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The Most Overloaded Job in Automotive Retail

Why the area manager, not the dealer, decides whether standards hold. And what the best-run networks are doing about it.

Built on AutoSmart's work with dealer standards programmes across passenger-vehicle, two-wheeler and commercial-vehicle networks, and on publicly available industry research. No individual brand, network or person is identified.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The one-page version

Every dealer standard an OEM writes, every programme it launches and every finding its audits raise ends up in the same place: on the desk of one person who looks after ten to fifteen dealerships and a territory that can take a day to cross. This paper is about that person.

Automotive OEMs in India now have a lot to be proud of in how they run their dealer networks. The best of them have written standards for the showroom, the workshop, the parts store and the warranty room. They evaluate on a calendar. They track findings. That puts them well ahead of the many brands, in automotive and beyond, that still run their outlets on trust, memory and the occasional surprise visit.

But when those same OEMs look at why standards slip, they tend to look at the dealer. This paper argues that they are looking one level too low. The person who decides whether a standard holds is the **area manager** (the field manager, the territory manager, the regional service manager, the title varies). And that job, in most networks, was never designed. It accumulated.

One area manager with twelve sites, a dozen active programmes, sixty to a hundred checkpoints per site and a full-day drive between the two farthest dealerships cannot be everywhere the standard says they should be. So they are not. Coverage falls, findings pile up without an owner, the visit becomes a surprise inspection instead of a coaching session, and the dealer learns to perform for the audit rather than run the standard every day.

10 to 15	40 to 60%	1 in 5
Dealerships a single field manager typically covers	Of a network that gets no manager-led evaluation in a cycle when every check needs a visit	Or fewer: audit findings closed within the cycle when the manager is the only owner

The paper makes four arguments:

1. **The visit maths never balances.** Sites times checkpoints times cycles, divided by working days, is a number no field manager can reach. Networks that have not done the arithmetic are asking for something they have already made impossible.
2. **What runs out first is coverage, then ownership, then trust.** Programmes that depend on a manager physically checking every item leave a large share of the network unevaluated each cycle. Findings that depend on the manager to chase them stay open. Dealers who only see the manager when something is wrong stop listening.

3. **The dealer is usually not the bottleneck. The model is.** Most of what fails at dealerships is basic and fixable. It stays unfixed because the one person who could see it, prioritise it and follow it up is spread across a dozen sites.
4. **The networks getting this right have changed what the visit is for.** The dealer does the first pass with evidence. The manager verifies online. The visit goes only to the gaps. Findings get an owner inside the dealership, not at head office. And the manager is measured on coverage and closure, not on the score.

Each section ends with something you can take back to your own network. The last section is a 90-day plan for redesigning the role, and it needs no new headcount to start.

SECTION 1

01 The job that nobody designed

Ask an OEM to describe its area manager's job and you will get a list. Ask the area manager and you will get a sigh.

Here is the list, compiled from the field structures of a dozen passenger-vehicle networks we work with. The names change from brand to brand. The load does not.

- **Standards.** Showroom, workshop, parts, warranty room, customer lounge, signage, uniforms, safety, environment. Sixty to a hundred checkpoints per site once you count sub-questions.
- **Programmes.** A workshop improvement programme. A sales process programme. A customer experience programme. A parts self-assessment. A warranty claim audit. A product-specific campaign or two. Each with its own calendar, its own checklist and its own dashboard.
- **Numbers.** Retail, service load, parts purchase, accessory revenue per vehicle, customer satisfaction, complaint closure, manpower against business plan, training nominations.
- **Relationships.** The dealer principal who needs persuading to hire a second service advisor. The general manager who has just resigned. The workshop head who is excellent and about to be poached.
- **Everything else.** Launches, campaigns, dealer events, escalations from head office, escalations from customers, the regional review deck.

Now the territory. In a typical network the field manager covers ten to fifteen dealerships. In a metro that might be manageable. In much of the country it means a territory where the two farthest sites are five or six hours apart by road, where a "visit" is a two-day trip, and where a genuine review of one dealership's parts operation takes the better part of a day on site.

None of this arrived at once. Each programme was added by a different head-office function with a good reason. Each checkpoint was written because a real problem had occurred somewhere. Nobody sat down and totalled what the sum would mean for the person at the bottom of the funnel. That is what we mean when we say the job accumulated rather than being designed.

Why this matters more in automotive than almost anywhere

India's auto retail industry is enormous and dispersed. FADA represents more than 15,000 dealerships operating over 30,000 outlets and employing around five million people. Passenger-vehicle wholesales crossed 4.6 million units in FY2025–26, the highest ever, and retail registrations are now running at over four lakh a month. Every one of those vehicles is sold and serviced at an outlet that some field manager is responsible for.

