



SIMI

Annual Report 2010 - 2011

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President's Report

As I look back on my 12 months as SIMI President, it strikes me that despite the continuing economic doom and gloom, the Motor Industry has moved on from the catastrophe that was 2009 and the Society can take a lot of credit for that. Securing Scrappage and then succeeding in getting a six month extension was a long battle. It has worked; the numbers speak for themselves – 25,000 customers will have benefitted from scrappage by the end of June this year. It has given a psychological boost to the Industry, while the Exchequer will have benefitted by in excess of €80m in extra VAT and VRT. Most importantly, we now have an additional 2,200 people working in the motor industry which, in itself, benefits the Government's coffers to the tune of €55m each year.

Despite these positive trends, it is crucial that we do not lose sight of the reality of business life for motor retailers. New car sales at 90,000 per year, while significantly up on 2009 levels, are still well below economically sustainable levels for the current networks of dealers and while most businesses have succeeded in reducing their cost base, margins have shrunk. It's only when customers feel that the economy as a whole is on the right path that they will get back to buying new cars. The Society needs to play an active role with Government to do our part in seeking to put the country right. We have a proven track record of engaging constructively at national level and we must carry on doing so.

The VRT change in July 2008 was a disruptive one for our Industry, but all

brands mobilised into something of a stampede for environmental superiority. Now, 80% of Ireland's new cars have CO₂ emissions under 140g/km, making Ireland 'head of the class' in Europe. VRT and Road Tax change is on the agenda again, so we need to heed the lessons of past mistakes. The Society needs early engagement with Government on this issue to avoid the upheaval experienced in 2008. This discussion needs to also include the problem of seasonality in our Industry, by addressing the number plate system, which has the potential to benefit the Industry, the motorist and NCT by ironing out capacity strains. By allowing car owners to change their registration plate to their own county, a significant revenue stream could be created for local authorities so they could reinvest badly needed money into our road network. The Motor Industry also has an important role to play in developing a sustainable economy and driving green innovation. The ESB's national rollout of the network infrastructure for electric cars is the backdrop for the really exciting e-car programme and this year has seen the introduction of a number of electric vehicles to the Irish motorist. Perhaps the most immediate challenge facing the Industry is the absolute necessity of reducing the cost of doing business in Ireland. Commercial rates and other local authority charges are examples of this cost and their historical blunt execution must be turned on its head to reflect the levels of business and property values of today. SIMI is taking up this issue as a priority with the new Minister for the Environment.

The demand by consumers for lower prices, and the associated need for cost savings for businesses, unfortunately gives rise to fringe and black market operators who ignore quality and safety standards, and who don't think twice about taking advantage of the customer time and time again. In this context, having the SIMI logo over the door is more important than ever for all sections of the Motor Industry.

The Society continuously works to uphold the highest standards of business for itself and its members. Support from members, for both the Investigation & Complaints Service and beepbeep.ie, our used car website, is key in convincing consumers that an SIMI retailer is the only place to shop. I would urge members to continue to support these worthwhile projects, while, at the same time, the Society will continue to highlight to the public the value of the SIMI brand and to Government, the importance of eradicating black market operators.

In conclusion, the reality is that there are many industries out there in a worse place than we are. I'm certain that our Industry, given an opportunity to engage constructively with Government, will survive, thrive and contribute meaningfully to the fortunes of this country as we always have done. This is a great business to work in and I am honoured to have served as your President. Let's continue the hard work and get through these tough times.

Eddie Murphy,
President of the Society

Director General's Report



It is sometimes said that it takes adversity to bring out the best in an organisation. This may well be true of SIMI. Following the impact of the changeover to CO₂-based VRT and Road Tax, 2009 marked the low point for the Motor Industry, with new car sales down to 57,118, over 120 businesses closed and almost 10,000 individuals losing their jobs.

The delivery by SIMI, of both Scrappage and the VAT changeover to the Margin Scheme for our members, contributed to the survival of many dealers and stimulated business in both used and new car sales, which recovered to 88,373 in 2010. The achievement of an extension to Scrappage for the first six months of 2011 continued to support this slow progress toward recovery, with 2011 new car sales showing an increase of 12% over 2010 for the first four months of the year. Although in a stronger position than many other sectors, it would be premature to conclude that the Motor Industry has recovered. In reality, such recovery, as we have seen, is fragile with many businesses continuing to operate on the very edge of survival and again, unfortunately, we have seen some that have just not been able to survive.

Commercial vehicles, often seen as the real barometer of the economy, have seen an even deeper fall with HGV business hugely impacted by the collapse in construction, in addition to the general contraction

in economic activity. It was only at the end of April 2011 that new HGV registrations finally stopped falling for the first time since 2008.

SIMI itself has not been immune to the closures and cut-backs in the Industry but has continued to strive, with reduced resources, to deliver more for members. New projects such as BeepBeep.ie and the SIMI Motor Industry Awards have been initiated and delivered. And the focus has not just been on those involved in car sales – other sectors have also been supported, the Vehicle Testers VTN Project being one of the biggest ever undertaken by the Society. The year ahead remains a very difficult one with the high cost of doing business in Ireland, the continuing lack of finance availability for businesses and for car buyers, and the persistence of low levels of consumer confidence. We face challenges in all sectors, with reduced demand for servicing and, therefore, for parts, with both commercial vehicle and car sales remaining constrained and with Vehicle Body Repairers facing increased environmental and other burdens, while pressures from the Insurance sector continue to suppress rates below viable levels. In this difficult business environment, members can rely on the commitment of their Society to continue to endeavour to deliver significant and meaningful improvements for them.

