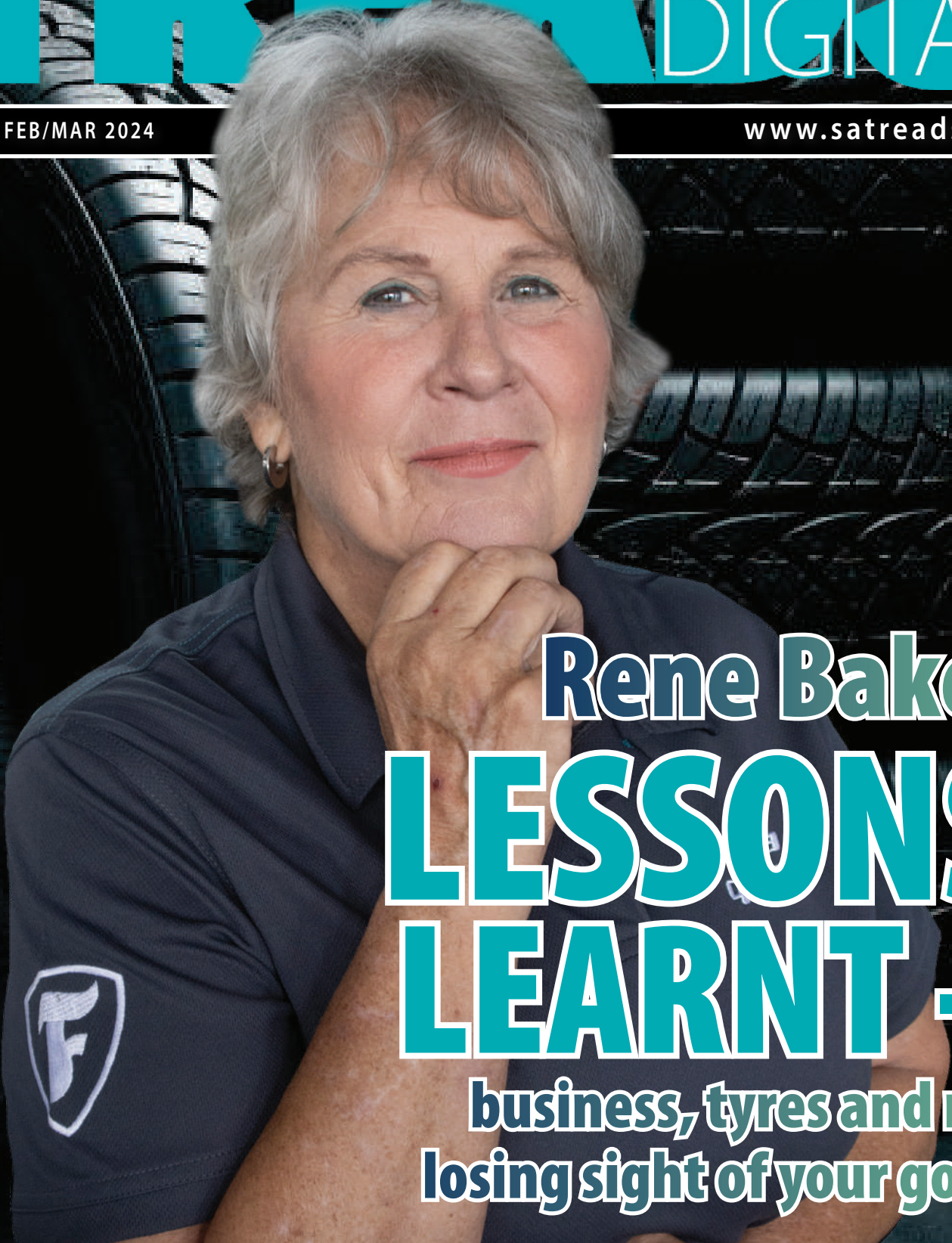


Southern Africa

# TREADS DIGITAL

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## Rene Baker LESSONS LEARNT – business, tyres and not losing sight of your goals

RETAIL SECTOR  
UNDER  
PRESSURE

NEW SUPPLY CHAIN  
PLANNING PLATFORM  
FOR SRSA

TEPA TO FOCUS ON  
RECYCLED WASTE TYRE  
COLLECTION

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## Editor's Corner

**Have you ever stopped and taken note of the condition of the tyres on a vehicle, when you are in a car park, or shopping centre? After so many years running a tyre publication, it is the first thing I notice. To my dismay, what I frequently see, fills me with dread. Bald treads, exposed steel belts, irregular wear due to improper inflation, the list goes on. When one considers that the tyres are your only connection to the road, it begs the question, why are motorists inclined to neglect them and to delay replacing their tyres when worn?**

Granted, tyres are an expensive commodity, viewed as a grudge purchase by consumers, but failing to look after this critical component on a vehicle could have serious repercussions.

This is where the role of the tyre retailer becomes crucial. They can actually help you to limit your costs upon fitment, by alerting you to some crucial checks and tricks of the trade that could extend the life of your tyres.

With disposable income shrinking, motorists could be tempted to purchase second-hand tyres from dubious

traders, to save a buck or two. Tempting? Don't do it! Worn tyres could compromise your safety.

In this, our first issue for 2024, we take a closer look at the retail sector, which appears to be under pressure, due to various factors discussed in our feature story.

We also bring you an exclusive interview with a dynamic female entrepreneur, who is a member of one of the country's largest franchise groups – Supa Quick, where she shares her simple recipe for success.

Catch up on the latest news coming out of South Africa and beyond.

Wishing you all a happy, healthy and prosperous 2024!



