



Electric vehicles on the rise

Why new-car sales and aftersales are set for a radical transformation – and what automakers and dealers can do now



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In brief

The electric revolution is upon us. Our research suggests that battery electric vehicles (BEVs) will account for about 16 percent of European new-car sales by 2025. By 2030, their sales share could increase to almost 50 percent annually. At this rate of adoption, Europe is clearly outpacing the global average, which is set to grow from 12 to 25 percent in the same timeframe.¹

For traditional automakers, adapting to this new era requires more than just manufacturing an increasing number of BEV models. The BEV revolution also calls for a revolution in sales and aftersales – car manufacturers must rethink how new vehicles should best be sold in an increasingly digitalized world and how the aftersales business can adapt. In this report, we take a look into the future.

First, we look at the all-electric disruptor, Tesla, to paint a picture of how new-car sales can be made both more efficient and more effective, with lower costs, and with a radical focus on speed and simplicity. Then, we change the focus to the undisputed leader in BEV sales, Norway, to assess the implications that the growth in BEV volume will have on aftersales profitability.

While we challenge the applicability of Tesla's approach as a template for the sales transformation of traditional automakers, much can be learned from its careful integration and orchestration of online and offline channels.

This can accelerate sales for customers and help reduce costs per sale: for each new car sold, Tesla's salespeople spend, on average, five hours less on administrative and customer-facing activities than their peers at traditional automakers, which translates into 1.6x lower costs per car sold. But this efficiency comes at the cost of providing a "traditional" car-buying experience (especially in areas like test drives and vehicle handover).

Looking at Norway, we find compelling evidence for a potentially massive 50 to 60 percent decline in aftersales profits, which is driven by declining revenues in labor, spare parts and accessories. But we also unveil proven strategies from Norwegian dealers that help reduce this decline to just 10 to 30 percent: harnessing customer loyalty, increasing workshop efficiency and improving the pricing strategy.

Taking inspiration from Tesla and from what is working in Norway, this report sets out a number of key lessons and strategic actions that traditional automakers and their dealers can take to improve and protect their sales and aftersales business.

Figure 1: Observations from our new-car sales and aftersales benchmarks

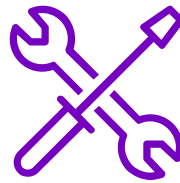
Learning from Tesla means

Learning from Norway means



33%

higher lead-to-order conversion in certain markets



~99%

less moving parts in the engine



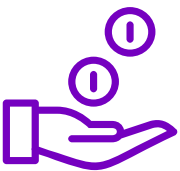
~5h

less time invested per car sold



Up to 60%

lower aftersales profits if no countermeasures are taken



1.6x

lower costs per car sold



Up to 40%

recovery of aftersales profits possible

Methodology

This report looks at two different showcases to make predictions and draw recommendations of how new-car sales and aftersales can and must change.

As a benchmark for efficient new-car sales, we compare Tesla's new-car sales journeys and cost of sales structure against a selection of traditional automakers. To do so, we conducted extensive mystery shopping at Tesla showrooms across Europe, interviewed former employees of the company, and performed an in-depth analysis of publicly available information. In addition, we worked with several traditional automakers² and surveyed hundreds of their dealers across their core European markets.

For the aftersales part of this study, we examined the development of the aftersales business in Norway – a market that is leading in BEV adoption and can thus provide insight into what the future may hold for the rest of Europe.

Our analysis entailed working closely with a large Norwegian importer group and several dealers to examine the development of their sales, car-park structure, workshop visits, revenue pools, and profits.

Drawing from both Tesla and Norway, we derive sound conclusions that can help to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the BEV sales business and to project how different strategies can be deployed to protect aftersales profitability.

Classification of electric vehicles

Electric vehicles (EVs) use electric motors for propulsion, either on their own, with a fuel-cell, or as a hybrid in conjunction with a traditional internal combustion engine (ICE):

1. Battery electric vehicles (BEVs)

are exclusively propelled by an externally chargeable electric motor with no secondary source of propulsion.

2. Plug-in hybrid electric vehicles (PHEVs)

use a combination of an externally chargeable electric motor plus an ICE for propulsion.

3. Hybrid electric vehicles (HEVs)

use a combination of electric motor plus an ICE for propulsion.

4. Fuel-cell electric vehicles (FCEVs)

use hydrogen fuel-cells to power the electric motor which provides propulsion.