Alan Nolan,
Director General

2010-2011 The Year in Review

Scrappage

- **25,000 scrappage cars sold**

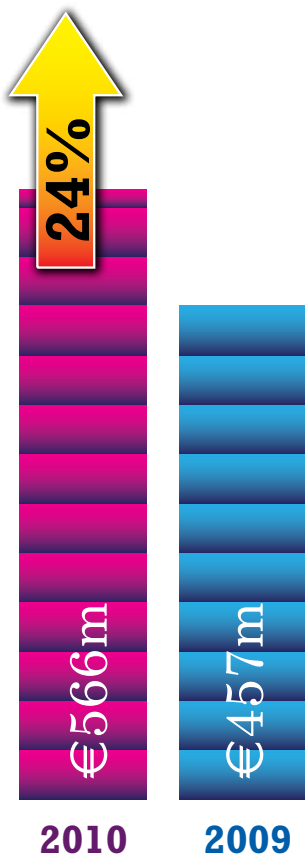
- **New car sales up by 31,255 (+55%) in 2010 – 17k Scrappage; 14k other**

- **€566m generated in Government revenue from new car sales in 2010; increase of 24% (€109m) on 2009**

- **€62m in Scrappage Scheme Revenue alone**

- **Average CO₂ per new car dropped by 11g/km**

Government revenue from new car sales



(Statistics to end of March 2011)
 In our pre-Budget submission in 2009, we outlined that the introduction of a Scrappage Scheme would increase Government revenue, protect jobs and reduce CO₂ emissions. Following the welcome introduction of the Scheme by the Government, our predictions proved to be correct. In fact, the Scrappage Scheme exceeded our expectations. Scrappage was scheduled to end on December 31, 2010, but in our submission for 2011, SIMI sought an extension of the scheme. Despite negative press from some economists, we succeeded in convincing Government to extend the scheme for a further six months, until June 30, 2011, albeit at a lower refund of €1,250 (down from €1,500 in 2010). The subsequent extension of Scrappage has been an unqualified success.

As predicted... the Scheme increased new car sales; 88,373 cars were registered in 2010, an increase of 31,255 or 55% on 2009.

As predicted... the Scheme protected jobs; 2,200 extra people employed in the Motor Industry at the end of 2010.

As predicted... Government Revenue increased; up €109m in additional VAT and VRT on new car sales.

As predicted... the scheme led to a reduction in CO₂ emissions from new car sales; down 11g/km on new cars sold in 2009.

The good news continues into 2011. The extension of Scrappage has seen a further increase in new car sales of 14% on 2010, with new car sales reaching 50,000 in early April nearly three weeks ahead of the same milestone being reached in 2010. Government revenue from new car sales has also increased accordingly.

Beepbeep.ie project



Highlights

- **400,000 unique visitors across all beepbeep.ie partner sites in January 2011.**

- **Facility for video on every vehicle**

- **Mobile friendly website with automatic dealer location**

- **Free mobile site for every dealer on beepbeep.ie**

- **Stock on CBG.ie, IrishTimes.com, Adverts.ie**

- **Interactive Graphical New Car Statistics**

The SIMI's e-commerce strategy really took off in 2011 with beepbeep.ie entering its second year with a host of new developments and features. After establishing itself in 2010, the beepbeep hub now provides SIMI dealers with easy access to the second biggest group of used car websites including beepbeep.ie itself, IrishTimes.com, CBG.ie, and Adverts.ie. By handing back control of their online marketing to the dealers who own the stock, the SIMI e-commerce programme has raised the bar as regards service, standards and responsiveness, while minimising the costs. The consumer has benefited by having a one-stop shop to view a wide range of assured vehicles from dealers who have signed up to a code of standards. No other online used car package offers so much. Unlimited access to technical checks on the SIMI's Car History Check system and free



mini-sites formatted for viewing on iPhones are all included. The beepbeep.ie technical team works hard to facilitate dealers, franchise and independent, in sending their stock wherever they want it to go, with the minimum of fuss. We work closely with the majority of other websites and dealer management systems to make the process hassle-free and, with detailed reporting, dealership management remains in control at all times. In addition to the online services, the SIMI's e-commerce programme has run a number of highly successful Digital Marketing and Social Media Workshops throughout the country. Launched in October 2010 at the Aviva Stadium, these workshops have helped dealers of all sizes get a handle on current and future online marketing trends. With Facebook

and Twitter now outperforming Google in many areas of consumer online activity, it is an area that the Irish motor industry cannot afford to ignore. Beepbeep.ie and the SIMI's e-commerce strategy has created a real alternative for dealers who want to differentiate their business and stock from those who do not adhere to the same levels of quality and aftersales service. It continues to offer excellent value for money while leading the way with innovative features such as social media and video integration. Its continued success is dependent on the support of all SIMI's members, both as subscribers and as champions for the site. So, make sure you link to the site on your mobile phone, add a link to your email and help your customers to find their next car on beepbeep.ie.

Electric vehicles

- **Electric vehicles now available in Ireland**

- **ESB ecar strategy to deliver charge point infrastructure**

- **VRT relief up to €5,000**

- **Grant aid of €5,000 per vehicle (SEAI)**

- **Accelerated Capital Allowances**

The Finance Act 2011 formally implemented the incentives being made available for Cars and Light Commercial Electric Vehicles. Now, consumers can avail of zero VRT plus a grant from SEAI of €5,000 to offset against the price of electric vehicles. This grant aid is subject to a maximum total relief of €5m while the scheme lasts. In addition, businesses purchasing these vehicles will receive accelerated capital allowances of 100% of the cost of the vehicle in the year the vehicle is purchased. ESB will be providing the infrastructure to ensure owners have sufficient access to recharge their vehicles, with targets set for the end of 2011 of 1,500 public charge points, 2,000 home charge points (depending on sales), and 30 fast charge points. The Government and ESB have already signed





Memorandums of Understanding with three vehicle manufacturers to ensure the supply of electric vehicles to the Irish motorist. The aim of this project is to have 10% of vehicles on the road powered by electricity by the year 2020.

Commercial Vehicles – change in VRT categorisation

- **LCV Sales 2010 – 10,546 (+14%)**

- **HGV Sales 2010 – 1,020 (-11%)**

- **Change in VRT Classifications**

- **Change in VRT rate for Category C - €50 to €200**

- **Road Tax confusion**

Sales of Commercial Vehicles, a key barometer of overall corporate



activity, continue to be very weak, emphasising the current economic climate in Ireland. January 2011 also saw the introduction of new classifications for VRT on Commercial Vehicles. These had originally been outlined in the Finance Act 2010, with the aim of the moving the classifications to European definitions to support the new Type Approval systems and to ensure a more construction-focused rather than Revenue-focused registration system. The original proposals raised a number of serious concerns for both Motor Industry and business in general, which would have seen many genuine commercial vehicles, including panel vans, move from €50 to 13.3% VRT, increasing the cost of such vehicles substantially. Following a series of meetings with Revenue during the year, an amendment was included in the Finance Act 2011 which enabled commercial vehicles manufactured originally with a large carrying capacity to continue to avail of the lower VRT rate. This covered nearly all panel vans and some, but not all, Commercial 4 x 4 vehicles. Revenue also accepted the Industry's difficulty in the changeover period by allowing a derogation for vehicles in stock or ordered, which enabled derogated vehicles to avail of the lower VRT rate until May 31, 2011. VRT of Category C Commercial Vehicles increased from €50 to €200 from May 1, 2011. During 2010, confusion arose over the treatment of Commercial Vehicles in respect of Road Tax. This occurred when the Department of Environment & Local Government re-issued an old circular on Road Taxing commercial vehicles, which reminded Motor Tax Offices that in order to tax a vehicle commercially, the owner should confirm

the vehicle's use is for business purposes only. This gained widespread media coverage and caused confusion among owners of these vehicles. In fact, there had been no change to the law. The Society wrote to the Minister requesting a realistic approach to this issue, allowing these vehicles to be taxed commercially, as long as their use is mainly for commercial purposes and any personal use is incidental.