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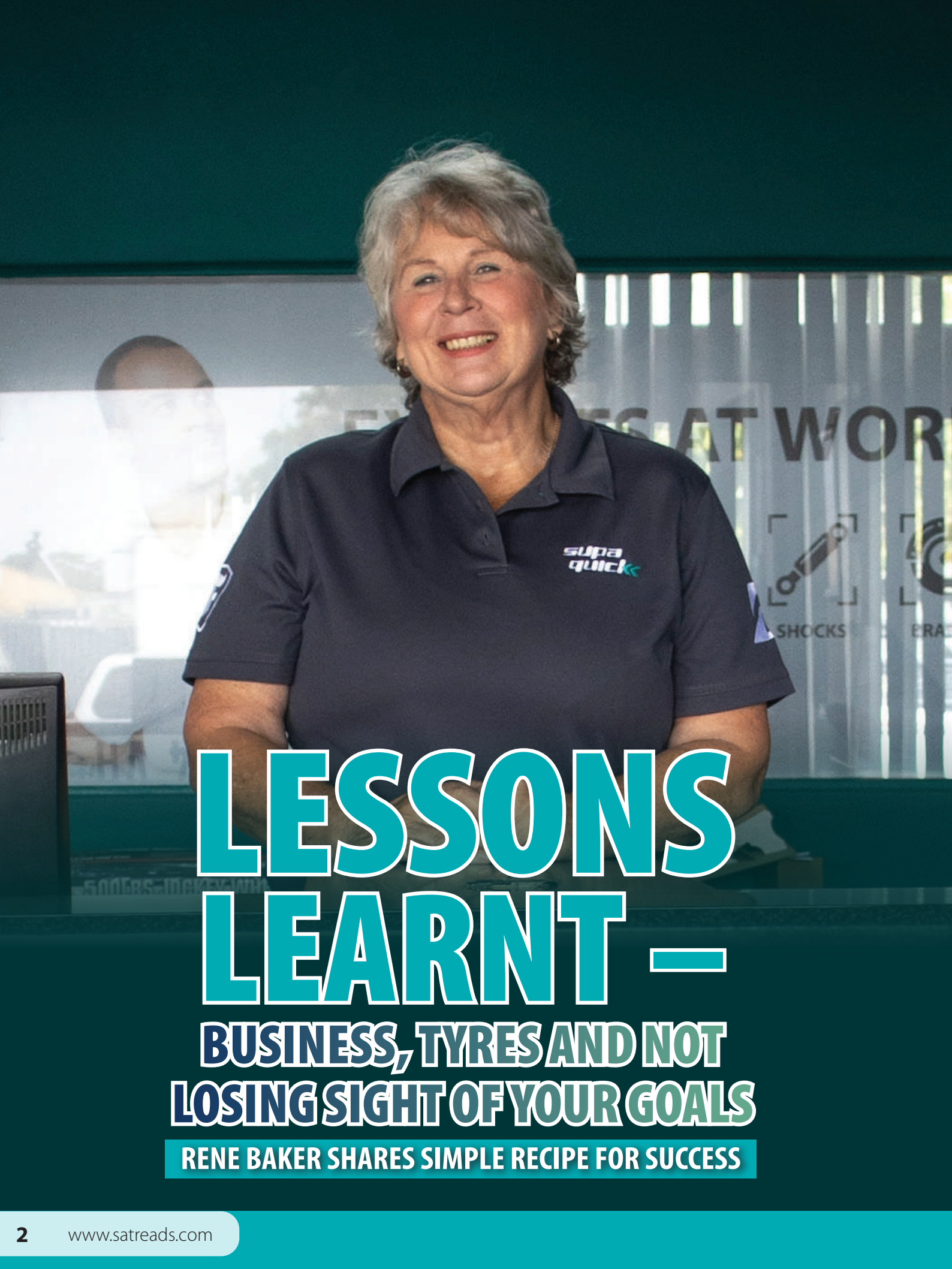
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# LESSONS LEARNT – BUSINESS, TYRES AND NOT LOSING SIGHT OF YOUR GOALS

RENE BAKER SHARES SIMPLE RECIPE FOR SUCCESS

**As a fellow female entrepreneur, meeting dynamic women who have made it in the business world – particularly a male dominated one – is heartwarming. Enter Rene Baker, a lady, who 10 years ago, took on a mammoth challenge, purchasing a shop that sells tyres and other underbody components to motorists, a business that was largely unfamiliar to her. Loerie Supa Quick, is now a respected fixture in the small upcoming city of George, in the Western Cape. Moreover, the fitment store is recording remarkable growth year-on-year. How did she do it? We caught up with Rene to find out.**

**Congratulations Rene. We are hearing great things about your retail operation. Talk us through your career path and what led to your decision to enter the automotive sector.**

At the beginning of my career – 42 years ago – I had followed my childhood dream, to become a mathematics teacher, which I achieved, in 1981. I then went on to teach for three years, before finally deciding to explore other opportunities. Why, you may ask. I don't need to tell you what teachers earned in those days - very little! The need to supplement my income combined with a newfound fascination for sales, led me to what I describe as the second chapter of my career, in sales, marketing and even manufacturing, in the décor industry, specialising in mirrors, paintings and photo frames, for the mass market (I managed a factory), a venture that took me to 2014.

I was financially and emotionally supported by many wonderful players in these 34 years, and I couldn't have achieved my goals if not for all of these supportive people. However, I must make mention of J. Daynes, M. Formato and P. Gokool, and S. McCann, men who saw my potential and who believed in my abilities.

One day, scanning the workplace for possible opportunities, I came across an advertisement of a franchise store that was up for sale, in George. Having yearned to leave the hectic pace of Johannesburg and retire there someday, the advert immediately caught my eye, especially as the store in question was a Supa Quick franchise, a brand I knew and respected. A perfect step to semi-retirement, or so I thought.

The rest, as the saying goes, is history.



