

Where company policy is to put people first

Enthusiasm for customer and company counts for everything at this auto aftermarket business.

Darryl Abotomey is reminded daily what he loves most about his job, simply by observing the people around him. A recent encounter at one of Bapcor's 13 Melbourne warehouses highlighted that his staff were just as happy as the boss.

"We regularly hand out service awards for our staff, and there was a lady who'd been here for 20 years," the CEO and managing director of Bapcor says.

"She was so rapt to be acknowledged for that service, that when I was leaving she just ran up to me to say how much she appreciated it, and how much she loves her job.

"It's one thing to talk about your staff being your most important asset, and a lot of people do. It's another thing to make it real. You just want people to love what they do, and we work hard at that."

Listening to and rewarding its people is proving a sound strategy, with Bapcor's credentials as Asia-Pacific's leading automotive aftermarket business gaining even greater traction through a 27 per cent growth in revenue in the first quarter of the 2021 financial year, despite the impact of COVID-19. This followed growth of 12.8 per cent in 2020.

For the majority of owners of the 19 million vehicles on Australia's roads, 5 million in New Zealand and more than 16 million in Thailand, Bapcor is an unsung hero. Through the retail outlets under its umbrella, including



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Bapcor teams supply auto parts to customers in Australia, New Zealand and Thailand.

Autobarn and Midas, enthusiasts have a means to maintain and dress up their cars.

And through Burson – which has grown from 90 stores to 190 in less than a decade – it supplies parts to workshops for servicing and breakdown repair, with a commitment to deliver within an hour of ordering.

"The increasing complexity and variety of vehicles – even 10 years ago it was mainly Ford, Holden and Toyota – has meant we've now got all these different parts for different makes," Abotomey says.

"Workshops obviously can't keep all of those parts, or they'd need warehouses bigger than ours. That's how we've grown and continue to grow."

Many of the initiatives Bapcor implements are the result of the company's "Have your say" team member engagement surveys, which are underpinned by four key values: we give a damn; we are in it together; we get it done; we do the right thing.

Keeping each other safe and well is paramount, a pledge that two years ago led to the introduction of an employee assistance program devoted to emotional and mental wellbeing, which offers confidential counselling and support for any of the Bapcor family.

Last October, every eligible Bapcor employee received a Visa gift card ranging from \$150 to \$300 as a gesture of thanks. In

2020, they introduced paid pandemic leave to help staff through the most difficult of years.

Abotomey makes time at weekends to write birthday cards for team members, and loves nothing more than heading out to stores both here and overseas and being greeted by familiar, smiling faces.

"We want our people to enjoy what they do and have fun doing it," he says. "We try to keep a family culture. Despite how big we are now, it's important to do that.

"I'm not a real rev-head – if I had to choose between cars and people, it's the people side for me. The passion of our team members is more important than the products we sell."



Celebrating our team members



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