and mentioned a few items worth including which we won't tell you now, but would encourage you to get in touch with Autologic to find out more.

Garage-focused

After giving a brief overview of vehicle locking functions and CANBus systems, we broke for lunch, where *PMM* blocked a rather ravenous looking Mickey's path to the buffet table to get a bit more background on the training.

Mickey first told us the thought process behind the course's construction. "When putting a manual together, Autologic draws on its team of marque specialists who research and write the content – often in their own time – and together we try to make it as customer-focused as possible," he said. "Instead of Autologic setting the agenda, we try to assimilate content to mimic the sort of queries we receive on the phone, every single day. My colleague Kevin Hardy is mainly responsible for the course content which is being experienced today.

"A training course grants more time to answer these questions than the natural constraints of a phone call. It also allows for visual demonstrations, which can greatly help in getting messages across," Mickey continued.

Practice makes perfect

The excellent turnout for the day's training affirms the emphasis it places on the practical needs of the customer and its anti 'theory for theory's sake approach'. "Hopefully, the course will encourage attendees to think on their feet and become more of a self-sufficient entity," Mickey told us. "With the knowledge-base and skills set they have accrued they shouldn't have to rely so much on support networks. I want to drum into these guys how important it is to check everything thoroughly first, so when they do come to the cure, the procedure followed has been so methodical and precise, they'll know exactly what is wrong with the car and won't waste time ordering expensive parts which won't actually repair the problem.

"If they aren't meticulous and don't have the right equipment and resources, then a part could be ordered when actually the fault code could be caused by a wiring error," said Mickey, by way of example.

It is with this objective firmly in mind, that the afternoon's practical element was constructed. Mickey took two C-class Mercedes and induced faults in them. One had a central locking fault and the other didn't start. All the technicians got involved and an afternoon's lively discussion and hands-on activity ensued, with the help of Mickey's specially 'acquired' diagnostic

toolkit, a scope and the Autologic – or the 'little blue box of magic tricks' as Mickey referred to it.

Transferable skills

Everyone enjoyed the day and from the feedback *PMM* received, found it extremely informative. One happy chappy was David Owen, Proprietor of A&A Garage in Holywell, Flintshire. He beamed: "I've been on plenty of courses this year and this one has not let me down. The deliverable is very understandable and as jargon-free as it could be. I came to find out more about electrical fault finding on Mercedes, but the great thing is that the skills we have learnt today are transferable across a number of vehicles. It's definitely been worth the long trip down from Holywell!"

PMM says: Well done Autologic on a fantastic course which is bound to pay dividends when the attendees get back to their businesses.

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