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RIDING GROWTH IN GHANA



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We talk to Mona Boyd, managing director of Avis Ghana, about how she is preparing her business for an explosion in demand

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Nissan Patrol

The brand name Avis is known the world over for prestige car hire and fleet management services, and is synonymous with quality, reliability and, of course, security. Operating in over 165 countries around the globe, Avis is often seen as a lifeline for business people and diplomats venturing into unfamiliar territory.

The company to hold the Avis Ghana franchise began operating in 1994 with just three cars and a vision of quality and business management that would quickly differentiate it from the rest. “Ghana at that time had just had its first successful democratic elections after a string of coups, and there was virtually no business infrastructure,” explains owner and managing director Mona Boyd. Most competitors were informal, simply operating from beneath a tree with no concept of managing and growing a business or operating with overheads. But from the very beginning, Boyd targeted quality. “Being American I went to the community I knew best, the American community. We put maps in our cars, dressed our drivers in black slacks, white shirts and shoes, and gave them written instructions and a full tank of petrol, which was unheard of in Ghana.”

Drivers received thorough customer services training, a process that quickly became formalised into a corporate training standard. Growth, however, was hampered

by the stagnant economy and an absence of business infrastructure. By the time the company was awarded the coveted Avis franchise in 2001 it was operating with 15 cars, had established an enviable reputation in the marketplace, and its drivers were taking clients to most West African countries including Togo, Benin, Côte d’Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Mali and Senegal. “For many of our customers, it was often quicker and safer to rent a vehicle from us and to be chauffeur-driven across West Africa rather than attempt to fly to their destination,” Boyd says.

165
.....
Number of countries
where Avis operates
worldwide

It wasn’t until oil was discovered in Ghana two-and-a-half years ago that the business environment changed dramatically, with an influx of global businesses and clients. At that point, with 65 cars and operating a combination of rent-a-car and car leasing services,

Boyd recognised the risks to the business as well as the enormous opportunities, and she moved rapidly to respond to the change. Significant investment along with new expertise would be required if the company was to take advantage of growth, and maintain its leading position.

Over the subsequent 18 months she forged a joint venture partnership with Avis South Africa to form a new company, Avis Fleet Services, Ghana. Twenty per cent owned and financed by Avis Ghana and 80 per cent by Avis SA, the new company went into business in March this year,



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forward to another
100 years of
success and service
to Mother Ghana.

To all our hardworking
staff we say a big
**THANK YOU!
YEDAASE!
OYIWALANDON!
AKPE!
NAGOODE!**

1912

The late Salem Kalmoni and his brother Subhi arrived in the then Gold Coast (present day Ghana) from their native Greater Turkey (present day Lebanon).



1958

S. KALMONI & SONS – predecessors of Japan Motors imported the first Japanese made vehicle, This car was called Datsun the now Nissan. After that came Toyota, Mazda, Mitsubishi onto the Ghanaian market.

1965

JAPAN MOTORS – S. Kalmoni & Sons gave birth to Japan Motors with a staff of less than 50. Since then they have become synonymous with the Nissan brand name. They have been innovative over the years and poised to give exclusive customer care; this is seen in the range of vehicles offered. Customers can depend on Japan Motors for Quality After Sales Service support.



1978

MODERN AUTOMOBILE SERVICES – formerly known as (Enyidado Industries Limited) was established as importers and dealers in machinery component, parts and accessories. The Company dealt in Daewoo vehicles, forklifts, electric generators and earth-moving machinery and currently deals in Rexton (4x4 station wagons) and Actyon Sports (4x4 pick-ups) from Ssangyong in Korea as well as Changan, Lifan saloon cars and the Foton range of commercial vehicles from China.

1979

YAMA MOTOR COMPANY LIMITED – established for Yamaha outboard motors/marine engines and for after sales service.

1989

OMAN FOFOR TRADING COMPANY LIMITED – established as the sole authorized distributor of Canon Products in Ghana. Today Oman Fofor are a leading office automation business in the Ghanaian market and has acquired dealership for Microsoft, American Power Conversion (APC) and Symantec.



1996

SILVER STAR AUTO LIMITED – established and opened in 1997 and holds the distributorship and franchise for Mercedes-Benz passenger cars and commercial vehicles, Foton Heavy Duty trucks, Energizer Car Batteries and Parrot Bluetooth devices.



1997

ADVANCE CONSTRUCTION & DEVELOPMENT LTD. – deals in general construction for the Kalmoni Group of Offices, showrooms, workshops, warehouses, houses, site works, renovation and maintenance. It also produces pavement and concrete blocks.

2001

LAKESIDE ESTATE – has become the leading real estate development company specializing in affordable housing at the northern suburb of Accra. Started in 1974 as Agri-Cattle Limited with 3,000 acres as an agricultural entity, its planned productivity in 2012 is 150 homes. It also features the award winning Lakeside Marina Park with a 17 acre Lake and up-coming Theme Park.