**Were you not a little intimidated to take on a business that was a total departure from your previous skills and experience base?**

To be honest, no. And the reason for that was due to a young man who had been working for this particular fitment store for 8 years at that time. Although the owner was selling, Divan was keen to remain with the operation, and so Divan and I made a pact to support each other through this venture. His knowledge and relationship with the customers was unmatched and I knew I could rely on him to steer me through the intricacies and complexities of the business. He remains with me to this day.

Additionally, although one might be forgiven for thinking that the decor business is female dominated, this was not the case during the time of my involvement. All the buyers and managers I dealt with were men, although this slowly began to change over the years as women became more empowered.

“

Divan and I made a pact to support each other in running the business.

”

“

I am connected  
to the number one franchise in  
the country.

”

In short, although the two markets were vastly different, I was used to trading in a male dominated environment, and this held me in good stead in my new venture.

**You took over ownership of Loerie Supa Quick in 2014. What were some of your first experiences and what initiatives did you introduce to take the business to the next level?**

What instantly springs to mind, is the time I panicked, hastily refunding a customer after he challenged me on price, claiming I had over-charged him for his tyres. The pricing issue in this industry – still prevalent to this day – took some time to come to grips with, but eventually I learnt that charging fairly, whilst not giving in to the common practice of discounting the product, was the wisest route to take.

At that time, the market in George was largely overtraded, as the city was still small. Back then, retailers made a meagre living, at best. Thankfully, the marketplace is changing, with George undergoing a growth spurt.

Despite this, no new stores have opened, although we do find current stores switching alliances.

Thankfully, I believe that I am connected to the number one franchise group in the country, in terms of the overall basket, so I have not had to contemplate switching to another brand.

I have also opened up a dedicated section at the back of the store with extra lifts, to

offer what we refer to as the ‘dirty jobs’, exhausts, shocks, brakes and the like. We also provide a professional air conditioning service, which is being well received, in contrast to those being offered on the side of the road.

That being said, although we offer the full spectrum of underbody services, tyres continue to make up close on 70 percent of our total sales.

**What sort of assistance does the Supa Quick franchise office provide?**

With motoring fleets making up a sizeable portion of our business, the Supa Quick franchise head office negotiates all national deals on our behalf, alongside continuing to ensure their franchisees receive the best possible deals and rebates on product.

Plus, with the group now operating as an open channel, we also have the freedom to compete on other brands.

Given the price-sensitive nature of the market currently, there are times when we will challenge Head Office on certain decisions that may impact on our margins, and that is to be expected. But overall, I believe they provide us with the best possible support, wherever they can.

It is not often we come across retailers who are not expressing frustration over the lack of support they allegedly receive from their franchisor. Your views on this hotly contested issue are refreshingly different.





I learnt this lesson long ago, to now allow the negativity and noise surrounding me detract me from my core purpose and running my business as I see fit. In 1984, when I first became involved in the framing and painting sector, China was just emerging as a world player and suddenly, the market was flooded with a multitude of suppliers. Back then, I took the decision to continue to focus on my business and product offering, by cultivating strong relationships with my clients. After all, people buy people! I firmly believe that. I carry that lesson with me to this day. My motto is this: support your suppliers, but at the same time, do everything you can to satisfy the needs of your customers, within reason.

That is not to say that we don't have our share of frustrations with our franchisor, at times, but we do not let these issues overtake us, and become the focal point of our business.

In my case, I am happy, and frankly, lucky to be associated with Supa Quick. The brand is not only strong, it is the longest, most sustainable brand in the market.

#### **What do you believe differentiates you from your competitors?**

I operate on a simple set of basic principles: acknowledge the customer when they pull up to your store, irrespective of how busy you are; help them as quickly as you can; offer to take them somewhere or drop them off at the mall, if the job in hand is time consuming; offer them a space to work, complete with wifi in-store, and the like. It's the little things that make the difference.

We have several retirement communities

in our area, and should senior citizens be unable to start their car, (on suspicion of a flat car battery), we will go out to them to identify the problem and fit a new battery, if required.

In short, we make the most of each and every opportunity to meet the customer's needs.

#### **How do you deal with a customer who is pressing you for a better price?**

As a rule, we do not become entangled in the pricing war. On the odd occasion, should a customer come in, armed with a better price from an opposition store, we might concede, but simultaneously, we are quick to point out that in all likelihood, the 'better price' they got is because that particular store is running a special, and that this is not the norm.

Notwithstanding, our prices are not overly inflated. They are reasonable, which is why it has taken us 10 years to arrive at a profitable level of trading. Which is not to say that we don't strive to assist our customers, with regular patrons often paying less for affiliated services such as balancing and wheel alignment, where and when we can.

It is all about reading your market. What may apply in Johannesburg, may not work down here in George.

Thankfully for us, with so many people 'semigrating' to the Cape, the store is well positioned to grow its current turnover further, over the next five years.

#### **How would you describe your management style?**

I believe that people deserve respect, but they need to earn it. This applies to both staff and management. My staff know that they have the freedom to operate, but within certain parameters. Should they need to overstep these parameters, they need to check in with me first.

I would sum it up like this: my job is to negotiate, constantly, with staff, suppliers and customers. I give in when I need to but I also dig in when I need to!

#### **What would your advice be to other prospective female entrepreneurs?**

To learn from the very start of their careers not to expect to be treated differently due to their gender. There is no special treatment in business. More important, you should naturally aspire to being treated equally by way of respect, remuneration and professionalism.

Believe in yourself and your capabilities and don't be afraid to ask questions! There is no shame in confessing you don't know something. That is how you learn.

Learn everything you can about your respective business sector and commit to selling your personality, not your looks!

Show your staff that they are an integral part of the business, and that without them you would be lost – a sure way of achieving unending loyalty.

Finally, establish the necessary support systems – both at home and at work – that will contribute towards achieving your goals.

“

I give in when I need to, but I also dig in when I need to.

