

INTERVIEW WITH STEVE NASH, CEO OF INSTITUTE OF THE MOTOR INDUSTRY (IMI)

## 'No better time to get into auto industry'

**THE** Institute of the Motor Industry (IMI) conducted a business visit over to Malaysian shores in October 2013 with the purpose of meeting key automotive organisations and the Ministry of Education to discuss how vocational training and accreditation can positively influence the country's automotive industry.

As a result of that courtesy call, the Ministry of Education and the IMI signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) earlier this year with a focus on delivering training support across a network of community colleges in Malaysia to enhance the skills of automotive professionals with the lynchpin being the subject of hybrid and electric vehicles.

The IMI is Britain's professional association for individuals working in the retail automotive industry as well as the authoritative voice of the sector.

We had a chance to have a few words with the chief executive officer of the IMI, Steve Nash, regarding his thoughts on the Malaysian automotive industry and the opportunities presented by it.

**CBT: What has IMI achieved in Malaysia since it started eight years ago with Martin Austin and later, John Young? What is the plan to revive the IMI in Malaysia?**

**SN:** My predecessors have done good work in laying the groundwork and establishing the connections and contacts with the various players in the automotive sector. Since the beginning of this year, we have been stepping up the momentum of our work here – especially with the help of our Malaysia-based senior manager, Matthew Stuart. In January, we signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Malaysia Ministry of Education.

Central to the MOU is the delivery of training support across a network of community colleges in Malaysia to enhance the skills of automotive professionals, particularly focusing on the growing footprint of electric and hybrid vehicles. The Pekan Community College, Kedah, and the Kepala Batas Community College, Penang, are among some of the colleges we have initiated this with. This development kicked off our new international strategy with Malaysia as a focal point.

With the current focus in the Malaysian automotive industry on raising standards, the IMI believes it can play a central role in giving local training providers the very best qualifications and accreditations for their candidates. By partnering with a recognised and trusted awarding organisation such as IMI, a centre is guaranteeing the quality of trainers, equipment, internal verification and external verification. We expect the Malaysian automotive industry will hear a lot more from us in the coming years.

**CBT: How do you see the automotive sector in Malaysia and in terms of career prospects for those in this sector?**

**SN:** Malaysia is a rapidly evolving market with prestige brands from Europe making big investments in the country and domestic companies such as Proton and Perodua looking to forge ahead with new product ranges.

Also, the "National Automotive Policy" announced in Malaysia early this year, aimed at transforming the country into a regional energy-efficient vehicle (EEV) hub, is expected to generate 187,000 additional employment opportunities by 2020. In response, automotive professionals will need to acquire new skills and knowledge relevant to EEV. Electric cars are also breaking into the market, with various initiatives introduced to encourage the use of such cars.



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Someone will have to keep all this new technology on the road and, with more than 22 million cars on the road already, there will always be a requirement for professional technicians to keep Malaysia moving.

Those who apply themselves will have plenty of opportunity to move up through the ranks. With the robust automotive market we are seeing here, I would say there has never been a better time to get into the Malaysian automotive sector.

**CBT: How has IMI helped to improve or address some of the challenges in this sector?**

**SN:** We constantly work with manufacturers, training providers and aftermarket businesses to ensure our qualifications and accreditations meet the requirements of the industry. Our aim is always to ensure that the industry can access a professional and profitable workforce.

In Malaysia, we have been working closely with automotive players and education bodies to enable them to become IMI approved centres to offer internationally recognized IMI qualifications.

In April this year, we recognised Nasim Sdn Bhd as an IMI Approved Assessment Centre, so their technicians can be trained and assessed based on internationally recognised standards, in collaboration with Automobile Peugeot.

We are also working with the Ministry of Education to provide training support across a network of community colleges in Malaysia to enhance the skills of automotive professionals - particularly focusing on electric and hybrid vehicles.

**CBT: In your opinion, what is the determining factor to succeed in this sector?**

**SN:** The obvious answer is hard work and a passion for the sector. For me it is also about looking ahead and not ignoring new challenges. Technology constantly changes in automotive and the demands of customers change for those in customer service and sales roles. Those who take it upon themselves to face these challenges head on and grow with them are the people who end up in senior roles in the industry.

**CBT: What advice do you have for those working in this industry?**

**SN:** Invest in yourself. The sector is not a static entity and technological development is not slowing down any time soon. If you want to go far you should ensure your training is up to date. Make sure you are as valuable as possible to your company by being able to handle the latest challenges, be they in customer service or in the workshop. Companies are crying out for talented individuals who can help them ahead of curve, make sure this is you.