



Picture above: Volker Zweig positions the vehicle for the perfect photo on the given guide lines in the CarCutter app.

Do you want to know how exactly the app works? You can find a video course on this at AUTOHAUS next at: <https://next.autohaus.de/ecampus/78917>

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CARCUTTER AND AHG

23 minutes faster per vehicle

The AHG GROUP in Horb and the Graz-based company CarCutter have developed an app that greatly simplifies vehicle photography. At AUTOHAUS next, both partners reveal how the photo app can also help other car dealerships to generate more clicks on the GW exchanges and save time on photography.

by Nina Lipp

Zevery entrepreneur. The AHG GROUP has been at the driving vehicle photography has recognized great potential. Professional photos for used car exchanges are essential for the click and sales rate, but are often associated with time-consuming processes: full camera memory cards, tedious sorting of photos, error-prone assignments.

Finding the right vehicles and tedious uploading of images. "Despite a good digital camera, the photos always looked different - different lighting conditions, disruptive backgrounds, unequal perspectives and so on," says Tobias Brendel, Chief Digital Officer of the AHG GROUP. In order to avoid this time wasting, Tobias Brendel looked for a partner with whom he could be a partner last year

found a simpler and more practical solution to the problems in vehicle photography. An exciting cooperation began with the Graz-based company CarCutter, which specializes primarily in the extraction of vehicle photos using AI (artificial intelligence).

From the idea to implementation

In June 2019, CarCutter and the AHGGRUPPE put their heads together for the first time. The plan was to develop an app with which the vehicle can be identified and a uniform vehicle photo can be ensured. In addition, the app should be able to upload the images directly into the customer system or their photo distribution system, which should save an enormous amount of time. The first test version of the app was completed just two months later in November 2019 for other problems such as "different vehicle views and perspectives, poor lighting conditions, and sorting photos". The prototype was immediately tested on site by the AHG salespeople, the first weak points were identified and reported immediately. Stefan Fedl, founder and CEO of Car-Cutter, found the fast live testing and customer feedback very valuable: "We found the app idea exciting right from the start, because it gives us the opportunity to develop a product directly for the customer, which we rarely have a chance to do, especially in the size of AHG. We were always in communication with sellers and users. In this way we found out exactly what the market or the customer needs and developed the app directly 'for the customer' ". There was feedback almost every day



Stefan Fedl, founder and CEO of CarCutter, and Tobias Brendel, Chief Digital Officer AHGGRUPPE

and correction loops. After the app became more stable, the next logical step was to roll it out to other locations. The app is now in use at all 40 retail group locations. From the beginning, even in the first test phase, a large part of the communication ran directly through the internal developer and coordinator of the car dealership, Andreas Povoden, and the developers at CarCutter. A colleague as a permanent contact person on site was very beneficial for both parties. The 700 km distance between Graz and Horb near Stuttgart was therefore not a problem for the test phase.

To learn from mistakes

During this test phase, of course, there were also hurdles, Brendel admits: "The research into 'the right smartphone

ne 'degenerated very quickly. In the end we experimented with over 20 smartphones, because it should of course deliver the necessary image quality and computing power, but at the same time be affordable even for large quantities an inexpensive yet powerful device was found for less than 250 euros net, which is now used in all branches of the AHG GROUP. The app itself should work on all devices from the last two years, regardless of whether it is Apple or Android. In addition to problems with the device selection, Internet and proxy connections as well as the image transfer directly to the AHG system (intranet) were more difficult than expected. But that has also paid off, as the automatic photo upload to the AHG intranet means that the

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The main part of the time savings could be achieved. In the video module on AUTOHAUS next, Tobias Brendel explains detailed background information.