Management research on span of control is consistent: most managers do their best work with somewhere between five and ten direct reports, and effectiveness falls away sharply beyond that. Gallup's recent work puts the median at five to six. A field manager with a dozen dealerships is not managing a dozen people. Each dealership is a business with fifty to three hundred staff, its own owner, its own culture and its own problems. Twelve of those is not a wide span of control. It is a portfolio.

> *"I have twelve sites and I know that on any given week, eight of them are running on whatever I told them last month. I just do not know which eight."*
>
> **Area service manager, passenger-vehicle network**

Take this back to your network

Write down, for one area manager, every programme, every checkpoint and every KPI they are currently accountable for. Count them. Then count the sites and the driving hours between them. Most network heads have never seen this total on one page. It is usually the moment the conversation changes.

SECTION 2

02 The visit maths

Multiply what the standard asks for by the number of sites and divide by the number of working days. It does not balance. It never did.

Take a conservative version of the job. Twelve dealerships. One full standards visit per site per month, which is what most programme calendars quietly assume. A full visit, including preparation, travel and the write-up afterwards, consumes about a day and a half of the manager's time in a compact territory and three days in a dispersed one. Take the lower figure, to be conservative.

That is 216 days a year. A field manager has about 220 working days, and after regional reviews, training, launches, escalations and leave, perhaps 130 of those are genuinely available for dealer visits.

The visit maths for one field manager in one year (illustrative)

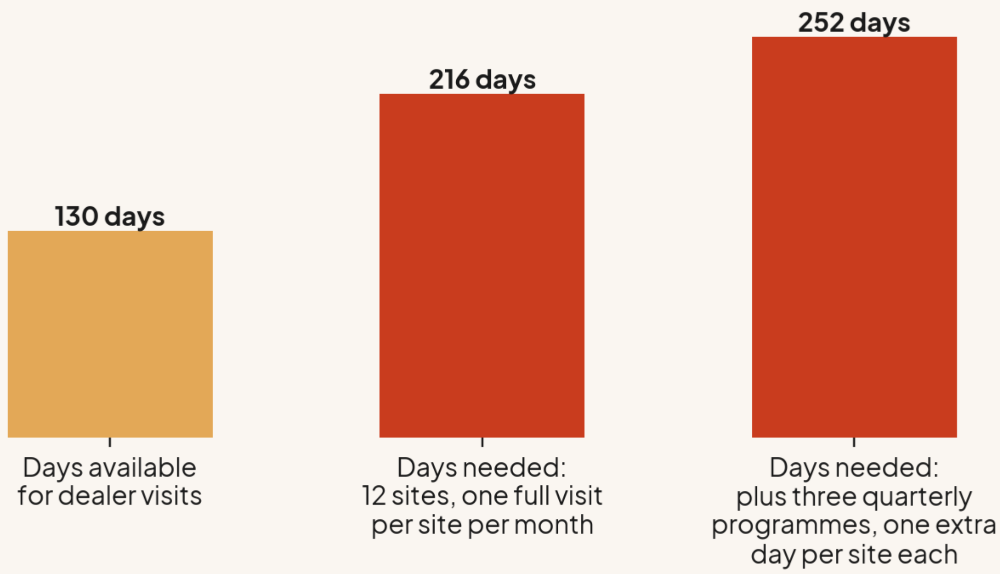

Figure 1. What one field manager's year looks like when every programme requires a physical visit. The days-needed figures assume a day and a half of manager time per full visit and one extra day per site for each quarterly programme. Illustrative, built from typical field structures.

The first bar is the reality. The second is the minimum the calendar assumes. The third is what happens when three quarterly programmes are layered on top, each needing its own visit. **The manager is being asked for something between one and a half and two times the time they actually have.** And this is before the surprise: the dealer who calls on Tuesday because a customer has gone to the regulator, the regional head who wants the launch readiness check done this week, the GM who has just walked out.

What managers do with an impossible number

They do what any sensible person does. They triage. The sites nearest the office get visited. The sites with the loudest problems get visited. The sites that were fine last time get a phone call. The programme with the most visible dashboard at the regional review gets done properly; the others get done from memory, from the last visit's photographs, or not at all.

None of this is dishonesty. It is the only rational response to a job that cannot be done as written. But it has three consequences that show up in the data of every network we look at, and we will take them in turn in the next section: some of the network is simply never evaluated, findings are raised but not owned, and the visit stops being useful to the dealer.

