How to part with your car without trading it in…

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Changing your car and don’t know what to do for the best with your old one?

Gerald Morgan describes his dilemma and how he solved it…

(All words and photographs by, and copyright, Gerald Morgan).

I recently decided that time was up for me on my nearly 10 year old 2014 VW Polo BlueGT which had done nearly 80,000 miles. Looking round newer models I decided to buy a VW Taigo Style, and the VW dealer offered me a trade in price. He suggested that should I try elsewhere I might be able to get around £1,000 more for it, but his hands were tied over the amount he could offer.

So with that in mind I decided to try one of the newer internet based second hand car sales sites. There are several around – Cinch, Motorway, Autotrader, WeBuyAnyCar, CarWow to name a few.

Preparation

Before putting a car up for sale, it is important to present the vehicle in the best light possible. Prepare the car by removing all personal possessions from the various nooks and crannies inside, and also in the boot and around the spare wheel. Give it a good wash and quick polish (I used AutoGlym Rapid Aqua Wax for speed), clean the wheels, especially alloys, and remember to vacuum the interior.

Make sure all documentation is available, so get together the V5C and as much of the service history documents as is possible. Don’t forget to find all of the keys for the vehicle too – and note down the mileage. Check that the locking wheel nut tool is available.

Look at the potential selling websites to see how cars are presented there to make sure that you can follow suit.

Selling

I decided to try Motorway to sell the car, so went on to their website (motorway.co.uk) to register. Note that they will put your car in their next available sale to around 5,000+ dealers, which could be the next working day. Bear this in mind if you are looking to actually dispose of your car in a couple of weeks in the future rather than as soon as possible.

The first valuation that came up on entering the registration number was a wildly optimistic value for the car which I would guess was just a teaser to get some interest. To proceed, it was necessary to create a profile of the car and take some photos. Note – I had already taken several photos ready for the process, but this turned out to be a waste of time as you have to use their app on a smartphone to complete the process. I started to enter details on a laptop, but then had to change to a smartphone for the next step, the photos.

The app has a built in photo system that utilises the smartphone's camera. It shows what to take, and has guide marks to get the angles right. There is a specific set of photos required, and each one must be taken before finishing the photo section of the profile. I found the photo taking to be a little frustrating trying to get the image within the guide marks, but got there in the end. It is suggested to take the car to a quiet car park on an overcast day. This will allow easy access all around the vehicle and will reduce glare and reflections. The rest of the profile includes a description of the condition, noting any defects on the bodywork, the type of material used for the seats, the service history – confusingly, digital images of the documents can be uploaded via a laptop.

Once I had all of the data filled in I thought I was ready to sell – but then I had to phone them to confirm details. I did this on a Sunday, but was still able to get through OK. The profile I had set up was verified, and the photos checked to make sure they were suitable for their dealers. They gave a reserve price that needs to be agreed, but I wasn't ready to sell straight away, so left it until I was. This also meant that when I was ready to sell, there had been a drop in the estimated, and therefore, reserve price as market conditions changed.

Their process is to put the car in their next sale to dealers, which runs from the evening on one day until 15.00 on the next. To speed things up later on, they also recommend that copies of the V5C, your driving licence, and any finance settlement letter is uploaded to them prior to the auction. At around 15.30 on the day of sale, an email will arrive giving details of the highest bidder and the price achieved. In my case the highest bid was greater than the reserve price. It is necessary to view the offer and to agree to it.

Collection and Payment

The buying dealer should then make contact to arrange inspection and pick up the vehicle. They will ensure that the vehicle matches the details given, especially around condition, and want a test drive. An adjusted offer may be made on inspection.

The dealer in my case only needed a short test drive up and down my road – with me as a passenger. The only concern was that the service history showed the clutch hadn't been changed on the car. His policy is to give 6 months warranty and 12 months AA breakdown on cars he sells. He had some concern that it might need changing, so would prefer to get it done before sale. He therefore dropped his offer to cover this, which was also just below the original reserve price. The new offer was still more than was on the table at the dealer, so I agreed to the sale, and within minutes the sum agreed was in my bank account, the V5C handed over, and the DVLA notified of the change, and the dealer put the Polo on the back of his transporter to drive away.

Incidentally, notifying the DVLA is confusing; you are advised to let them know that you have sold to a Motor Trader. The dealer told me that once he had done his bit online the system would not need me to advise them – naturally within minutes I followed the advice on the V5C and tried to advise the DVLA online. This just got a response that they already knew! Even the email from Motorway had a link to advise the DVLA after collection of the vehicle. A couple of days later a confirmation slip from DVLA arrived in the post, so all was OK and legal.

Summary

I found the whole process OK. It would probably have seemed easier if I had done it before, but it achieved what I wanted in that I sold my car for more than was on offer as a trade-in value. Some parts of the process looked potentially dodgy, such as payment and handover of the car, but with on-line banking and mobile apps these days it went smoothly. No waiting for money to clear, or wondering if the car would return from a test drive. I would use the process again when necessary. Motorway were enthusiastic in email updates, and helpful on

the phone. I can't speak for the other sales platforms, but I imagine they would be similar in terms of process.

Note

I wrote this article independently, and there was no financial inducement made by Motorway to write it.

I believe after each sale, a reward offer is made to sellers to encourage friends and family to sell via Motorway and split £100 of Amazon vouchers when they sell their cars.