Registration System

● **Changeover from Revenue to NCT – Sept 1, 2010**

● **Initial problems**

● **Improvements**

September 1, 2010, saw a change in the system for registering vehicles which are outside the normal Distributor/Dealer channels. This changeover saw Revenue delegate responsibility for registering these vehicles to NCTS (Applus). While the Industry supported a new system, the initial roll-out focused on the needs of an individual registering one vehicle, and seemingly ignored the business requirements of the professional trade. Dealers suffered delays in getting appointments, which in some cases cost them sales, with additional complications in having vehicles valued, and issues arose over acceptance of payments. Right from the start however, Revenue and Applus were willing to engage with the motor trade with a view to improving the process. Substantial progress has been made in a number of areas, but work is still ongoing. These discussions have led to increased capacity, flexible payment/top-up measures, and streamlining the process for registration of vehicles under the disabled driver scheme. March saw the implementation of a pre-inspection system, whereby a retailer can have vehicles inspected

by NCT without having to register them at that time, have Revenue's system updated to include these pre-inspected vehicles, and allow the dealer to register them on ROS, using the deferred payment or FACT account, once they have a customer. In addition, NCT have introduced a system of inspecting, for a fee, vehicles on a retailer's own premises. Delays in getting appointments still continue to be a source of frustration, but the system is improving and the Society will continue to press Revenue and NCT until all areas of concern are dealt with.

Block Exemption

- **EU Commission Announcement May 27, 2010 on Automotive Block Exemption**

- **New Regulation for Aftermarket effective June 1, 2010**

- **New Regulation for Vehicle Sales effective from June 1, 2013**

In May 2010, the EU Commission confirmed that it had adopted new competition rules for agreements between Vehicle Manufacturers and their Authorised Dealers, Repairers and Spare Parts Distributors. For the Aftermarket, the new rules came into force on June 1, 2010, while for Vehicle Sales, the current Block Exemption (1400/2002) remains in force until May 31, 2013, after which, contracts in relation to sales of motor vehicles will be governed by the General Block Exemption.

Vehicle Sales BER

The previous Automotive BER 1400/2002 continues to apply to motor vehicle sales until May 31, 2013. Subsequently, the new General BER will apply. The new General BER differs from the automotive BER 1400/2002 in a number of areas, in particular

with regard to the combination of sales and service, the opening of additional sales outlets and the conditions for Multi-Branding. Unlike its predecessor, the new Automotive BER does not contain many of the specific provisions of the previous regulation on Contract Termination and Arbitration. However, ACEA (European Vehicle Manufacturers Association) member organisations have signed a Code of Good Practice in which they have committed themselves to include, in contracts with their authorised dealers and repairers, provisions regarding Minimum Notice Periods and Arbitration Procedures for Contractual Disputes.

Aftermarket BER

Agreements regarding the Repair of Motor Vehicles and the Distribution of Spare Parts have been governed essentially by the new Automotive BER from June 1, 2010. These rules are not fundamentally different from those that applied under the previous Automotive Block Exemption. The new Automotive BER 461/2010 contains three specific provisions that are identical to those laid down in the Automotive BER 1400/2002. They relate to the ability of authorised repairers to sell spare parts to independent repairers, the ability of producers of spare parts, repair tools and diagnostic or other equipment to sell their products to authorised and independent distributors or repairers, and the rights of original equipment suppliers to place their trade mark or logo on the parts they supply for assembly or sell in the Aftermarket. The guidelines stipulate that vehicle manufacturers must make repair and maintenance information available to independent operators in the same manner and under the same conditions as this is made available to the manufacturers' authorised repairers. With regard to warranties, the guidelines

stipulate that vehicle manufacturers cannot oblige their customers to have all service and maintenance work carried out by authorised repairers in order to maintain the validity of the manufacturers' warranty for their vehicle.

VTN Project

- **Commercial Vehicle testing reform programme (RSA & PwC)**

- **Stakeholder consultation document**

- **Fixed license period**

- **VTN ISO Project**



At the Commercial Vehicle Testers' AGM in November 2010, Denise Barry of the RSA confirmed that there would be substantive changes to the current operation of Commercial Vehicle Testing. There would be a move from the current indefinite license period to a fixed term license (probably 10 years). The RSA indicated their willingness to engage with the Society's Commercial Tester Members and their brand VTN on the roll-out of the new regime. Subsequently, the RSA, in conjunction with consultants PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC), issued a stakeholder consultation document at the end of March – *Proposed Reform to testing arrangements for Commercial Vehicles and ADR Vehicles*. The Society's Tester Committee has responded with a detailed submission on this document. In light of the proposed changes to testing, the Society's Tester members voted in favour of developing VTN from its current status as a brand to a co-operative network with mutual

high standards giving members the ability to deliver on the RSA's proposals. For each test centre, it will involve implementation of the VTN Standard, (which will include individual guidance and support by a VTN Consultant in each Test Centre to ensure implementation of the VTN Standard based on CITA Recommendation) a VTN/ CITA/ISO Audit from NSAI and Training for Competent Person. The VTN Quality Management System (QMS) has been developed as a Group Certification Process using CITA 9B as its framework specifically for vehicle testing. This Group Certification will enable VTN members present to the public a robust, professional network capable of delivering the requirements of the RSA for commercial vehicle testing. It also ensures consistency across the Network and enables immediate feedback to and from the VTN on any issues that may arise. The VTN brand is owned by SIMI on behalf of Vehicle Tester Members and this development is a significant member project, funded by Tester Members.

Finance availability

- **Number of Finance Houses reduced**

- **Vehicle Manufacturer support**

- **New entrant**

- **Credit Unions & savings**

Like most other business sectors, a key issue for the Motor Industry is the state of Irish banking. While a number of banks have continued their commitment to both the Motor Industry and its customers, a number of major Motor Industry finance providers have exited the market and those remaining have reduced lending capacity. This is a double negative for the Motor Industry, as dealers require finance for their business to continue, while their customers rely on finance

in order to be able to purchase vehicles. The reduction in the level of finance means dealers have working capital issues and there have been cases where potentially profitable business opportunities have been foregone because cash is in short supply. Dealers who have managed to cut their costs to fit the current economic climate have seen the cost of banking increase, as interest rates and bank charges have risen over recent years.