Where the week actually goes

When we ask field managers to account for a typical week, a pattern appears that is remarkably stable across brands and regions.

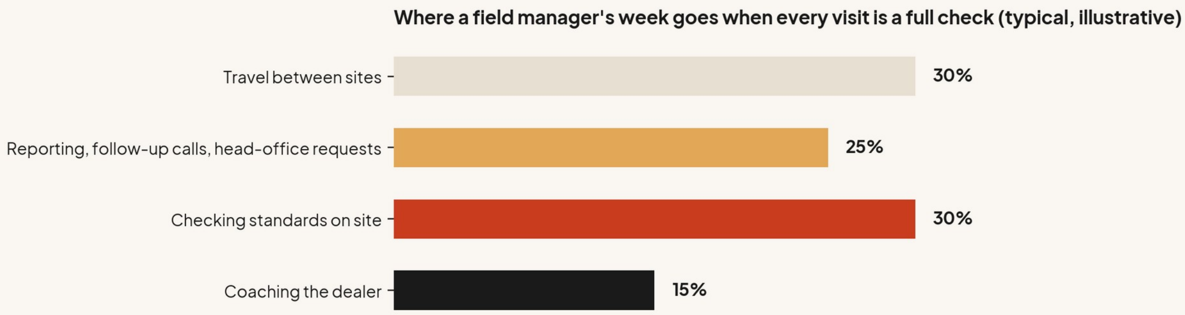

Figure 2. A typical split of a field manager's working time under a check-everything visit model. Aggregated from conversations with field teams across several networks; illustrative.

Roughly a third of the week is spent moving between sites. A quarter goes on reporting, dashboards, follow-up calls and head-office requests. Of the time actually spent at a dealership, most of it is spent checking whether things are in place, and only a small share is spent on the thing the OEM actually hired the manager for: working with the dealer to make the business better.

The most experienced, most expensive person in the field structure is spending most of their time confirming that a fire extinguisher is present. That is not a criticism of the manager. It is a criticism of a visit model that has not been redesigned since the checklist was on paper.

> **Take this back to your network**
>
> Run the arithmetic for your own structure with your own numbers: sites per manager, programmes per year, real days per visit including travel, real days available. If the answer is above 100%, every programme you add from here is being paid for by coverage you are losing somewhere else.

SECTION 3

03 What runs out first

When a field manager cannot cover the job, three things fail in a predictable order. Coverage goes first. Then ownership. Then trust.

Coverage: the outlets nobody evaluated

Look at any dealer standards dashboard and the first number is the average score. The more useful number is the one next to it, usually in smaller type: how many outlets were actually evaluated this cycle out of how many exist.

Across the networks we work with, that number splits cleanly by how the programme is run. Where the dealer submits the evaluation themselves with evidence and the manager verifies it online, coverage runs close to 100% cycle after cycle. Where the programme needs the manager, or a specialist, to physically visit and check, coverage runs anywhere from 40% to 90%, and the most technical programmes, the ones that need a specialist in a warranty room or a workshop, sit at the bottom of that range.

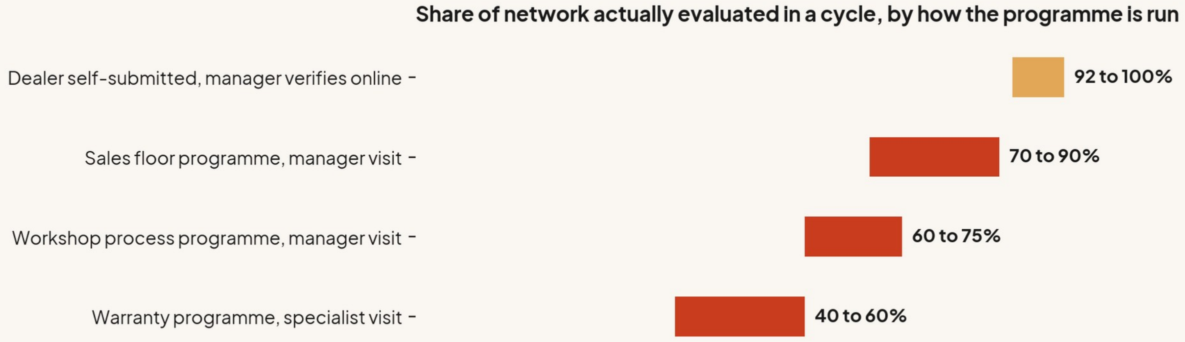

Figure 3. Typical share of a network evaluated in a single cycle, by the way the programme is run. Ranges aggregated across passenger-vehicle networks we work with; illustrative, not from any single brand.