”



# RETAIL SECTOR UNDER PRESSURE

**When I first joined the tyre industry, more than 30 years ago, retail stores were in their prime, generating handsome returns. Over the years, the marketplace has become saturated, with consumers spoilt for choice on where to purchase their replacement tyres. While this turn of events may have been beneficial for motorists, the plethora of tyre outlets that now exists, has impacted negatively on the industry.**

**Today, franchises and dealer stores are struggling to remain competitive amid perpetually shrinking profit margins. An over-supply of retail outlets coupled with a shifting market dynamic, have created apprehension, with retailers now looking at alternative ways to supplement their turnover.**

Historically, wholesaling was not the norm in the tyre industry, but this has changed, with manufacturers now compelled to sell product to wholesalers at drastically reduced prices, to meet their target volumes.

This according to industry sources. While wholesalers have their place, some of the dealers we spoke with, (all of whom requested to remain anonymous), claimed that a surge in wholesaling practices was adversely impacting their businesses, making it even more difficult for them to compete.

One franchise owner we spoke with questioned the need to pay franchise fees, when in reality, buying from a wholesaler is far cheaper. "Disposing of new product via a wholesaler, in order to meet monthly targets, is an old way of doing business, one that does not support the manufacturers' franchises and branded stores which are actively promoting their affiliated brands," he said.

And then there is the growing trend for manufacturers to offer direct selling to their customers, something that is particularly evident in the commercial segment.

In response to these allegations, Sumitomo Rubber SA, said: "SRSA currently does not have a direct to market approach and uses the Dunlop dealer and independent channels to reach the consumer. Consumers that are interested in purchasing Dunlop tyres online will be directed to Dunlop dealers (based on location), as the fulfillment partner."

This statement was further backed up by Bridgestone SA, who said: "Bridgestone does not offer direct purchasing on our core tyre business. Bridgestone's retail approach is to offer our products through premium partners that can deliver superior service. We believe that dealers who can render high quality service, have a greater chance of enduring market pressures."

"Business cannot be successful without our partners," echoed Goodyear. "At Goodyear, we adhere to what we like to call 'the connected business model'. Essentially, this means connecting all aspects that make up the business, from the product, to the OEM, customer (retailer), to the end-user and all factors in-between. In South Africa, we are working with all retailers to ensure that we strengthen our relationship with them and also support them in their respective market segments, so that it is a win-win relationship." And yet, the perceived lack of support some in the distribution trade say they receive from their manufacturing partners, often leads them to explore other options, a popular one being, switching alliances from one brand to another.

How often does one drive past a retail outlet, that seemingly overnight, has switched signage to mark its allegiance to a different tyre brand? This is now commonplace, with retailers hoping to gain greater support from a rival brand, or in some cases, choosing to forego alliances altogether, in favour of becoming an independent store.

In these economically pressing times, it would appear retailers are doing anything and everything in their power, to ensure their businesses to survive.

"There are relatively limited barriers to entry to the tyre retail space, and this allows, at points, more retail offerings than the market requires. The change of alliance more closely

aligns to the value proposition of the individual retail chains and their ability to differentiate their offering made to dealers," added SRSA.

"Offering premium products that are locally manufactured and fitted with exceptional customer service, will continue to deliver sustainable growth for retailers," claimed Bridgestone SA.

Reliable service, backed by a sound product range remain key in this highly competitive business. But this alone may not be enough. As our exclusive interview with Rene Baker aptly illustrates, retailers who extend their product offering and services to include underbody components and other affiliated services, set themselves up for sustainability.

"In the current economy, consumers are ever conscious of their reduced disposable income due to the rising cost of living, fuel increases and the like. We recommend the dealer segment should consider a dedicated focus on ancillary products in-store, to provide a full solution to the customers' needs in the automotive segment," SRSA concluded.

“

There are relatively limited barriers to entry to the tyre retail space and this allows more retail offerings than the market requires.

– SRSA

”

# TRENDS, DIRECTION AND OPPORTUNITIES AT AUTOMECHANIKA JHB 2024

The Automechanika Johannesburg CEO Breakfast event on 25 January in Centurion witnessed three power-packed presentations delivered by brains trust-league experts in their respective fields, providing thought-provoking facts and indicating some real direction and opportunity for the automotive sector in South Africa.

Paul-Roux de Kock, Chief Analytics Officer at market intelligence, data and analytic group Lightstone highlighted the dynamics of population movement among the various regions in South Africa which is an on-going phenomenon influencing planning and formulation of measures to provide products and services where population centres thrive.

De Kock stressed that affordability has emerged as a key factor in consumer behaviour and the automotive sector is vulnerable to this. Motor manufacturers who have not yet done so, should be encouraged to establish a manufacturing presence in South Africa within a policy framework aimed at increasing the cost-effectiveness and ultimately the affordability of vehicles in the country. Auto Sector Lead for Southern Africa at audit firm KPMG Dex Machida presented the findings of the firm's recently-published Global Automotive Executive Survey which, inter alia, indicated a definite trend towards a growing market for electric vehicles (EV's) and highlighted the need for proper planning and implementation of initiatives to appropriately serve market needs.

In the South African context, it was incumbent on the SA motor industry to attach high priority to the export of vehicles in order to ensure the sustainability of the local manufacturing industry as local volumes were too low to achieve this. An important pointer that also stood out in the survey is consumer experience and the role that digital technology can play in the enhancement thereof if applied correctly.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a growing phenomenon and would become increasingly more relevant and important in this regard. There is a definite need by consumers for an enhanced customer experience to underpin sound customer relationships which will be ignored at its peril by the motor industry at large.