Despite the reduced availability of finance it is not true to say there are no finance providers in the market. SIMI Finance House members, Permanent TSB, Bank of Ireland Finance and GE Money, have continued to support the Industry through the supply of retail and wholesale finance, while a number of Vehicle Manufacturers support their franchise networks through their own branded finance. Some of these options however are not available to the independent sector, and the last survey of members on finance indicated that savings and credit union loans are becoming an increasing source of finance for car buyers. The Motor Industry needs the banking sector to return to some sort of normality as a matter of urgency. It is hoped that the Government's plans to recapitalise the banks in the coming months will lead to an improvement in finance availability.

Consumer trends

With the recession continuing and householders hit with significant hikes in mortgage rates, many consumers kept their money in their pockets in 2010. With the Budget, Government uncertainties, the IMF and a decline in disposable income, spending in the retail sector remained low, with the exception of new car sales. For nearly every single month in 2010 and into 2011, our Industry was excluded from retail figures because it created a 'false picture' of the retail market.

Compared to 2009, 2010 did see retail sales stabilising somewhat but personal savings were around the 12% mark and this, coupled with the lack of the availability of finance, saw the typical new car buyer in the 40-plus age category. With price remaining the key influencing factor in when and where to shop, dealers and distributors reacted by offering incredible value in asking prices for new vehicles and servicing and repair charges across the board. The latest Amárach-AIB Economic Indicator showed that Irish consumers are now "planning for the long haul, emotionally and economically". However, clearly, Irish consumers are seeing their new car purchase as a worthy investment for the future.



Overall Winner Cavanagh's of Charleville



Hugh Sheehy, Marketing Manager, Cavanagh's of Charleville Ltd accepting his award for Franchised Dealership of the Year from Ronnie Whelan, Alan Nolan and Dave Watson of Castrol Professional.

The SIMI Franchise Dealers Conference in November saw the presentation of the first SIMI Motor Industry Awards. The awards were generously supported by Castrol Professional, and gave recognition to the great efforts made by SIMI members to stabilise their businesses and to innovate in the current extremely challenging economic environment. The independent judging panel consisted of Dermot Jewell (Chief Executive Consumers' Association of Ireland), Bob Clarke (Chairman of the SIMI Standards Tribunal and former Rights Commissioner) and Bernard Potter (Editor of *Irish Motor Management*, the official magazine of the SIMI). The judges welcomed the wide range of high

quality entries reflecting the belief and commitment that has driven the Industry's recovery during 2010 and they were particularly impressed by the consistent willingness to innovate and launch new business strategies. The winners were:

- Cavanagh's of Charleville – Franchised Dealership of the Year
- Cunningham Higgins Specialist Cars – Retail Operation of the Year
- Joe Duffy BMW – Aftersales Operation of the Year
- Merlin Car Auctions – Innovation of the Year
- Drogheda SIMI Members - Unsung Heroes of the Year



Stephen Ussher, Membership Services' Executive, SIMI.

Membership services update

Membership service 'on the road'

The key to supporting members is meeting them face to face, at local meetings, National Conferences, and, perhaps most importantly of all, in members' own premises. The precedent for this was set back in the 1970s by the then young Membership Manager, and now Senior Executive, Con Dalton, who celebrated 40 years in the SIMI last September. The knowledge garnered by Con over the years has been invaluable, and the torch has now been passed on to Membership Services' Executive Stephen Ussher. The renewed focus on this 'back to basics' method resulted in Stephen visiting every county in the last 12 months, with individual meetings with over one third of all members. This focus will continue into the rest of 2011 and 2012. Allied to this, is the Centre Structure, with local AGMs held every year. By the Society's Annual General Meeting on May 19, every centre will have held at least two meetings in the last 12 months. Stephen is always on hand to visit your premises to try to assist you with any issue you might have so we would urge all members to continue to avail of this valued service.

New ways of communicating with our members

Most notably in the past year, SIMI's communication has stepped up a gear and with more and more members online, we are finding that the quickest and most cost-effective way of communicating information of all sorts is by email, ezines, text messages and online.

Our newsletter continues to be a vital way of keeping members up to date with industry news and fewer members are opting to receive this news by post, with the vast majority receiving it by email. In addition, *Irish Motor Management*, published by IFP Media, continues to be the public voice of the Industry and highlights issues of serious interest to SIMI members. An online version of the magazine www.irishmotormanagement.com has recently been launched. The Society's website www.simi.ie contains a password-protected, members-only section where vital business information can be accessed and also provides an



information source for the public and media. We plan to develop the site to become more interactive with the public and easier to navigate in the coming year.

Perhaps the biggest change to communication, for both the Society and members alike, is the use of Social Media over the past year. Led internally by the Society's Press Officer Suzanne Sheridan, the Society now actively uses Facebook,

LinkedIn, Twitter and other tools to engage with members, the media and the public about events, news, opinions and a lot more. Be sure to follow us online to keep up to date with all things social.

Training

The economic downturn and the subsequent focus on cost reduction has seen a fall-off in demand for many of the traditional training courses provided by the Society. In response to members' needs, the Society has tailored its courses and negotiated reduced costs from suppliers to allow delivery to members of appropriate courses on a cost-effective basis. Last year saw the running of 'bite-size' Training Courses which were three half-day seminars at a reduced cost that looked at three different aspects of car retailing. Members were able to avail of these as a block or one-by-one at 50% of the cost of other external training courses. The popular VAT Training Courses were run as seminars, allowing for increased numbers and associated reduced delegate fees, without diluting the

quality of content – this was of particular importance with the move to the Margin Scheme. Consumer Credit CPD Training was again run on a seminar basis and slightly reduced hours, with members availing of reduced fees for the statutory training. Tester Training remained the responsibility of the Society for the time being, and over 400 testers attended the CPD Training last autumn.

Statistics service



The Society's Statistics Service has undergone significant change in the last year, with the upgraded system, hosted on beepbeep. ie, better servicing the needs of members, the media and the public. The new system was launched at the President's Press Conference in the National Convention Centre last August and the new online portal is accessible to both the public and members. Our service is the only official National Motor Industry source of vehicle statistics. It has been designed to be a one-stop shop for all Motor Industry information. Detailed statistics will be updated monthly and they can be accessed at www.beeper.ie/stats, while members can access more detailed statistics information through their password protected login.