Read that carefully, because the implication is uncomfortable. **The programmes with the highest coverage are the ones where the dealer does the work. The programmes with the lowest coverage are the ones with the highest financial exposure per finding.** A warranty room that is never audited is a warranty room where nobody knows what is being claimed. A workshop process that is never checked is a workshop where the express bay promise is whatever the service advisor says it is.

And the outlets that fall out of coverage are not random. They are the far ones, the small ones, the ones that were fine last time. Which is exactly the group in which a genuinely failing outlet can hide for a year.

Ownership: the findings with nobody's name on them

A standards visit produces findings. In a mature programme each finding is specific, photographed, dated and assigned. This is genuinely good practice, and most brands in the world do not do it. But look at what happens to those findings afterwards when the field manager is the only person who can move them.

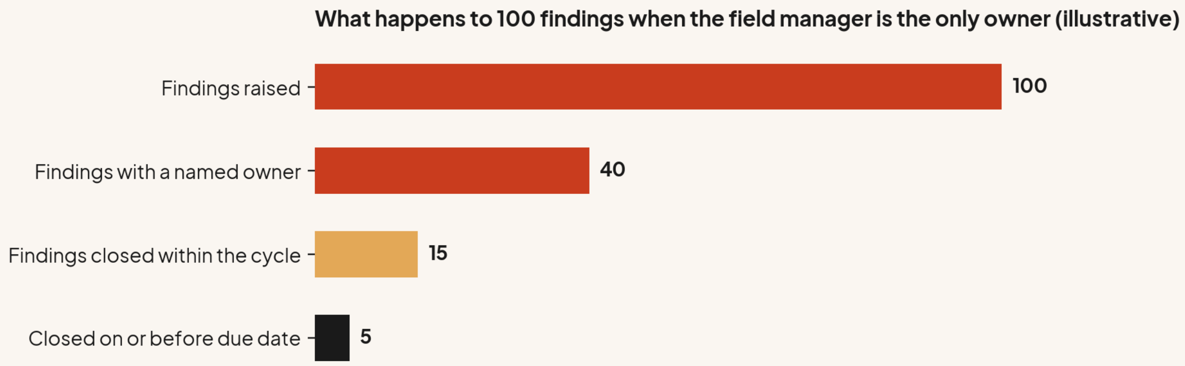

Figure 4. What typically happens to findings raised in one cycle when the field manager is the only person accountable for follow-up. Illustrative, aggregated across networks that track corrective actions.

In networks that track corrective actions, we commonly see fewer than half of open findings carrying the name of a person at the dealership. Fewer than one in five are closed within the cycle. Of the ones that do close, most close after the due date. And the ones that stay open are the same findings that come back next cycle: the manpower gap, the missing express bay tooling, the solar panels that were promised in the facility plan, the customer record not updated in the system.

The reason is not that dealers do not care. It is that a finding assigned to "the dealership" is a finding assigned to nobody, and the only person with the authority to insist on a name is the field manager, who is on the road between two other sites. **A finding without an owner is a finding that will be raised again.** The tracker fills up with repeats, the manager stops looking at it, and the audit becomes a record of what was wrong rather than a tool for fixing it.

Trust: the visit that only comes when something is wrong

The third failure is the quietest. When a manager only has time to visit the sites with problems, every visit becomes an inspection. The dealer principal learns that a visit means bad news. The workshop head learns that the manager arrives, photographs the gaps and leaves. The team learns to prepare for the audit day rather than run the standard every day.

Dealer satisfaction research in India has for years put "quality of OEM field support" among the top drivers of a dealer's view of the brand. That support is delivered by the same person who is now too stretched to deliver it. The dealer notices. And once the dealer has decided the field manager is an inspector rather than a partner, the standard stops being something the dealership owns and becomes something it survives.

> *"My area manager is a good man. I see him once a quarter, for four hours, and he spends three of them taking photographs. What am I supposed to learn from that?"*
>
> **Dealer principal, multi-brand group**

Take this back to your network

Three numbers, this week: the share of your network with no manager-led evaluation last cycle, the share of open findings with a named owner at the dealership, and the share of your last cycle's findings that were also raised the cycle before. Together they tell you whether your field structure is coaching the network or documenting it.

SECTION 4

04 The dealer is not the bottleneck

Most of what fails at a dealership is basic. It stays failed for a structural reason, not a cultural one.