Machida stressed that the development of sound customer relationships is an imperative for successful business. Craig Parker, Research Director: Africa at international consulting firm Frost & Sullivan further highlighted the trend towards alternative energy sources for vehicles. A great deal of research and development had already taken place in the field of EV's and green hydrogen fuel cell-based propulsion systems. He reported that the practical application of fuel cell technology in vehicles is currently gaining momentum, notably in Japan. Insofar as EV's are concerned, the battery is the heart of the system and South Africa is in the fortunate position that it has viable natural resources required for battery manufacturing, which makes the country a viable proposition for the local production of batteries and EV's. Parker further alluded to the exciting opportunities that were inherent in second life applications for batteries and the potential for South Africa to become a centre of global relevance in this respect, where special economic zones (SEZ) could play a vital part in rendering a recycling industry viable and sustainable on an international scale.

The CEO breakfast garnered significant attendance, attracting senior executives from various sectors, both in the private industry and government. Notable attendees included representatives from Absa Bank, Autoforum, Automotive Industry Development Centre (AIDC), Bodyshop News Africa, City of Joburg, CVLC Communication, Department of Trade, Industry and Competition, Drone Council South Africa, Gauteng Enterprise Propeller, Gauteng Fleet and Logistics, Gauteng Growth

& Development Agency, Gauteng Tourism, German Embassy, iFundi, KZN Economic Development, Lightstone, Liqui Moly SA, Mabule International, Mahle Aftermarket South Africa, Masterdrive, Mitsubishi Motors South Africa, Motor Industry Bargaining Council (MIBCO), Motor Matter, Motus Aftermarket Parts, Naamsa, National Regulator for Compulsory Specifications, Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality, NRCS, Panthera Media, RAC Masterdrive, Reign Supreme Holdings, RMI – ARA & SAVABA, RMI/MIWA, Robert Bosch (Pty) Ltd, SA-German Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Savrala, Sincpoint, SKF South Africa, Skinny SBU Super Cars, Standard Bank, Stellantis, Supreme Spring, TecAlliance South Africa, TEDA, TEPA and SAPRA @ (RMI), The Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport South Africa, Treasury, Trenstar, Tshwane Economic Development Agency, U.S. Department of Commerce, and Yassir Technologies.

The event served as a platform for meaningful discussions and networking opportunities among key industry players and government stakeholders. Automechanika Johannesburg is proud to remain at the forefront of innovative thinking and, through this insightful event, live out its slogan of "Real Business: No Fluff! The 2024 edition of Automechanika will take place between the 19-21 November at the JHB Expo Centre, and is gearing to once again connect suppliers and manufacturers to key buyers. Automechanika is the platform to generate sales leads, launch new products and solutions and network with industry peers.

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# NEW CUTTING-EDGE SUPPLY CHAIN PLANNING PLATFORM FOR SUMITOMO RUBBER SOUTH AFRICA

Sumitomo Rubber SA (SRSA), manufacturer and distributor of the iconic Dunlop tyre brand, is rolling out an AI-powered inventory management platform, with the support of software development firm Slimstock, in a move set to transform its supply chain capabilities to enhance operations, reduce waste and optimise planning.

The new technology platform rollout comes soon after the announcement of a R1.7bn investment at its Ladysmith manufacturing plant that includes new plant equipment and machinery to increase passenger car tyre production capabilities, efficiencies and product offering to further support the Original Equipment (OE) market.

Warren May, Director of Corporate Planning at Sumitomo Rubber South Africa, says: "The tyre manufacturing industry is a dynamic and constantly evolving space, and SRSA is committed to offering the market quality, safety-tested tyres manufactured for local conditions. In order to do this, we require strategic partners to support us in our vision with expert data-led guidance. We are excited that Slimstock, an AI-powered inventory management platform company, will support us on this journey, ensuring that the multi-billion investment we've made into our plant, is supported by a robust back-end system that helps us become resilient to market changes, and optimises our planning."



## **Slimstock**

The Netherlands-based software development company provides the virtual infrastructure to create a more efficient, resilient and sustainable supply chain. SRSA will adopt Slimstock's award-winning supply chain planning platform, Slim4, across its operations in South Africa.

Slim4's advanced forecasting and multi-echelon planning capabilities will provide the SRSA planning team with the granular SKU-level demand insights required to achieve the optimal balance of inventory. Additionally, it will bring greater operational efficiency to users' day-to-day lives, and the ability to respond more quickly and effectively to supply chain disruption.

"At Slimstock, we remain committed to empowering businesses to make better

and faster decisions. We are thrilled to support Sumitomo Rubber SA on this transformative journey, and we look forward to forging a long-lasting partnership," says Milton Lawson, Sales Director at Slimstock.

## **Supply chain volatility**

The new platform will help create a single source of truth for supply chain data, allowing the business to mature its Sales and Operations Planning (S&OP) process and support more effective decision-making.

"With a more sophisticated demand and supply chain planning solution, we will have the capacity to effectively navigate the increasing levels of supply chain volatility, and retain our ability to offer a standard of service unparalleled within the automotive industry," says May.

# TEPA FOCUSES ON RECYCLED WASTE TYRE COLLECTION

**Vishal Premllal, National Director of the Tyre, Equipment, Parts Association (TEPA), a proud association of the Retail Motor Industry Organisation (RMI), says TEPA is working closely with all tyre trading members to ensure that they are registered for waste tyre collections at the Waste Tyre Bureau. This will help expedite more waste tyre collections and contribute to effective and responsible recycling practices.**

He says one cannot stress enough the importance of recycled waste tyre collection. When it comes to recycling of tyres, the Waste Tyre Bureau of the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and Environment, is the custodian of waste tyre collection in South Africa.

Instead of dumping them onto land refills, they are recycled into many interesting, innovative, and creative ways but if not managed correctly can have a dire impact on the environment.

Recycling is obviously key for the environment and for a more sustainable future. The Minister of the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and Environment, has recently put out a Section 29 plan for comment from the industry. "The plan will help better manage waste tyres in South Africa, facilitate waste tyre processing capacity and help to reduce the negative environmental impacts of waste tyres," he says.