Improvements are always being made and more information will be available in the near future.

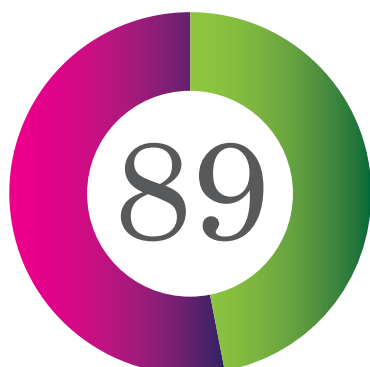
SIMI logo increase in standards

The SIMI logo has long been an indication of quality for consumers, somewhere they can buy their car or have their vehicle serviced with a high degree of confidence. The SIMI Logo and Code of Ethics are strictly for the use of members only and the Logo clearly distinguishes members as professional motor industry businesses, operating to the highest ethical standards. The bedrock of this is the Society's Investigation & Complaints Service. The SIMI Consumer Complaints Service is a free service offered to members and their customers with the objective of resolving complaints without recourse to expensive, damaging and time-consuming legal proceedings. Complaints processed in 2010 represented a 7% decrease in comparison to those received in 2009. A total of 270 complaints were registered of which 153 (57%) were resolved through the Society's mediatory efforts. A quick, positive reaction or simple explanatory letter from the garage often resolves a complaint. The 270 complaints were registered by customers of 160 member companies. The type of complaints processed can be broken down as follows: 147 (54%) related to the condition of the vehicles (mechanical and electrical defects) either sold,



repaired or serviced. This compares to 65% recorded in 2009. 104 (39%) related to alleged misrepresentation of pricing, documentation, finance, etc. This compares to 24% recorded in 2009. 13 (5%) complaints related to alleged conditions regarding the previous history of vehicles. This compares to 6% recorded in 2009. 6 (2%) complaints related to refund of deposits. This compares to 5% recorded in 2009. In 2010, 89 complaints (33% of the total processed and similar to 2009) were referred to the SIMI Retail Motor Industry Standards Tribunal. The Tribunal is chaired by an independent Arbitrator and includes industry representatives and a leading Consumer advocate. Of the 89 cases referred to the Tribunal, 47% resulted in a refund, free repair or compensation being paid to the customer and 53% were either rejected as unreasonable or the Tribunal found that the garages' offers to resolve the complaints were considered adequate. The Society's Management Board is currently reviewing the operation of the Complaints Service, and will bring proposals to the NEC later this year with a view to strengthening this service.

Cases referred to the SIMI Retail Motor Industry Standards Tribunal in 2010



53%

Rejected as unreasonable or the Tribunal found that the garages' offers to resolve the complaints were considered adequate.

47%

Resulted in a refund, free repair or compensation being paid to the customer

Free Services for our Members



As part of their subscription, members receive many services and advice at no extra cost – vital services that otherwise would be difficult to access and a significant additional cost to businesses.

Among the expert advice:

Human Resources and Industrial Relations

In the challenging times for the industry over the last two years, there has been a significant increase in the number of calls to the SIMI HR Service from members in need of advice and assistance. The main issues of concern that the service has dealt with have been in relation to the restructuring of businesses and the resulting need to reduce staff levels, implement pay cuts or reduce working hours. During the last year, there was a noticeable rise in the numbers of cases taken by former employees against members on the grounds of Unfair Dismissal, Unfair Selection for Redundancy, etc. The Society has continued to advise and represent members at

the Labour Court, Employment Appeals Tribunal and Rights Commissioner hearings. The HR Service continues to provide members with advice on all aspects of compliance with Employment Law, Health and Safety Legislation and Human Resource Management. Through the SIMI newsletters, website and *Irish Motor Management* magazine, the Society will provide updates to members on relevant changes or developments in Employment regulations. Advice can be given in confidence by telephone, email or in person.

VAT and VRT advice

The Society offers members specialist advice on taxation matters that are specific to the motor industry. The level of queries on VAT and VRT remain high, particularly due to the move to the VAT Margin Scheme and the associated complications. An increasing number of queries relate to imported used vehicles and, in the first quarter of 2011, the VAT treatment of vehicles supplied under the disabled driver's

scheme has become a hot topic. VRT queries have risen due to the changeover to NCT for registering certain vehicles and the change in the VRT Classification Structure for Commercial Vehicles.

Social media advice

A new service the Society is now offering is free one-to-one Social Media training for members. Designed to equip members with the practical knowledge and advice needed to kick-start a Social Media presence. This training is being delivered by the Society's Press Officer Suzanne Sheridan, who has already brought the Society's own use of social media up to date. This training is for individuals or companies who either have never used Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn or email marketing, or who may have knowledge about Social Media but need some guidance. More and more Irish businesses are taking advantage of Social Media to communicate with their customers more effectively at a very low cost and are seeing an immediate pay-off.

Looking forward to 2012



The Society's continued focus into 2012 will be to assist in creating the best possible business conditions for members in the current economic difficulties, whether through enhanced business services and advice or through lobbying and public relations. Specific challenges over the coming year will include the changes to both VRT and road tax systems scheduled for 2013. The Society has already begun to tackle these issues and has commenced both debates within membership and early engagement with Government Departments under whose remit these taxation headings fall.

Part of this engagement will include our proposed review of the number plate system.

The Society will continue to offer the best specialist advice to members as part of their membership, always looking to new areas where the Society's executives can lend their expertise. Commercial Rates and other State charges are perhaps the one area of business costs over which members have no ability to implement reductions – the SIMI will press for changes here, along with other representative organisations.

The SIMI logo and brand is the sig-

nal to consumers of high quality and of a business where they can expect the highest ethical practices. The Society's PR will focus on this issue over the next 12 months in conjunction with our recently launched campaign aimed at highlighting black economy operators to the relevant authorities. The Society's used car website, beepbeep.ie, will also play a key role in our consumer focus, and, with the members' support, we aim to see our site become a key player, the site and brand that consumers can trust.

The SIMI logo and brand is the signal to consumers of high quality and of a business where they can expect the highest ethical practices.