The electric revolution is here



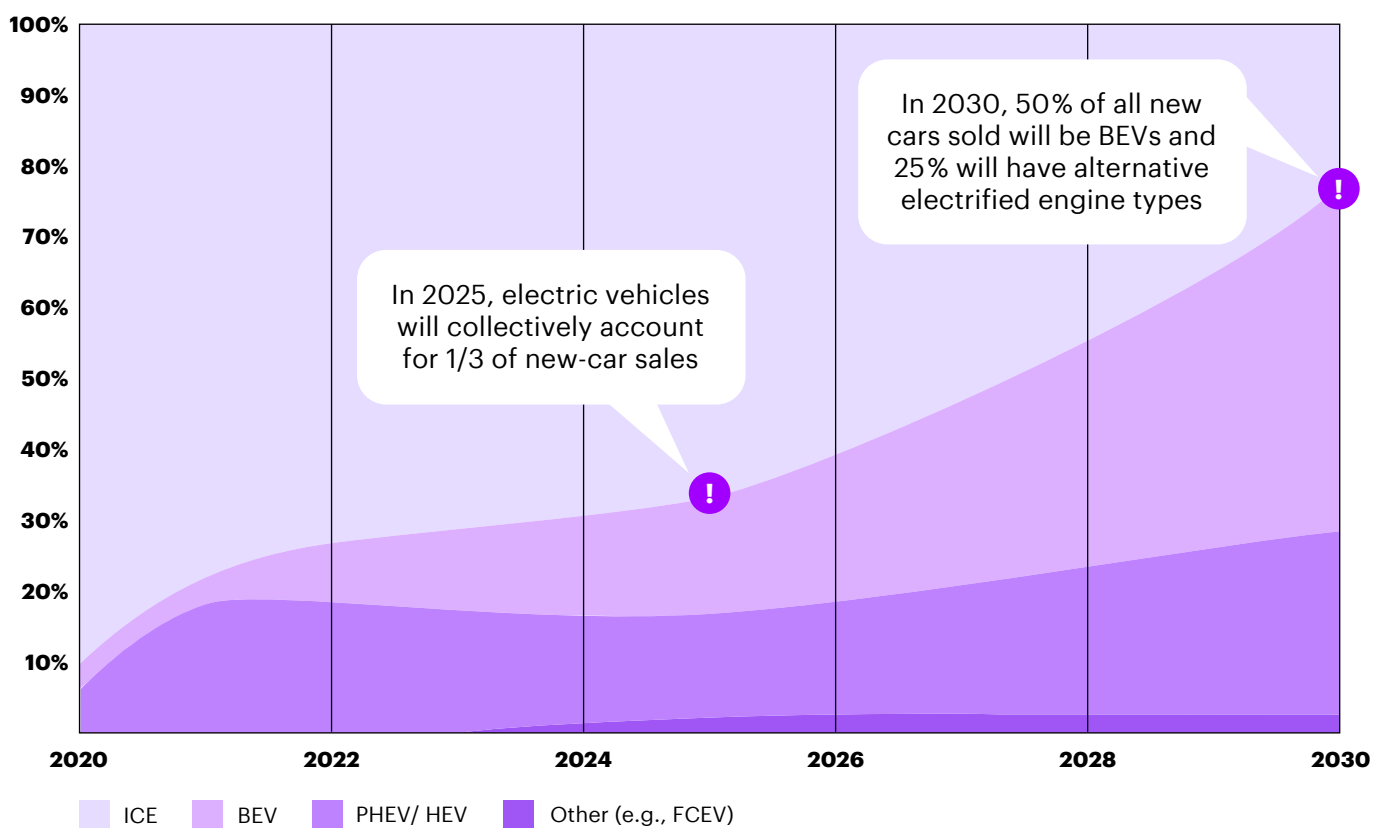
The global automotive industry is going through a period of tremendous disruption. And it is not just being driven by EVs. In fact, multiple technological and societal megatrends are converging – e-mobility, sustainability, and customer experience are becoming the omnipresent pillars of the industry’s future and promise to completely overturn decades of conventional wisdom about automotive business models.

However, electrification and digitalization are clearly central drivers of this industry revolution. And as the technology continues its rapid ascent, more and more automakers are pivoting their product portfolios towards hybrid and electric vehicles. Porsche, for example, is aiming for more than 80 percent of new-car sales to be fully electric by 2030.³ Stellantis has set an even more ambitious target of having 100 percent of its sales from BEVs in Europe by the same year.⁴

Indeed, virtually all automakers have communicated a clear intention to electrify their product portfolios between 2030-2040. While Toyota plans to offer 70 electric vehicle models as part of their fleet by 2025⁵, Mercedes-Benz’s fleet will follow into CO₂ neutrality by 2039, and customers will already be able to choose an all-electric alternative for every model from 2025 onwards.⁶ Similarly, Volkswagen Group aims to reach zero-emission in 2040 across major markets, with a growing share of BEVs as key contributor, accounting for 50% of new-car sales by 2030.⁷

50% of all new cars sold in Europe in 2030 will be BEVs.