The environmental and health consequences of not disposing of tyres correctly is significant ranging from fire hazards, to toxins leaking into our ground soil and water from the non-biodegradable composition of tyres, to diseases such as malaria, encephalitis and the Zika virus to name just a few.

The reality is that despite Government's best efforts, there are still millions of waste tyres stockpiled and many more lying in back yards and on informal dumping



sites. The product will take thousands of years to break down and unfortunately we are already finding unacceptable volumes of plastic in our water that ends up in our food system. Premllal says the consequential cost of this is significant, not to mention the health hazard.

All responsible and ethical tyre traders need to ensure they are correctly registered and their waste is being collected by the department.

Consumers can also play their part in ensuring waste tyres are being disposed of responsibly by handing them over to a registered tyre dealer. Premllal says if consumers are unsure on the health of their tyre or when to dispose of it, they can call into a registered TEPA tyre business and speak to one of the trained specialists. He says equally in the event one notices illegal stockpiles these can be reported via the TEPA whistleblower hotline and TEPA will contact

the department to deal with the stockpile.

"On the back of a looming environmental disaster, we urge the public not to exasperate the situation by contributing to the stockpile of unwanted tyres. If you have made the decision to replace your tyres, don't further compound the problem of waste tyres, rather leave the waste tyres at your TEPA dealer so that these tyres can be disposed of correctly as the law prescribes."

Addressing the environmental impacts of waste tyres requires concerted efforts from governments, businesses, communities, and individuals. By adopting sustainable practices, promoting environmental awareness, and actively contributing to environmental greening initiatives, one can mitigate the adverse effects of waste tyres and work towards a cleaner, healthier, and more sustainable future for all. "We all have a responsibility to protect the environment, let's play our role!" concludes Premllal.

# 'TYRES ARE NOT A COMMODITY', SAY MOTORISTS

**According to a study conducted in South Africa, durability, comfort and performance are the main attributes drivers have in mind when considering their next tyre.**

It is a common misconception that drivers treat tyres as a commodity and do not differentiate among different types and brands on the market. Research conducted by Ipsos demonstrates a slightly different picture. Nearly four out of 10 drivers remain focused on a specific brand during tyre replacement process. This translates to a growing number of consumers who believe having the right tyres is crucial and consider their performance before making their tyre choice.

According to the Ipsos research, respondents believe that tyres are 'Extremely important. 95% of those surveyed believe that Durability along with Smooth & Comfortable Ride (94%) coupled with Long Lasting Tyre (94%) were the top three attributes when selecting a tyre. Performance (93%) ranked as the fourth highest priority while making their purchasing decision<sup>1</sup>.

Richard Fourie, Managing Director, Goodyear South Africa: "This is very telling for consumers in South Africa, where reports consistently point to damaged and poorly maintained tyres as a major cause of road accidents. Viewed in conjunction with the high road accident rates experienced in the country during the festive season and the upcoming Easter holidays, it is clear that making the right decision when buying tyres is vitally important.

The research findings prove that consumers prefer premium tyres which offer excellent performance in all driving conditions as well as efficiency and sustainability; in other words, they look



for a perfectly balanced tyre. Premium tyre manufacturer Goodyear strives to answer this need with the newest generation of its highly acclaimed Eagle F1 Asymmetric family.

## **Goodyear Eagle F1 Asymmetric 6: Delivering uncompromising performance**

Goodyear's latest ultra-high-performance (UHP) tyre Eagle F1 Asymmetric 6 delivers a step forward in performance<sup>2</sup> and efficiency<sup>3</sup>. State-of-the-art technologies provide drivers with excellent grip, braking and handling in dry and wet weather conditions.

At the same time, a range of features make the Eagle F1 Asymmetric 6 EV-ready. A more aero-efficient sidewall reduces drag and improves mileage. Meanwhile, the varying sipe pattern works to dampen road noise. The tyre is also certified for a higher load rating to serve an EV market with typically heavier vehicles.

The tyre was named winner of Auto Bild<sup>4</sup> summer tyre test, with the publication placing it first when compared to 49 other summer tyres. In addition, it was certified 'Eco-Master' for its efficiency, low rolling resistance and sustainability. Testers noted

the tyres' "premium tread pattern with exemplary performance on wet and dry slopes [with] outstanding mileage."

## **Future-proofing for EVs**

With the rise of EVs globally, drivers are increasingly conscious of a tyre's impact on efficiency and sustainability. When consumers were asked in a Goodyear survey<sup>5</sup> what characteristics they expect from an EV-ready tyre, almost one third (31%) prefer the value of a long-lasting tyre, while nearly another third (27%) look for an eco-friendly tyre with low environmental impact, and 18% look for lower overall road noise.

Sonia Leneveu, Director Marketing Consumer Europe, Goodyear: "Drivers demand more from tyres than ever before, and the trend towards highly informed buying decisions, with drivers focused on technology and sustainability, proves that tyres are not a commodity.

"There are a number of innovations associated with Goodyear Eagle F1 Asymmetric 6 that make it a very balanced tyre. It brings together Goodyear's UHP tyre characteristics and EV-specific features, which are increasingly important as electric vehicles become more widespread."



# Generation **X**



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By John Stone

For the past two decades Sapphire Media has supported the worldwide tyre and automotive industry as a unique Business Media Consultant delivering professional editorial and marketing/PR services to a global client base and as a regular columnist in leading publications.