Society's priorities 2011

- **VRT**

- **Road tax**

- **Review of number plate system**

- **Best specialist advice for members**

- **Fighting commercial rates and changes**

- **Highlighting the importance of the SIMI brand**

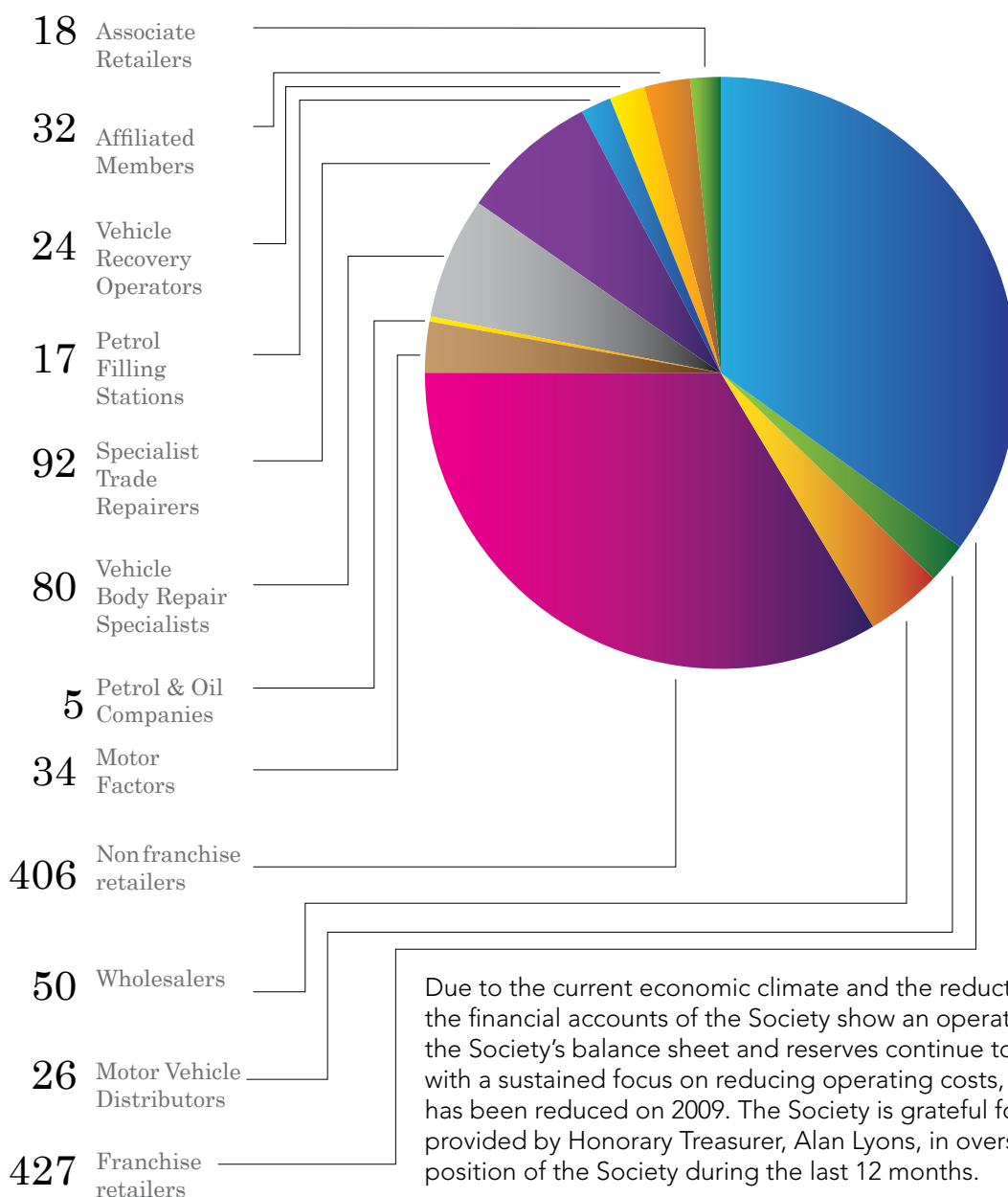


Members by numbers

Membership & Financial Position

At the end of the calendar year 2010 the total number of members was 1,211, a decrease of 127 on the previous year. The Society's membership has been impacted by the negative economic climate, with the last 12 months unfortunately seeing a number of members, across all sectors of membership, cease trading, continuing the trend of 2009. A number of members have reactivated their membership since the Society's year-end of December 31, 2010.

Breakdown of membership by category – Dec 31, 2010



The year in short

New car sales in 2010 performed strongly relative to 2009. The boost from the Scrappage Scheme introduced in January helped sales of new cars increase by nearly a third in the first quarter of the year. Before the end of May, new car sales had exceeded total sales for 2009.

October saw the biggest jump with new car sales up 115% on 2009 and we ended the year with 88,373 new car sales, a welcome increase of 55%.



Sales of LCVs (Light Commercial Vehicles) remained poor throughout 2010; a sign of how the small business sector was hit by the recession

2010 saw 10,546 LCVs sold, compared to 9,285 in 2009 (13.6% up).



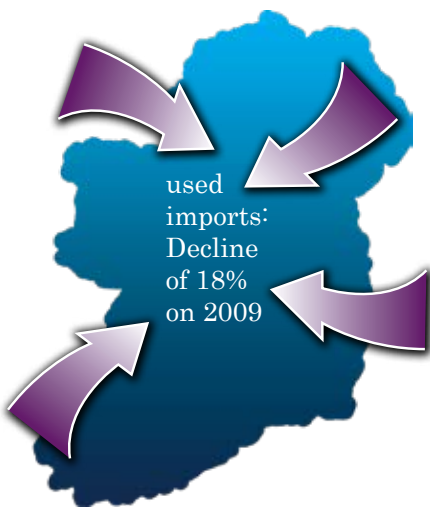
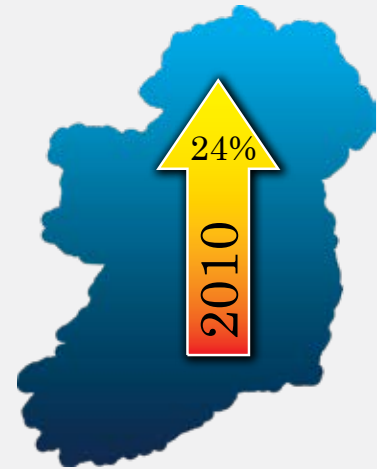
A symbol of the decline of the construction industry, **sales of HGVs** (Heavy Commercial Vehicles) remained stagnant in 2010 with unexpected low levels of purchase

2010 saw 1,020 HGVs sold, compared to 1,151 in 2009 (11.4% down)



Clearly affected by the decline in tourism, **hire cars** had a difficult year, however, we did see an increase in 2010

The first quarter of 2011 was positive for the hire drive sector with registrations up by 32%. This is in addition to an increase of 24% in 2010, albeit from a very low base.



