

STORY 25

THE
FINE
ART
OF
SELLING
TO
ROYALTY



Do not approach royalty directly, do not speak directly to them. Do it through their aides. Never give instructions, only suggestions, when it comes to servicing their cars. Never say no, even if it means having to lug stacks of cold hard cash back to the office.

These are just some of the dos and don'ts when it comes to the fine art of selling Rolls-Royces, Bentleys and Daimlers to royalty. An art that Barry Kan, Malayan Motors General Manager, has honed over the years.

He will be the first to admit that he learnt on the job by listening to his boss, Royston K S Tan. It is a Malayan Motors tradition, handed down through the years.

"We understand royalty. We know you need to show them respect and know your place in society. If you don't know your place, then it becomes very difficult," stresses Kan.

With other prestige clients – those who have reached the pinnacle of their careers or society – once you build a relationship, things get easier,

he says, adding that it is important to never abuse the relationship and badger them for favours. "Always respect boundaries. Give them the latest information, the best information and if there is something you can't provide, find out where you can get it for them. These people are at the pinnacle. You don't have to hard sell them anything and they have the facilities or people to cross check your information anytime. But say if you know there is a new model coming out soon, they appreciate your telling them, even if they have decided on the old model."

He adds: "I always tell my guys that selling them the car is only the first step. In 10 or 20 years, we want their children to come back and buy cars from us." He says it is a skill you cannot learn in school. "A lot of it is intuitive. You have to read your customer right. Some want to know everything about the car and ask a lot of questions. They take time to decide. So, when you deliver the car you go through everything with them. We tell them: 'Here's the key, here's the starter button, here's how you engage the gears!'

Others just want to know how much, what colour it comes in and when they can have it." There are also customers who just drop in while passing by, wanting nothing in particular, but just to stay and chat for hours. "We have this facility. We want them to feel comfortable and welcome here."

Kan, originally from Malaysia and a father of three, has been with Malayan Motors since 1981, working his way up from Service Manager. He was initially rejected when he applied for a job in Wearnes as a trainee after finishing school in Malaysia. But he found his way back after higher education in Singapore and a stint with Singapore's port operator, PSA International.

"I've always been interested in cars and as a child was fascinated by my uncle's Jaguar which was one of the first few cars with air conditioning. He used to switch off the engine at the traffic lights and coast down the road to the house, exclaiming: 'See how quiet it is. You can't even hear it coming.'"

The cars may have changed but the fascination has obviously stayed.