## THE TIRE COLOGNE 2024: WORKSHOP LIVE – FOR A DIGITAL AND COMPETITIVE WORKSHOP OF THE FUTURE

**The future of the tyre industry is getting closer, and it is digital! The innovative special format “Workshop LIVE” at the next THE TIRE COLOGNE 2024, which takes place from 4 to 6 June in Cologne, is pointing the way ahead for independent workshops and tyre specialty traders and offers comprehensive insight into the digitalised and competitive workshop of the future.**

As the leading international platform of the global tyre and wheel industry, THE TIRE COLOGNE presents a broad spectrum of new products and innovative services. Companies that want to elevate their business to the next level can network with well-known exhibitors from Germany and abroad at THE TIRE COLOGNE and inform themselves about the latest developments. It is crucial for the tyre specialty trade too to set itself up competitively in order to also continue to exist successfully on the market in future. The increasing technical complexity and digitalisation of vehicles also defines the requirements for workshops and tyre specialty traders. Services must be adapted to the future requirements of digital workshops. This primarily means allround service that fulfils the increasing standards of customers and at the same time creates new business potential.

A highlight of this year’s THE TIRE COLOGNE is therefore the Workshop LIVE special area in Hall 8, in cooperation with the companies Hunter and Würth. Visitors can look forward to live demonstrations of the most modern digital workshop requirements, with a focus on advanced diagnostics and repair technologies. The services continually increasing in demand also include the ergonomic and efficient design of the tyre service,

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the automated tyre tread measurement during the acceptance dialogue and services for rapid measurements, which also include glass service and calibrations of advanced driver-assistance systems. Another focus of Workshop LIVE is on the challenges and requirements affiliated with the transition from combustion engines to electromobility and the related high voltage technology.

Presentations of the latest technical applications in a model workshop enable the public to become familiar with the innovative technologies directly on the tyre. The Hunter and Würth companies demonstrate processes in the field of automotive glass, including information about automotive glass and the repair of windshields. They also demonstrate procedures in thermomanagement, including the diagnostics, repair and maintenance of air conditioning systems. New products for the tyre specialty trade and advanced diagnostics methods for tyres will also be presented in the special area.

Koelnmesse – industry trade fairs for the mobility segment: Koelnmesse stages INTERMOT, THE TIRE COLOGNE and polisMOBILITY, three major international trade fairs in the mobility segment, hosted at its trade fair grounds in Cologne/Germany. Alongside tires and wheels, THE TIRE COLOGNE focuses on equipment for motor vehicle servicing and tire fitting centres and presents a comprehensive range of products and services for tire retreading and the recycling and disposal of old tires. INTERMOT is the show for motorised two-wheelers and presents the key innovations in electromobility, accessories, clothing, parts, customizing, touring and workshop equipment. The latest format polisMOBILITY shows how urban mobility can and must be designed in the future. The events serve as central, international business platforms, bringing the industry together with a carefully targeted approach to showcase the latest products, developments and innovations.

# NOKIAN TYRES INCLUDED IN EUROPEAN COMMISSION'S UNANNOUNCED INSPECTION

The European Commission has initiated an unannounced inspection at Nokian Tyres plc's ("Nokian Tyres") headquarters in Nokia, Finland. The European Commission has expressed its concerns that the inspected tyre manufacturing companies may have violated EU antitrust rules that prohibit cartels and restrictive business practices.

The Commission has concerns that the inspected companies may have violated EU antitrust rules that prohibit cartels and restrictive business practices (Article 101 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union).

The products concerned by the inspections are new replacement tyres for passenger cars, vans, trucks and busses sold in the European Economic Area. The Commission is concerned that price coordination took place amongst the inspected companies, including via public communications.

The Commission officials were accompanied by their counterparts from the relevant national competition authorities of the Member States where the inspections were carried out.

Unannounced inspections are a preliminary investigatory step into suspected anticompetitive practices. The fact that the Commission carries out such inspections does not mean that the companies are guilty of anti-competitive behaviour, nor does it prejudice the outcome of the investigation itself.



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# PIRELLI EARNS CDP'S HIGHEST A RATING FOR CLIMATE ACTION



**For the sixth consecutive year running, Pirelli and C. SpA obtained a place in the Climate A list 2023 compiled by the CDP, the international non-profit organization that gathers, disseminates and promotes information on environmental questions.**

The "A" rating is the highest score achievable in the "Climate" section and was awarded to 346 companies out of the more than 21,000 participating, evaluated on the basis of decarbonization strategies and effectiveness of the actions

implemented to reduce emissions and climate risks and to develop a low carbon emissions economy, as well as the completeness and transparency of the information supplied, and the adoption of best practices associated with environmental impact.

"Obtaining the CDP's most important recognition in the fight against climate change confirms the concrete results supporting sustainable transition achieved by Pirelli and its entire value chain also thanks to new technologies and the constant commitment to innovation," Marco Tronchetti Provera, executive vice chairman of Pirelli, said.

According to CDP, its goal is to guide companies and governments to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions, safeguard water resources and protect forests, gathers data regarding environmental impacts, risks and opportunities, for an independent evaluation applying the methodology with which point scores are calculated.

At the request of over 740 investors with more than 136 trillion dollars in assets, these data, in 2023, were communicated through the CDP platform by the companies involved.

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# BRIDGESTONE COMPLETES SALE OF RUSSIAN ASSETS TO S8 CAPITAL



**Bridgestone Europe NV/SA has completed the sale of its Russian operations to S8 Capital, a diversified holding company based in Russia. The transaction, which has received all necessary regulatory approvals, includes a tire manufacturing plant in Ulyanovsk and a sales and marketing office in Moscow. The company, which first established its presence in Russia in 1998, had suspended all manufacturing activities in the country in March 2021. As a result**

**of the sale, approximately 1,000 Bridgestone employees in Russia will transfer to S8 Capital, the company said.**

Bridgestone said it has maintained support for its Russian workforce since the suspension of operations, continuing to provide full salaries and employee benefits. This decision aligns with the principles of the Bridgestone E8 Commitment, reflecting the company's recognition

of its employees' contributions over the years, it said.

The impact of this asset transfer on Bridgestone's consolidated projections for 2023 is expected to be minimal, according to the company.

Bridgestone in Europe, Middle East, India, and Africa (EMIA) operates as a strategic business unit of Bridgestone Corporation. The unit, headquartered in Zaventem, Belgium, employs over 20,000 people and operates in 40 countries across the region.