2006

SILVER STAR TOWER – the first international class building development at Airport City, Accra. It is a 10 storey high showroom and office complex with a unique aesthetic architecture making it an iconic landmark on the Accra skyline. Look out for more buildings in the future.

2012

Though we started with only Japan Motors we now have over 7 companies mainly Modern Automobile Services (formerly Enyidado Industries Limited), Oman Fofor Trading Company Limited, Silver Star Auto Limited, Advance Construction & Development Limited, Lakeside Estate/Agri-Cattle Limited, Silver Star Tower Limited and Star Property Management Limited.



We stand for excellence, growth and commitment to our customers, we give them nationwide access to our products and services in Accra, Takoradi, Tamale, Tema and Kumasi



Marc Carr and Mona Boyd

“COMPANIES COMING INTO GHANA MEET
OUR STAFF AND IMMEDIATELY WANT
TO HIRE THEM”

bringing in expertise and technology from South Africa. “Now, all fleet management and leasing contracts are managed by Avis Fleet Services, Ghana,” she continues. “If a customer requires 50 vehicles on lease, for example, the new company can buy those vehicles and provide that service. And this has liberated our vehicles to supply the increasing demand for rent-a-car services.”

The rent-a-car service continues to be chauffeur driven, and is now supplemented by a well utilised point-to-point service.

Moreover, with the Ghanaian roads improving in quality, the company is planning to introduce a self-drive car hire facility in the future. Customer service is high on the corporate agenda, and all customers are surveyed as a matter of routine, with Avis Ghana seeking feedback on performance and looking for ways to improve its offering. Meanwhile, staff and systems are being put in place to establish long-term customer relationships.

From a sales and marketing perspective,



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Avis Ghana's front desk coordinator Fouzia Abubakari

Avis Ghana and Avis Fleet Services, Ghana work very closely together, providing a seamless Avis service from a single contact point to all corporate, government and private customers.

The Ghanaian business environment has certainly been challenging, and one of the most serious issues is the paucity of business and management skills. To fill this gap, the company has been continuously investing in training, sending staff on MBA courses, and paying for degree and postgraduate courses. At the ground level, the company's 60 drivers are given customer care training four times a year to

maintain high standards of professionalism. This investment in skills has been so successful that it has presented the company with one of its greatest challenges: how to retain valuable staff.

"Our problem is that companies coming into Ghana meet our staff and immediately want to hire them. So we not only spend a lot of time creating a highly professional organisation but we're also working to create a family-like environment for them to work in. I do a lot of activities to promote friendships among my staff, and if we can't compete with the high salaries offered elsewhere, we supply other perks. For

20%

Avis Ghana's stake
in Avis Fleet
Services, Ghana



Avis Ghana has been working with an increasing number of global services companies

“IN THE NEXT FIVE TO SEVEN YEARS I WANT TO INCREASE OUR FLEET TO 500 VEHICLES AND EXPAND OUR FOOTPRINT INTO ALL THE MAJOR CITIES”

example, we’ve set up a scheme for staff to buy shares in the company, and we also reward exceptional work with shares.”

The company has kept ahead of the competition by utilising the latest technology. Two years ago it implemented an in-house reservation and fleet management system providing an online booking service and secure payment by credit card. This links into the Avis World System, giving

customers seamless worldwide access with the distinctive Avis branding.

Expansion and service development is continuing on all fronts. Avis Ghana is setting up a hospitality suite and offices at Kotoka International Airport, the point of entry for many corporate clients. When this opens in June this year it will complement the two existing outlets in hotels in the capital, Accra. Preparations

are also underway to open an office in the oil industry centre of Takoradi a month later, in July. Further into the future the plan is to expand into the cities of Kumasi, and Aflao, on the border with Togo.

Boyd believes that the changes that have taken place so far in Ghana are just a sign of things to come. “The oil industry has already had a big impact. We are providing transportation services for four major companies in the oil industry, and we’ve been working with an increasing number of global services companies flooding into Ghana: Google, IBM, Morgan Stanley...the list goes on. But I think the future impact is going to be much bigger,” she says. “So we don’t have time to wait for that to happen, we need to be ready before it does.”

Over the next 18 months the plan is to increase the rent-a-car fleet to about 100 vehicles. “I have a big vision for this company. In the next five to seven years I want to increase our fleet to 500 vehicles deployed across the country, and expand our footprint into all the major cities, as well as mining areas and locations where industry arises,” she concludes. This will all require significant investment: “Once our current expansion initiatives are completed I will be turning my attention to the possibilities.” **BE**

For more information about Avis Ghana visit: www.avisghana.com

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