Figure 2: New-car sales forecast for Europe (EU27+EFTA+UK), 2020-2030⁸



Europe is one of the key growth regions for EVs. Our research suggests that battery electric vehicles (BEVs) will account for about 16 percent of European new-car sales by 2025 (see Figure 2). That, however, is when we expect EV sales to really take off. By 2030, BEV sales could account for up to 50 percent – we see this development being driven by three key factors:

1. Regulatory

Both the EU and European national governments continue to impose ever stricter CO₂ emission standards for ICEs. Indeed, the EU wants to reduce the CO₂ emissions of new cars sold by 100 percent by 2035 as part of its plans to make Europe the first automotive emission-free continent by 2050. Some national governments are moving even faster.

2. Price subsidization

To meet their climate and sustainability ambitions, European governments are implementing comprehensive EV subsidy programs for consumers. In Germany, for instance, buyers can get a subsidy of up to €6,000 from the government with an additional €3,000 from the automaker on a BEV with a list price below €40,000 – representing almost a quarter of the total cost.

3. Competition

Traditional automakers face a host of new competitors with a completely different, entirely BEV-focused business strategy. These market entrants, including brands such as Tesla, NIO, or Polestar, are starting to eat into market share. Tesla, for instance, sold almost 936,000 EVs globally in 2021.

As the market undergoes this profound shift from internal combustion to battery power, automotive sales and aftersales are going through an equally radical transformation. The combination of digitalization and electrification requires significant changes to the way new cars are sold and serviced. In this report, we shine a spotlight on both.

In the first part, we investigate the question of how new-car sales must change in a digitalized and electrified future. To find answers, we look at Tesla – one of the largest and most successful all-electric newcomers in the automotive industry. Compared to traditional automakers, Tesla has an inherent advantage, since it was able to build “greenfield” customer experiences and sales systems from scratch, unencumbered by legacy structures and processes. Against this background, we conducted extensive research comparing Tesla’s approach to new-car sales with that of existing automakers. Based on mystery shopping, dealer surveys and interviews with former employees, our report provides a series of recommendations on how automakers can transform the BEV sales journey while keeping it cost effective.

In the second part of this report, we examine the key question of how automakers and dealers’ aftersales and service business will be impacted by the rising number of BEVs. For this, we look at Norway – a market that is leading the electrification revolution with a ban of new ICE sales set to begin in 2025. We conducted extensive research examining the recent development of the aftersales market in Norway and forecasted its future evolution. Working closely with a large Norwegian importer group and several dealers, we were able to extrapolate how the pivot to EVs will change the nature and profitability of the aftersales business. And we propose a number of strategic recommendations for traditional automakers and dealers as they look to adapt.



Spotlight on new-car sales

How Tesla is setting the new gold standard for cost, time, and customer experience



Tesla’s approach to the customer sales journey is very different from the one traditionally taken by automakers. At nearly every step, Tesla has designed a streamlined experience focused on buyers’ core needs, with an end result that combines speed and simplicity with a reduced workload for salespeople.