It is worth being honest about what dealer audits actually find, because it is not what the strategy decks suggest. Across sales, workshop and warranty programmes in the passenger-vehicle networks we work with, the findings that come up most often are fundamentals:

- A position in the business plan that is vacant, or a person on the roster who is not on the floor.
- Staff not in the specified uniform.
- A customer record, a test drive record or a gate-in entry that was not made in the system it was supposed to be made in.
- A facility element (a demarcated bay, a display, a signboard, a solar installation, a parking surface) that the standard requires and the dealer has not yet invested in.
- A process promise, such as express service turnaround or pick-and-drop availability, that the workshop cannot consistently meet at its current staffing.

None of these are mysterious. A dealer principal shown any one of them, with a photograph and a date, can usually fix it or explain why they cannot. The question this paper asks is why, then, do the same findings sit open for months and reappear cycle after cycle?

Three things a finding needs, and who provides them

For a finding to close, three things have to happen. Someone has to **see** it and judge that it matters. Someone has to **prioritise** it against everything else the dealership is dealing with. And someone has to **follow it up** until it is done and the evidence is in.

In most field structures all three of those depend on the area manager. The manager sees it on the visit. The manager decides which of the twenty findings actually matter. The manager calls to chase it. When the manager is stretched across twelve sites, all three happen late, or partially, or not at all. The dealer, meanwhile, has a list of twenty items of apparently equal weight and no one to tell them which three matter this month.

This is why we say the dealer is not the bottleneck. **The bottleneck is a model in which one person is the only path from "found" to "fixed" for a dozen businesses at once.** Put a name inside the dealership on every finding, give the dealer a way to prioritise and close with evidence without waiting for the manager, and the same dealers with the same findings start closing them.

What the well-run networks already know

It is important to say clearly: the OEMs who can even have this conversation are the ones who are already ahead. They have a standard. They have a calendar. They have findings that are specific enough to argue about. A great many brands, in automotive and in every other multi-outlet business, have none of that. Their field managers walk into outlets with a notebook and an opinion, and nobody at head office can tell you which outlets were visited last quarter, let alone what was found.

The networks in this paper are not the problem. They are the ones with enough visibility to see the next problem, which is that the standards programme has outgrown the field structure that was supposed to carry it. That is a good problem to have. It is also one that gets worse every time a new programme is launched without asking who will run it on the ground.

> *"We cannot have one person check everything, every time. We are a lean organisation. The system has to carry part of the visit, or the visit does not happen."*
>
> **Head of field operations, passenger-vehicle OEM**

> **Take this back to your network**
>
> Before launching the next dealer programme, answer one question on the launch slide: which field manager runs this, on top of what, and what comes off their plate to make room? If the honest answer is "nothing comes off", you are launching a programme you have already decided not to run.

SECTION 5

05 Why spreadsheets hide the problem

A network run on Excel and email does not see the overloaded manager. It feels the symptoms and blames something else.

Most dealer standards programmes in India began the same way. A checklist in Excel. Area managers filling it in on a visit, or emailing it to dealers to fill in themselves. Completed sheets emailed back, uploaded to a shared drive or a small internal system as a record, and compiled at head office into a quarterly report. The compilation alone can take a central team a week or two.

This model has three properties that matter for the argument in this paper.

1. **It has no memory.** Each cycle is a fresh sheet. Nobody can see, without manual comparison, that the same dealership has failed the same manpower question four cycles running. The chronic problems are invisible precisely because they are chronic.
2. **It has no view of coverage.** The report shows the outlets that submitted. It does not show, with any prominence, the outlets that did not. A 60% coverage cycle and a 100% coverage cycle produce a similar-looking average score.
3. **It has no owner below the manager.** A finding in a spreadsheet belongs to whoever is holding the spreadsheet. There is no mechanism for a dealership's service head to pick up a finding, act on it and attach the evidence without the manager in the middle.

So the overload never shows up as overload. It shows up as **coverage gaps that look like dealer non-participation, repeat findings that look like dealer indifference, and manager attrition that looks like a hiring problem.** The network head sees a dealer problem, a discipline problem and an HR problem. All three are the same problem wearing different clothes.

What changes when the system carries the load

The networks that have moved their field programmes onto a live platform describe the same shift, and it is not primarily about speed, although the speed is dramatic: nationwide evaluation cycles that took a head-office team two weeks to compile now close in two or three days.

The real shift is in what becomes visible. Every centre's status is live, so the outlets that have not been evaluated are as prominent as the ones that scored badly. Repeat findings are flagged automatically across cycles, so chronic problems stop hiding. Each finding carries a name, a due date and an evidence requirement, so the dealership can close it without the manager in the loop. And the manager, for the first time, can see their own load: how many sites are due, how many findings are open, how many are overdue, and which three dealerships actually need them this week.

