



Many c-store retailers rely heavily on their vans, but there are many key factors to consider when investing in a new set of wheels

**SIMON BANKS**

It's no secret that there are big advantages for retailers who possess a van. But when it comes to investing in a new one, retailers can feel like they're being driven around the bend comparing different attributes and finding the very best price.

"Different sizes of van can offer different advantages," explains Sandy MacRitchie, marketing manager for Vauxhall Commercial Vehicles. "If you are doing a big weekly collection from a cash and carry then a large panel van such as the Iveco Daily or Vauxhall Movano gives you a huge load space and great payload. But if a store is having most of its stock delivered and is just using a van for occasional top-up shops, then a mid-size van such as VW Transporter or Vauxhall Vivaro, or even a compact van such as Vauxhall Combo or VW Caddy, might fit the bill. If you need to combine business

use with family use, then a Crew Van which offers a second row of seats might come in really useful."

Gary Pilsworth, of Great Offley Stores and Post Office, Hertfordshire, says: "I used to have a big estate car and go to the cash and carry two or three times a week, but I almost ran it into the ground so started looking at vans. After taking almost six months to compare models and sizes, along with making the decision to buy or to lease, I ended up buying a second-hand Vauxhall Vivaro. The Vivaro seemed to be the perfect size because my store is only 1,000sq ft and I only need

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to make two trips to the cash and carry a week. It makes my life much easier and I am now able to make fewer trips to the cash and carry and fill up even more."

The Vivaro is so spacious that Gary can fit several chilled boxes inside, making it work for home deliveries, too. He adds: "The van is useful for making home deliveries to elderly or disabled customers who can't get to our store regularly, while it also provides more space for other functions in my personal life such as taking my dog out."

David Heritage, owner of Barns Green Village Store in West Sussex, says: "Owning a van is a big benefit, especially because vans are tax free to retailers. I've owned my Citroën Berlingo for 18 months, but have owned one type of van or another for the past eight years. The van is the right size for what I need and reasonably priced. I use it to collect fresh fruit and veg twice a week and for making home deliveries."

David points out that as the van is branded