CarCutter in action - this is how it works

In the second best practice video, Volker Zweig, seller of used automobiles, AHG Autohandelsgesellschaft, shows how the app works in Aktion exactly: "In the first step, the VIN is scanned with the app and added to the order list in the background. Then the camera mode of the smartphone opens immediately and you can start taking photos. "While the user is guided step by step through the various views, blue guide lines appear on which the vehicle should be aligned. Only when the vehicle is correctly positioned in the auxiliary line frame does the auxiliary line change from blue to green and the camera allows the shutter to be released. This playfully and automatically enforces a uniform shooting of the pictures, regardless of whether trained or untrained users take the trigger.

In order to make the presentation of the vehicles even more uniform, the vehicle is automatically released by means of artificial intelligence when the images are uploaded and inserted into a virtual showroom. "The cut-out function is super practical, because it allows us to take the vehicle photos directly on the used car space and no longer have to drive to a photo space with no vehicles in the background. That saves us valuable working time with every car," reports Zweig. After the test photos for the

Video shoot were recorded, Volker Zweig AUTOHAUS next showed the finished result in the system. Only a few minutes later, the correctly assigned images that had been automatically uploaded via WLAN were visible on the AHG intranet. "I usually still check the images, but then immediately release them for the Internet and the used car marketplace. I now only need a fraction of the time for the entire process," says Zweig. To be precise, according to the AHG, an average of five minutes per vehicle remain for vehicle photography, which used to be 28 minutes - the duration has been reduced to less than a fifth compared to before. "The bottom line is that the whole thing brings us enormous cost savings. The time saved alone saves us more than 600,000 euros in process costs each year",

At the same time, the photo quality has been significantly increased and standardized, which is ultimately also reflected in the number of clicks on the AHG website and in the vehicle exchanges.

Integration with other dealers

It was already clear at the beginning of the project that the programming effort was too great for a single trading group. The CarCutter app should not only professionalize vehicle photography at AHG, but also give all car dealers an easy way to not only speed up their photography, but also to standardize and professionalise it. For this purpose, Fedl offers a subscription model that has been used since the recording of the au-

tohaus next videos even simplified: "Many retailers have complained that the offer is too complicated and they don't want to pay per app device or per user. So we reacted and are now offering around two euros for up to 15 images, five of which are exempted. The app is included in unlimited amounts. "The set-up fee of 99 euros has also been adjusted to the market to 199 euros, as the range of services has been greatly expanded:" We now not only create the background and logo individually for each retailer, but also also check all images in the test phase. It is not uncommon for us to train dealers how better photos can be taken or where we can see clear problems and need for improvement. This is the only way for dealers to get the most out of our service and app," says Fedl. For a 100 percent error-free high-end result, retailers can book an additional premium package in which every picture will be checked by hand in the future as well. Despite a manual check, the images immediately end up in the dealer system and are replaced fully automatically if something has been corrected (max. 24 hours, express 5 hours). "The retailer doesn't even notice the exchange and has nothing to do with the pictures even after they have been photographed. A 90 percent image is automatically replaced with 100 percent quality," says Fedl, proud of his "fire and forget "approach. If something has been corrected (max. 24h, express 5h). "The dealer does not even notice the exchange and has nothing to do with the pictures after the photo is taken. A 90 percent image is automatically replaced with 100 percent quality," says Fedl, proud of his "fire and forget "approach. If something has been corrected (max. 24h, express 5h). "The retailer doesn't even notice the exchange and has nothing to do with the pictures even after they have been photographed. A 90 percent image is automatically replaced with 100 percent quality," says Fedl, proud of his "fire and forget "approach.

For iOS and Android

The app is now available for iOS and Android and is currently being supported by CarCutter support for each individual customer. In addition to the aforementioned background adjustment and image control, support is also required to coordinate the interface for image upload with the retailer's IT manager. This is the only way to achieve maximum time savings with the app, as the images are loaded directly into the customer system / distribution system or the respective vehicle exchanges.

In addition to the AHG GROUP, other large dealer groups and automobile manufacturers are among the (test) customers of CarCutter in Germany. The most prestigious customer is currently the American wholesaler "AutoNation Inc." with sales of over 21 billion in 2019.