One head of field operations described year one on a live platform as being about habit, not results: getting every manager and every dealer to use the system every time, and measuring usage before measuring efficiency. That is the right sequence. A field structure that has spent a decade on spreadsheets does not become exception-driven overnight. But once the habit is there, the visit can be redesigned around it. That is the subject of the next section.

> **Take this back to your network**
>
> If your standards programme still runs on spreadsheets, do one thing before anything else: build a single view that shows, per field manager, sites due, sites evaluated, findings open and findings overdue. You will not need a whitepaper to see the overload after that. You will need a plan.

SECTION 6

06 Changing what the visit is for

The networks getting ahead of this have not hired more managers. They have changed what a visit is.

The old visit model is simple: the manager arrives, checks everything, records what is missing, and leaves. It is thorough, expensive and, as we have seen, impossible at scale.

The new model splits the visit into three parts and gives two of them to other people.

1. **The dealer assesses.** Before the visit, the dealership completes the standard itself, with evidence: photographs, documents, system screenshots. This is not an honour system. Every answer has an attachment.

2. **The manager verifies, online.** The manager reviews the self-assessment from the office or the car. Evidence that does not match the claim is marked as a gap. Evidence that is missing is marked as a gap. By the time the manager arrives, they know exactly which items are open and which are fine.
3. **The visit goes to the gaps.** On site, the manager spends the time on the items that need judgement, on the findings that need a conversation with the dealer principal, and on coaching the team. Not on confirming that the signboard is lit.

Manager days consumed per dealership review, two models (illustrative)

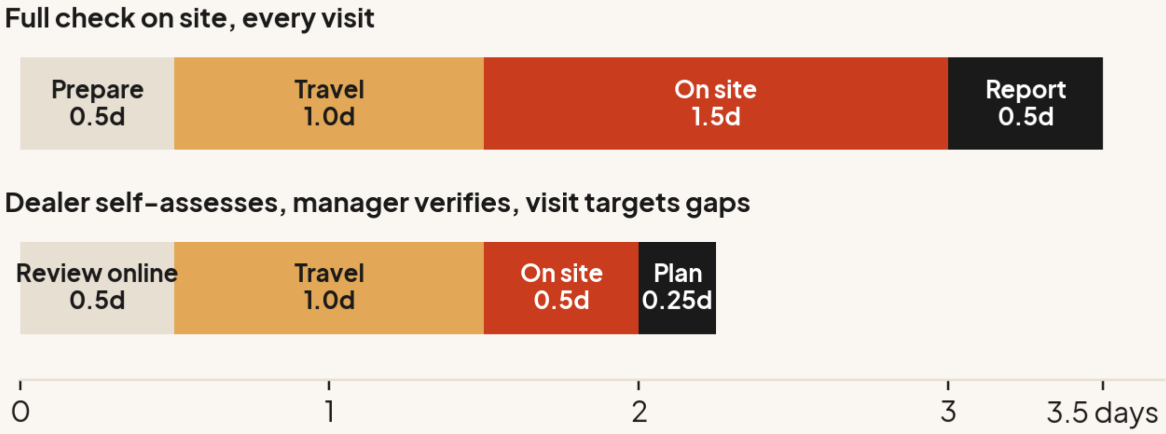

Figure 5. Manager days consumed per dealership review under the two visit models. The second model roughly halves the load without reducing the number of sites reviewed. Illustrative.

The effect on the visit maths is immediate. A full parts-operations review that took a manager a day or two on site becomes half a day of online verification and a targeted half-day visit. Coverage on the programme goes to nearly 100% because the dealer does the first pass regardless of where the manager is that week. And the manager's time at the dealership shifts from checking to coaching, which is what the dealer wanted from them in the first place.

The conditions that make it work

Dealer self-assessment is not a shortcut, and done badly it produces exactly the result sceptics predict: a network where everyone scores themselves 95. The networks where it works share a small number of non-negotiables. We cover these in detail in the next paper in this series; the short version is:

- **Evidence on every answer.** A "yes" without a photograph, document or system record is treated as a "no".
- **Independent verification.** Someone who was not at the dealership reviews the evidence and can overrule it.
- **Consequences for mismatch.** A self-assessment that does not survive verification costs the dealership more than an honest "no" would have.
- **The visit still happens.** Self-assessment moves the checking. It does not remove the manager. The visit becomes shorter and more useful, not optional.