With a drop in the asking prices of both new and used cars, the perceived value of purchasing a car in the UK as opposed to here dwindled in 2010

A repeat of the previous year, used imports saw a decline of 18% on 2009. Not a sign of overall sales, Irish consumers saw the equal value that was to be had here and fewer and fewer went across the sea to import a car from the UK.

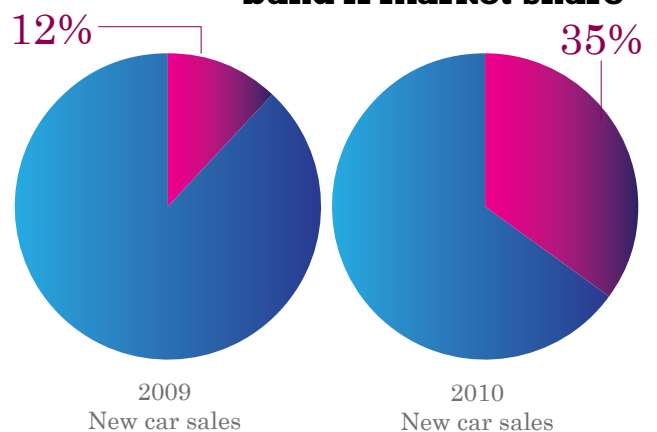
Our target to reduce CO₂ emissions of new cars in line with the introduction of the Scrappage Scheme was reached.

The average for CO₂ emissions in 2010 was 133g/km compared to 144g/km in 2009.

35% of new cars sold in the lowest CO₂ category

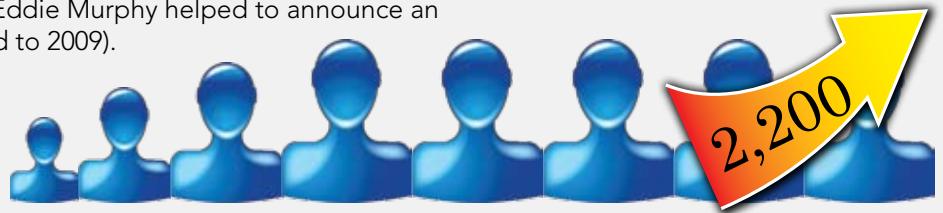
With the Scrappage Scheme targetting the lowest emission bands, A and B, 2010 saw 35% of new cars sold in the lowest CO₂ category, compared to just a 12% market share in 2009. All of the other higher bands, from C through to G saw a reduction in registrations as a reflection of the economic benefits for consumers in purchasing more fuel efficient cars.

Lowest emission band A market share



The industry recovered in 2010 following a dramatic loss of jobs in 2009

In November 2010, the then Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Innovation, Batt O’Keeffe joined us in a press call to announce the increase in employment in our industry, commenting: “It is clear that the Government’s Scrappage Scheme announced last year has worked, with extra jobs and more car sales recorded in what is now a growth sector in our economy.” In early 2011, the Society’s President Eddie Murphy helped to announce an increase of 2,200 jobs (2010 compared to 2009).



Market share of diesel cars increased in 2010 with alternative fuels seeing some increase too. Unsurprisingly, 2010 saw an increase in the purchase of diesel cars and a reduction in petrol cars. With electric cars yet to go mass market, they were unaffected but hybrids and flexi-fuels saw an increase (off a low base).

The argument that Scrappage would not result in costs to the exchequer but actually generate revenue, was won, with significant revenue generated from sales of new cars in 2010

Despite the VRT discount given to Scrappage car buyers, there was a significant increase in government revenue from VAT and VRT in 2010. That said, the sharp fall in car sales in 2009 did see a dramatic decline in revenue. However, the shortfall picked up thanks to the boost provided by Scrappage, with Scrappage Scheme cars alone accounting for €62m in revenue and new car sales in total generating €566m for the government, at a time when every euro was badly needed in our economy.

Scrappage scheme drives overall sales

Our expectations for Scrappage were exceeded and continue to be

At the beginning of January 2010, the Society predicted that 2010 could see 70,000 new cars sold – a target that, if reached, would be a good year relative to 2009. However, we knew from the reaction of the public to Scrappage in January, and more so in the first quarter of 2010, that the scheme would be a success. Over 17,000 Scrappage cars were sold in 2010 and compared to total new car sales of over 88,000, this was relatively small; proof that the real benefit of Scrappage is the knock-on effect it has on the overall new and used car market and the positivity it creates. Attaining a continuation of Scrappage for six months into 2011 was an extremely hard battle to win, despite the fact that the scheme was a win-win in 2010. With focus on the scheme ceasing mid-year and, therefore, eradicating the risk of bringing forward sales from 2012, scrappage continues to be a draw for motorists and an additional 10,000 scrappage cars sold in 2011 would be very positive for the industry.

The year in pictures...

1 - SIMI President Eddie Murphy targeted the consolidation of growth as a key objective of his tenure.

2 - The then Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources, Eamon Ryan, joined with Alan Nolan and Eddie Murphy in suggesting that Ireland can be a leader in electric motoring.

3 - In Spring 2011, an increase of 2,200 in numbers employed in the Industry was announced. SIMI President Eddie Murphy commented: "It can be compared to another Google opening up here."

4 - (L-r): Gerry Caffrey, Deputy President, SIMI presents Brian Durning from Donegal with the SIMI Automobile Apprentice of the Year Trophy for 2010.

1



2



3



4

The year in pictures...



- 5 - SIMI Director General Alan Nolan initiated a debate on the registration plate system which attracted a lot of interest in 2010.
- 6 - Alan Nolan gave the opening address at 'Powering Up', the SIMI National Franchise Dealer Conference 2010.
- 7 - At the SIMI Annual Conference (L-R): Arnold Koopans, Conference Speaker from the Netherlands and Jonathan Meade, Conference Chairman.
- 8 - Used car website beepbeep.ie went from zero at start up to delivering well over 400,000 unique visitors per month by early 2011.
- 9 - Alan Nolan and the then Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Innovation, Batt O'Keeffe, TD, at a press call to announce the increase in employment in the Motor Industry.

