

Executive Motoring: First Impressions Count

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AN EXECUTIVE car shouldn't simply be a tool for getting you to the office or for transporting you to clients. It should also inspire you and make a good impact on others. Shallow as that sounds, we all know image goes a long way in the world of business – and with these three motors - first impressions will certainly count:

Audi A4 Saloon

The Audi emblem of four linked circles will elevate your standing in the hierarchical world of business in an instant.

Audis tend to have a less aggressive perceived image than some executive cars and, to some extent, the make is still an enigma. Why? Well, it's a high-end luxury brand, but its philosophy has always been about understatement. It's never been about shouting from every rooftop – and that tends to be appreciated by motorists who want motion without commotion.



Get in to any diesel or petrol powered Audi any you'll soon see that the Bavarian based company's focus is on craftsmanship, fine quality and leading edge technology. The A4 2.0 TDI S line Saloon is no different.

Inside, the A4 has smart touches of chrome and high-gloss inlays. Operation of the beautifully damped controls is simple and intuitive, and the black leather seating with the S line sport package is the icing on the cake. The Saloon's luggage compartment has a large 480-litre capacity - 962 litres with the rear seats folded down, so driving a nice compact executive car doesn't have to come at the expense of practicality.

The chassis of the A4 is striking with its sporty precision, high ride comfort and safety. The 175bhp turbo diesel engine in the 2.0 TDI S line Saloon combines pulling power with efficiency. Top speed is 143mph and 0-62mph is reached in a swift 8.2 seconds. The car's electronic stability program system further improves handling, and its large brakes – with ventilated front and rear disks – offer supreme stopping strength.

What's more, CO2 emissions are only 120g/km and an average of up to 61.4mpg can be teased from the tank. This means the Audi A4 is made for mile-munching and so, along with its tasteful image, will serve any senior manager who 'lives on the road' very well indeed.

Mercedes-Benz CLA

The CLA-Class establishes a brand new segment for Mercedes-Benz.

The four-door car has world-leading aerodynamics and an avant-garde coupé shape. With its frameless doors, the mighty Merc features a radar-based braking system, which is able to warn you of an obstacle from a speed of 4mph - and it initiates precision braking when you put the anchors on.



Its sporty characteristics underscore the young-at-heart side of the brand and, in keeping with its athletic positioning, the CLA comes with high-torque turbo engines and sports suspension.

Inside, all trim surfaces are galvanised in silver shadow, resulting in a metallic finish. The instrument panel incorporates five round vents, and a free-standing display screen features a black piano-lacquer-look front panel and a flush-fitting silver frame.

The CLA is fitted with luxurious integral seats in the front and rear, underscoring its active spirit. And, behind the wheel, copious driving assistance systems offer support and reduce your workload. For example, established gadgetry, such as Adaptive Highbeam Assist and the Lane Tracking package with Blind Spot and Lane Keeping Assist, are available. The Benz is superb on the road and will re-ignite even the most jaded motorist's passion for driving. Its electromechanical power steering offers improved feedback in comparison to conventional systems, allowing you to really feel what the tyres and road are doing beneath you.

All engines feature an ECO start/stop function and they are mated to a six-speed manual transmission or a 7G-DCT dual clutch automatic transmission. If truth be told, Mercedes-Benz seems to have done it again – the German company has invented a true modern classic. And it's one that will make you look forward to your morning commute - every single day.

New Porsche Panamera S E-Hybrid

Since its unveiling four years ago, the Panamera Gran Turismo has managed to cultivate the appeal of the Porsche marque into the executive saloon segment.

Now, a new chapter in the progress of the four door, four seater sports car opens with the second generation Panamera, led by the world's first plug-in hybrid in the class.



The ground-breaking S E-Hybrid offers a combined power of 416bhp and extends further the span of sportiness and comfort that characterises the model line.

With its amplified output, the Panamera S E-Hybrid far exceeds the driving performance of the outgoing car. Into the bargain, the fuel economy has increased by 56 percent to 91mpg, which equates to emissions of 71g/km. What's more, the all-electric driving performance has been significantly improved with regard to electric acceleration, range and top speed.

The Panamera S E-Hybrid can reach up to 84mph in all-electric operation whilst the 0-62mph time has been shortened by half a second to 5.5 seconds. The car's overall top speed is 168mph, aided by a first-rate eight-speed Tiptronic S transmission.