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# HANKOOK SETS SIGHTS ON BECOMING A TOP-FIVE GLOBAL TYRE MANUFACTURER BY 2030



**Hankook Tire executives announced a strategy to bring the company within the top five tyre manufacturers in the world during its Partner's Day meeting held this week in Riviera Maya, Mexico.**

According to Hankook Tire North America President Rob Williams, Hankook ranks seventh in global tyre sales and sells tyres in about 160 countries. Global sales revenue as of 2022 was \$6.2 billion, and the company has a production capacity of 102 million units. Today the company employs approximately 22,000 people

and has seven regional headquarters, five R&D centers, eight manufacturing plants and 36 local subsidiaries.

An integral cog in the company's growth strategy involves Hankook's 2023 announcement that it will invest \$1.6 billion into a multi-phase expansion of its Clarksville, Tenn. tyre production plan. The groundbreaking for Phases 2 and 3 will be this year, and Phase 2 and 3 production will begin in 2025. The expansion will bring total production capacity at the plant up to 11 million units, up from today's 5

million. Ten million of these will be PLT tyres and 1 million will be commercial truck tyres.

In addition, Williams told dealers that the company's tyre plant in Hungary will be adding TBR production, and Hankook hopes to reach an 800,000-unit capacity per year there upon the tyre line's expected completion in 2027. Williams said this will allow the TBR products produced in the Tennessee plant to remain stateside. The company can also source products from South Korea and China on the TBR side and Hungary on the PLT side into the U.S.



# TYREXPO ASIA 2024 – POSITIVE MOMENTUM IN THAILAND

**It is now just four months before the leading international tyre trade show – TyreXpo Asia 2024 opens in a new location in Thailand at the Bangkok International Trade & Exhibition Centre (BITEC) from the 15th to 17th May 2024.**

The prestigious event also holds the distinction of being the very first show presented by the Informa Markets (who recently acquired former owners Tarsus Group) and is confidentially expected to attract over 4,000 international attendees from around 60 countries.

300 international tyre and automotive trade buyers have already confirmed their interest in being part of the event's popular 'Hosted Buyers

Programme' which further improve opportunities for top industry buyers to meet the 120 strong exhibitors within the global tyre industry.

At present, 85 percent of booth space have confirmed or reserved, with new addition of exhibitors including Vee Rubber and Black Donut from Thailand, CEAT from Sri Lanka, Service Industries from Pakistan, Malaysia Consortium of Rubber Products from Malaysia and TWT GmbH from Germany.

Informa are also intending to stage a comprehensive Conference on the Tyre Retreading and Recycling sector as well as an 'all new' International Tyre Market Business Forum with specially selected international speakers addressing several varying market

sector issues. More information to be announced later.

Alwin Seow, Event Director for the TyreXpo Series says, "TyreXpo Asia 2024 in Bangkok will be the only exclusive Tyre show taking place in Thailand, focusing on the emerging markets. We have received an ongoing level of registered interest, especially from emerging tyre and automotive markets including Cambodia, Myanmar, Laos, and Vietnam." For further information on the show visit [www.tyrexpoasia.com](http://www.tyrexpoasia.com) for the Hosted Buyer Programme, or to sign up as an Exhibitor or visitor email [jane.customer@tyrexpoasia.com](mailto:jane.customer@tyrexpoasia.com). Or for Buyer Enquiries – [john.buyer@tyrexpoasia.com](mailto:john.buyer@tyrexpoasia.com)

# GOODYEAR ANNOUNCES FORMER STELLANTIS COO AS CEO SUCCESSOR TO RICH KRAMER



**The Goodyear Tire & Rubber Company announced that Mark Stewart has been elected chief executive officer and president, effective Jan. 29. He will succeed Richard J. Kramer, who previously announced his planned retirement from the company following 24 years of service, including 14 as chairman, CEO and president. On the effective date, Laurette T. Koellner, independent lead director of Goodyear's board since 2019, will become non-executive board chair, and Stewart will be added to the Goodyear board as a director.**

Stewart joins Goodyear from Stellantis, where he served as chief operating officer (COO) of North America and a member of the group executive council, leading a business unit with more than 88,000 employees and more than \$90 billion in revenue. During his tenure,

Goodyear says Stewart led the region's EV transformation, introducing the first electrified Jeep in the U.S. market. Under his leadership, Goodyear says the region enjoyed "significant, industry-leading increases" in both margin and cash flow, despite the semiconductor shortage and a hyper-competitive U.S. market.

Previously, Stewart served as vice president, customer fulfillment, at Amazon, serving as the lead executive for customer fulfillment across 200 operations facilities in North America, leading operations, procurement, construction and engineering and teams dedicated to pursuing automation, artificial intelligence, advanced robotics and conveyance.

Prior to Amazon, Stewart was executive vice president and COO for ZF TRW Automotive, a role culminating from over two decades of increasing responsibility, starting with plant, production and quality management roles and advancing to lead Tower Automotive's Western Europe business as executive vice

president, TRW's North America Passenger Car and Commercial Global Steering business as vice president and general manager and TRW's Asia Pacific business as vice president. Over the course of his career, Goodyear says Stewart has overseen diverse manufacturing and fulfillment operations across the globe, and has been based in the U.S., Belgium, Germany and China.

Kramer will continue to serve Goodyear in an advisory capacity, the company says.

Koellner, former member of The Boeing Company office of the chairman, was elected to the board of directors of The Goodyear Tire & Rubber Company in 2015, becoming independent lead director in 2019. While at Boeing, Koellner also served as president of Boeing International and president of Connexion by Boeing. She has also served on six other boards and is currently a director for Celestica Inc. (since 2009), Papa Johns International, Inc. (since 2014) and Nucor Corporation (since 2015).

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