Ownership moves inside the dealership

The second change is who owns a finding. In the redesigned model every finding is assigned to a named person at the dealership at the moment it is raised, with a due date and an evidence requirement for closure. The field manager is the escalation point, not the default owner. The dealership closes findings on its own timetable, attaches evidence, and the manager verifies closure the same way they verified the assessment: online, quickly, without a visit.

This is the change that moves the funnel in Figure 4. Findings with a name close. Findings that close with evidence stay closed. And the manager's tracker shrinks from a few hundred items they are supposed to chase to a short list of escalations that genuinely need them.

The manager is measured differently

The third change is what the manager is held to. Under the old model the area manager is measured, implicitly or explicitly, on the scores of their sites. That measure rewards the manager for visiting their strong sites, for coaching dealers on how to pass, and for scoring generously. It punishes them for finding problems.

The redesigned model measures the manager on three things instead: **coverage** (was every site evaluated this cycle?), **closure** (what share of findings raised at my sites were closed, with evidence, within the cycle?) and **repeat rate** (what share of this cycle's findings were also raised last cycle?). Score follows those three. It never leads them. A manager measured on coverage and closure has every reason to find problems, assign them and get them fixed, which is the job.

> *"Once the dealers were doing the first pass and the findings had names on them, my visits changed completely. I stopped being the person who found problems and started being the person who helped fix them. The dealers noticed before head office did."*
>
> **Regional field manager, passenger-vehicle network**

Take this back to your network

Pick one programme, the one that consumes the most manager days per site, and run it as dealer self-assessment with evidence and online verification for one cycle. Compare coverage, manager days and closure against the previous cycle. Most networks that try this do not go back.

SECTION 7

07 A practical framework: designing the role on purpose

Here is how to take an area manager role that accumulated and redesign it deliberately. It does not need a new organisation chart. It needs six decisions.

Decision one: size the territory on load, not on count

Twelve sites is not twelve units of work. A flagship three-storey dealership with a body shop and a hundred and fifty staff is not the same load as a two-bay service point. Score each site on a simple load index (staff, facility type, programme count, distance from the manager's base) and balance territories on the index rather than the site count. Two managers with twelve sites each can have loads that differ by a factor of three. Most networks have never checked.

Decision two: classify every programme by who does the first pass

Programme type	Who does the first pass	What the manager does	Visit needed?
Standards and facility checks (signage, uniforms, lounge, safety, environment)	Dealer, with photographs	Verifies online; spot-checks on visit	Only for gaps
Process checks with system evidence (customer records, test drive capture, gate-in, follow-up timing)	Dealer, with system screenshots or exports	Verifies against the system directly	Rarely
Process checks needing observation (customer reception, consultation, delivery)	Manager on visit	Observes, scores, coaches	Yes, targeted
Specialist checks (warranty claims, repair quality, technical compliance)	Specialist or manager	Verifies documents; escalates	Yes, by specialist, on a risk-based sample
Commercial reviews (retail, service load, parts, accessories)	Data, automatically	Reviews exceptions with the dealer principal	Combined with a standards visit

Once every programme has a row in this table, the visit maths changes. Most of the checkpoint volume sits in the first two rows and never needs a manager on site. The manager's visits go to rows three and five, where their judgement and their relationship with the dealer are actually worth something.

Decision three: put a name on every finding, inside the dealership

At the moment a finding is raised, it is assigned to a role at the dealership, not to the manager: the service head for workshop findings, the sales head for showroom findings, the dealer principal for facility and manpower investments. Each role sees its own list. The manager sees only what is overdue or escalated. If a dealership cannot name an owner for a finding, that is itself a finding about the dealership's management structure, and it goes to the dealer principal.

Decision four: cap and prioritise

No dealership should be carrying more than five priority findings at a time. The rest are logged but not chased. Priority is set by weight (safety and customer-facing process first, presentation last) and by cost to fix (a habit that costs nothing before a facility item that needs capital). Findings that need investment go into a dated, funded plan agreed with the dealer principal and stop being re-raised every cycle as if they needed effort rather than money.

Decision five: measure the manager on coverage, closure and repeats

Set the three measures from Section 6 as the field manager's scorecard. Publish them by manager at the regional review, next to the score. Expect the score to fall in the first cycle, because problems that were being managed around are now being found. Expect it to rise from the second cycle, because they are now being closed.

Decision six: review adoption at the top

None of this survives if it is optional. The networks where the redesigned model has stuck share one feature: senior leadership reviews field usage of the system, by region and by manager, on a fixed cadence, and follows up personally with the regions that are not using it. Year one is about the habit. The efficiency targets come once the habit is there.

