



COMPANY: Reflex Vehicle Hire
SALES DIRECTOR: Lisa Spong
FLEET SIZE: 5,689 (September 30, 2020)
FOUNDED: 2004
UK HEADQUARTERS: Loughborough, Leicestershire

Vehicle hire growth will be ‘unprecedented’

Reflex is expecting its fleet size to grow by 10% this year as it experiences record demand from customers amid the Covid-19 pandemic, reports *Jessica Maguire*

The ability to adapt quickly to a flexible new business model and keeping customers central to operations are responsible for much of the success Reflex Vehicle Hire has witnessed amid the coronavirus pandemic. There are 150 orders guaranteed in Reflex’s pipeline that have been placed within its fleet purchasing programme and it has secured a 430-vehicle order from one of the company’s

largest customers who it has worked with for more than a decade. “Some of these orders include vehicles that will be utilised for vital contracts, meeting the bespoke needs of fleets, with vehicles enhanced with thousands of pounds-worth of additional equipment for their specific working environment, including generators and compressors,” says sales director, Lisa Spong. Many of the company’s clients are key workers in

critical industry sectors who have kept operational and are continuing to grow despite the pandemic. Reflex has retained all its customers during the Covid crisis and has also grown its customer base by 19%, from 156 fleets at the beginning of March 2020 to 186 by the end of September. Reflex’s partnerships have allowed the company to replace and buy 49 new fleet vehicles for customers, increasing its fleet size from 5,640 on January 2 to 5,689 on September 30.

It has already exceeded its pre-Covid position and Spong says the company is experiencing “unprecedented demand” from its customers at the moment. Reflex’s fleet is expected to grow by 10% this year (from 5,640 in January to 6,220 by the end of the year). She says: “We’ve got several vehicles that we’re going to commit to. But, mainly, we’re trying to ensure our existing client base get the vehicles they need. If we pick up others along the way, of course, we will supply if we can. “The benefit is that, because we’re rental, companies aren’t committing to buying or contract hire, because now we’re entering another semi-lockdown,” Spong says. She predicts that “growth is going to be astronomical for vehicle hire”, but it’s a matter of being able to get the vehicles. Spong says: “We do have to replace our fleet to keep it relatively fresh. However, to meet demand, we are now keeping vehicles on fleet rather than selling them.” The general replacement cycle for vehicles at Reflex is 36-48 months, with cars between 36-42 months and commercial vehicles ranging from 42-48 months. The vast majority (90%) of its fleet is made up of commercial vehicles. Manufacturers on fleet include, but are not limited to, Ford (53.84%), Mercedes-Benz (26.56%), Peugeot, Renault, Škoda, Seat, Vauxhall, Volkswagen, Isuzu, Mitsubishi, Nissan and Toyota Lexus. When the economy began to recover and people started to return to work, Reflex’s utilisation rates were also higher than they were pre-Coronavirus, reporting 91.5% (September 30) in comparison with 90%, pre-Covid. Its flexible business model favoured Reflex customers and worked to their advantage by easing monetary pressures for businesses that had contracts and works postponed, which allowed customers to nurture their profit margins, while seeing a halt in workload. “We’ve been working with customers during these difficult times, not against them,” says Spong. “Customers have been able to off-hire their vehicles without penalties. As a result, customer retention has remained strong. “Our transparent approach has enabled us to maintain the trusting relationships we have with customers.” Reflex faced a 20% downturn of vehicles, due to customers off-hiring as they didn’t know when they would be returning to business. However, the company used its vehicle tracking service to allow customers experiencing shut-downs to off-hire vehicles, while leaving them in place, ready for their business to restart, helping to minimise disruption and administration for both customers and Reflex at a time when they were short on resource – with most staff members working remotely. “We’ve been pleasantly surprised at our recovery rate,” says Spong. “We did expect it to go on for quite some time, but we were back in July and we forecast to be back to normal in September. We’re reporting above our financial utilisation.” Renowned for its unrelenting focus on improving customer safety, the company’s Ready to Work vehicle process has been altered to meet new

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LISA SPONG, REFLEX VEHICLE HIRE

stringent hygiene measures, and a new Covid committee has been introduced to ensure the safety of customers and staff. Spong says: “With the help of our newly-formed in-house Covid committee, staff undertook vigorous training starting with ensuring every colleague was fully hygiene trained, with hand sanitiser provided throughout the business, backed by strict social distancing measures. “Alongside the hygiene training, designated desk spaces have been created with instalment of Perspex shields. New measures such as temperature checks are conducted for all staff upon entry to the building.” Aside from internal hygiene measures, customers benefited from a contactless delivery service where the vehicle is fully sanitised before the keys are left in a safe place for them to collect. During vehicle collections, Reflex follows a similar process with vehicles left to stand for several days (72 hours) before pick-up. The

company then carries out a full cleaning programme before the vehicle is moved. Role changes within the business are allowing it to develop processes to create more efficient procedures, helping staff and customers have a smoother transition from booking to receiving a vehicle. Spong says: “It is a good time for us to review our processes and procedures and make sure they are in line with our core values of providing the highest levels of first-class service. “Even though we managed very well, we’re now looking at improving our current system, maybe to continue with people from working from home to reduce our carbon footprint.” Reflex has been offering electric vehicles (EVs) since 2016. Spong says it has been actively encouraging customers to make the switch and most of its customers have company cars that are self-charging hybrids, or full hybrids. “If that’s what our customer wants, we’ll invest in that technology. We’ve got the hybrid welfare vehicle, electric vans, electric cars and hybrid cars. We’re trialling all the EVs,” she says. “Our customers are leading the way in adapting their fleets to support the Government’s Road to Zero ambitions. We are working with our business customers to help with this transition by providing an extended range of fuel options for our specialist vehicles, not just standard vans,” says Spong. Reflex’s focus on customer safety and investment in customer service helped it secure the Fleet News Supplier of the Year Award. Spong says: “After receiving the title of ‘Supplier of the Year’, we will continue to deliver world-class service for not only being the safest rental company, but the best rental company. “The award is a prestigious title, but one we are not shy of living up to. This is our focus for 2021.”



Oliver Waring, managing director, and Lisa Spong, sales director, Reflex Vehicle Hire, hold the award they collected from Christopher Macgowan OBE, chairman of the judging panel while event host Steph McGovern looks on

FLEET SUPPLIER OF THE YEAR WINNER: REFLEX VEHICLE HIRE

JUDGES’ COMMENTS:
Safety is built into every aspect of Reflex’s business products and services, which was a clear differentiator in this category. Reflex was a frontrunner in several other awards categories, proving just how strong it is as an outstanding all-round fleet supplier.