SIMI Management Board 2010/2011



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President
**Managing Director/
Chairman**
**Henry Ford & Son
(Sales) Ltd**



Gerry Caffrey
Deputy President
Managing Director
Gerry Caffrey Motors Ltd



Alan Lyons
Honorary Treasurer
Managing Director
Auto Diesel Electric Ltd



Mike Finlay
Immediate Past President
Managing Director
**M.A. Finlay & Sons
(Newbridge)**



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Distributors Committee
Managing Director
Kia Motors Ireland



Jonathan Meade
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Managing Director
Hutton & Meade



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Committee
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Chris Fleming
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Steve Tormey
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**Deputy Managing
Director/Director for
Sales and Marketing**
Toyota Ireland



Alan Nolan
Director General
SIMI

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Immediate Past President
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M.A. Finlay & Sons
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Strongline Autoparts
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Louis O 'Hanlon

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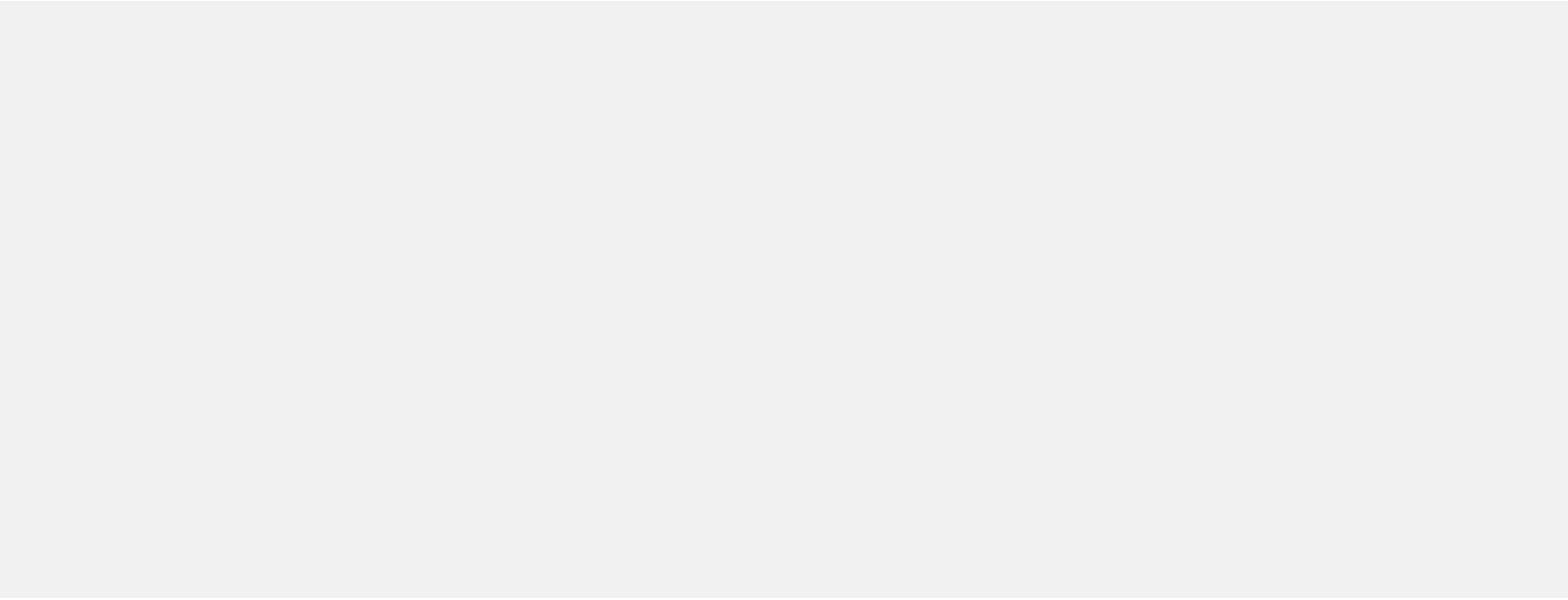
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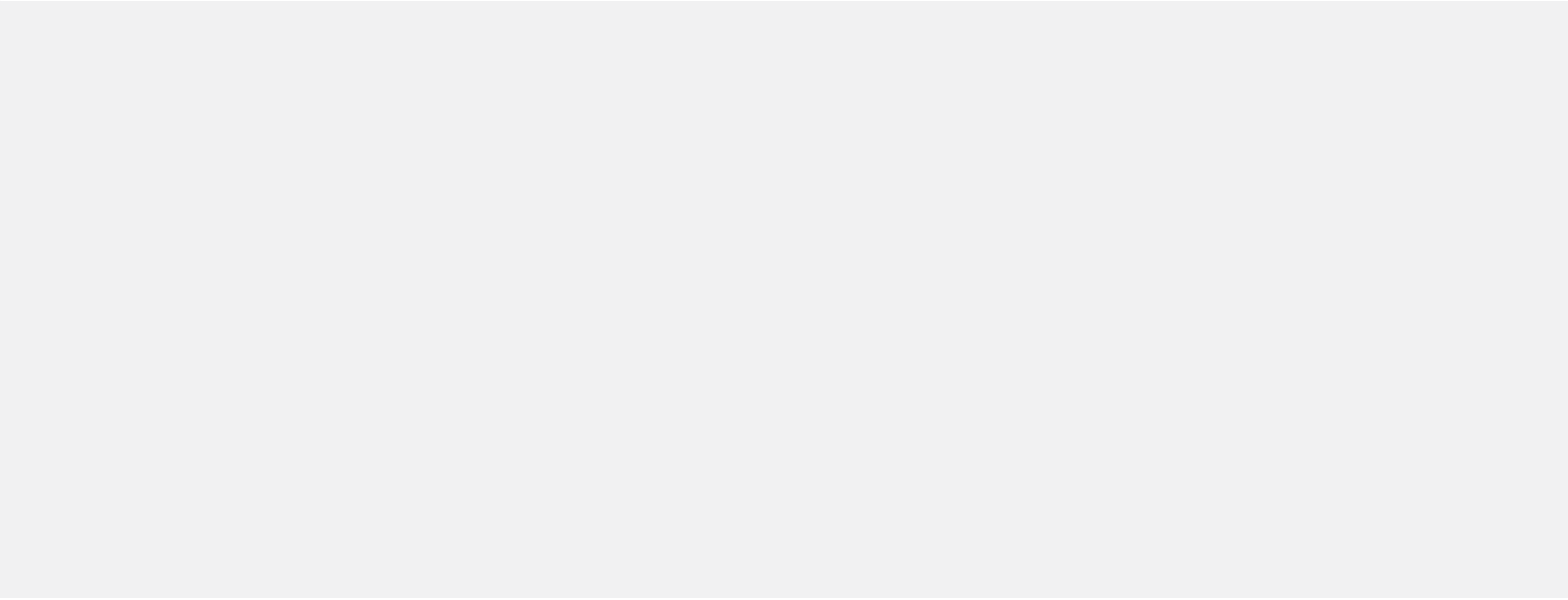
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