> **What this looks like in practice**
>
> A network we advised moved its most manager-intensive programme to dealer self-assessment with online verification, put dealership-level owners on every finding, and changed the field scorecard to coverage and closure. Coverage on that programme went from roughly two-thirds of the network to nearly all of it in two cycles. Manager days per site on the programme roughly halved. The closure rate on priority findings went from under a fifth to over half within three cycles, and the field team's own account of the change was that visits had become something dealers asked for rather than prepared for. The illustration is representative of outcomes we see; it is not a single brand's result.

SECTION 8

08 The 90-day plan

If you recognised your own field structure in this paper, here is what to do in the next quarter. None of it needs new headcount to start.

Days 1 to 30: see the load

- For every field manager, list sites, programmes, checkpoints, KPIs and driving hours. Total it. Put it on one page in front of the network head.
- Run the visit maths with your own numbers. Days needed against days available, per manager.
- Pull three numbers from last cycle: share of network with no manager-led evaluation, share of open findings with a named dealership owner, share of findings that are repeats.
- Build the load index and rebalance the two or three most unequal territories.

Days 31 to 60: change the visit

- Classify every programme using the table in Section 7. Move every row-one and row-two programme to dealer self-assessment with evidence and online verification.
- Assign a dealership role to every open finding. Where no role can be named, escalate to the dealer principal as a management finding.
- Apply the five-priority cap. Separate investment findings into dated, funded plans.
- Agree the new field scorecard (coverage, closure, repeat rate) with regional heads. Publish the definitions.

Days 61 to 90: change what is measured

- Run one full cycle on the new model for at least one programme. Report coverage, manager days per site and closure against the previous cycle.
- Put the field scorecard on the regional review agenda, next to score, not instead of it.
- Have the network head review system usage by region and by manager. Follow up personally where it is low.
- Decide, on evidence, which programme moves next.

Ten things to take away

1. Every standard, programme and finding ends up on one person's desk. Design that job on purpose.
2. Do the visit maths. If it is above 100%, every new programme is paid for with lost coverage.
3. Coverage fails first. Report the outlets not evaluated as prominently as the ones that scored badly.
4. A finding without a name inside the dealership is a finding that will come back.
5. The dealer is usually not the bottleneck. The single path from found to fixed is.

6. Having a standard, a calendar and a tracker already puts you ahead of most brands. The next step is making the field structure able to carry them.
7. Spreadsheets hide overload. They show it as dealer indifference and manager attrition.
8. Dealer self-assessment with evidence and independent verification is how lean field teams reach the whole network.
9. Measure field managers on coverage, closure and repeat rate. Let score follow.
10. Year one is about the habit. Review adoption at the top, on a fixed cadence, and the results follow in year two.

ABOUT THIS PAPER

Methodology, sources and about AutoSmart

Where the observations come from

The qualitative observations in this paper come from AutoSmart's ongoing work with dealer-network leadership and field teams across passenger-vehicle, two-wheeler and commercial-vehicle brands in India, the Middle East, Europe and South-East Asia. Where figures describe field structures, coverage, finding closure or manager time, they are illustrative ranges aggregated across multiple networks and rounded; no figure in this paper is drawn from, or attributable to, a single brand or network. No brand, dealer, location or individual is identified. Quotations are representative of conversations with network leaders, field managers and dealer principals, anonymised and lightly edited.

Public sources referred to

- Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM), annual wholesale data for FY2025–26, published April 2026: passenger-vehicle wholesales of 46.4 lakh units, up 7.9% on FY2024–25.
- Federation of Automobile Dealers Associations (FADA), monthly retail registration data, 2026, and FADA's published profile of the Indian auto retail industry: over 15,000 dealerships, over 30,000 outlets, around five million people employed.
- Gallup, research on manager span of control and engagement, 2024 to 2026.
- McKinsey & Company, work on managerial archetypes and span of control.
- Deloitte and Gartner, published research on spans and layers.

About AutoSmart

AutoSmart builds the audit and dealer-performance platform automotive OEMs and distributors use to run dealer standards, warranty, process and customer-experience programmes in the field. It is built around the model in this paper: dealer self-assessment with evidence, online verification by field managers, findings owned at the dealership with due dates and closure evidence, chronic problems flagged across cycles, and live visibility of coverage, closure and manager load.

We wrote this paper because the same conversation keeps happening with the field operations, service and network leaders we work with every day. If you would like to see the visit maths for your own field structure, we can usually build it in a week from your programme calendar and site list.

autosmart

Dealer standards, audits and field operations on one platform.

www.autosmarts.co · contact@autosmarts.co · +971 54 285 8846