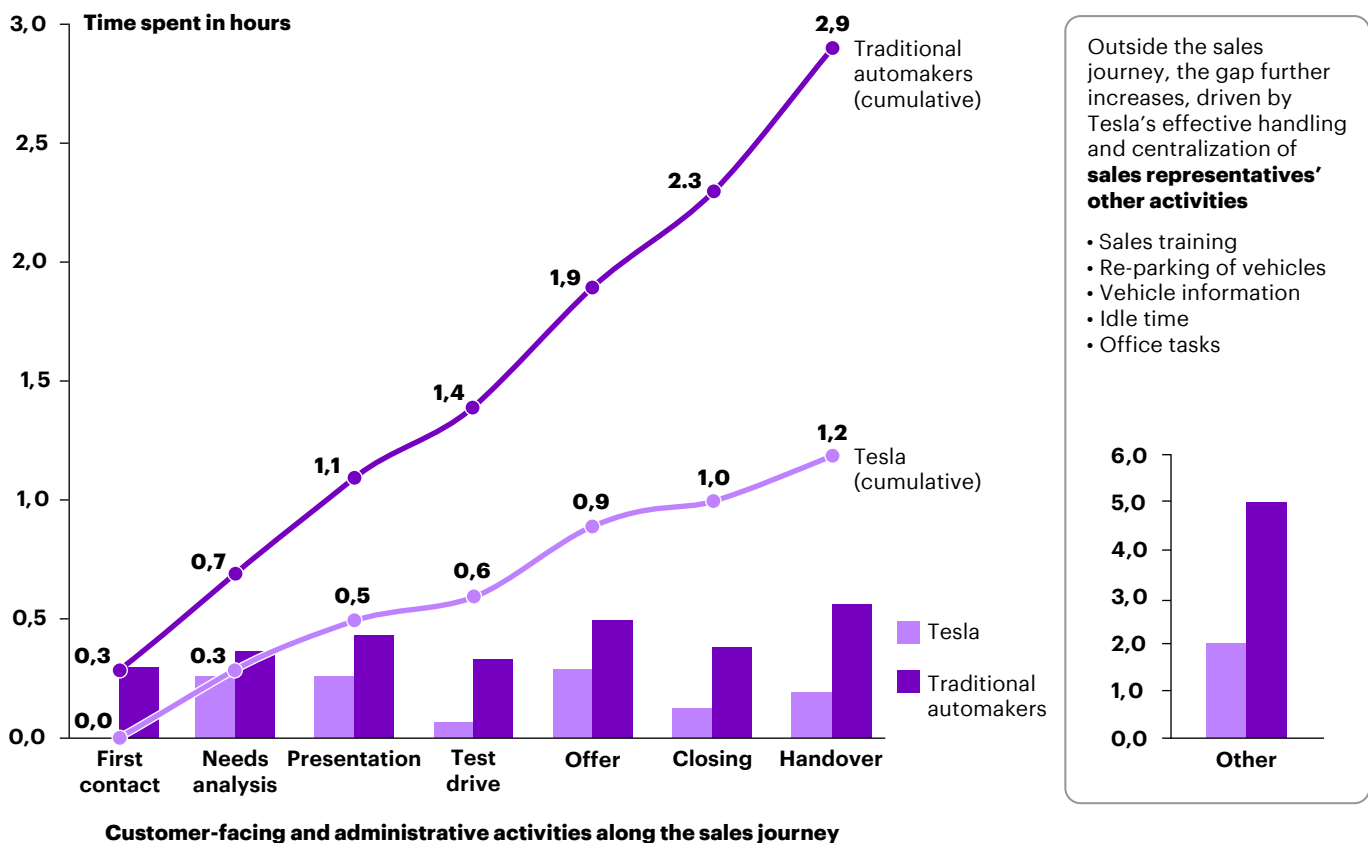
In Figure 3, we show how this compares with a typical sales journey in the automotive industry, from first contact to final handover.

What is particularly striking is that, for each sale, Tesla representatives spend only around three hours on customer-facing and administrative tasks such as advising on products and managing customer data. That is about five hours less than salespeople at traditional automakers. Much of this difference is down to the simplicity of Tesla’s product offering. But it also reflects the strong centralization of sales processes and systems and a high degree of self-service that the company expects from its customers throughout the sales journey.

The lower sales effort does not appear to adversely affect conversions, however. In fact, Tesla’s conversion rate from first contact to test drive and from test drive to contract closing is significantly higher than its traditional automaking competitors. At Tesla, one in three leads eventually buys a car. At traditional automakers, we have observed conversion rates as low as one-in-ten.

The customer journey at Tesla is 5 hours faster than at traditional automakers.

Figure 3: Tesla vs. traditional automakers across a typical B2C sales journey⁹



Outside the sales journey, the gap further increases, driven by Tesla’s effective handling and centralization of **sales representatives’ other activities**

- Sales training
- Re-parking of vehicles
- Vehicle information
- Idle time
- Office tasks

But what are the underlying reasons for this difference, what does Tesla do differently? At the beginning of the sales journey, from first contact to test drive, Tesla's innovative approach is most evident in the fact that Tesla spends zero time on first-contact activities. Instead, Tesla's customers can register and book an appointment for a vehicle presentation and/or test drive entirely by themselves online within five minutes. In addition, Tesla benefits from having a very limited range and many fewer customization options, with a simple online configurator which minimizes the need for explanation by Tesla representatives. Another advantage of Tesla is its online booking system which allows adequate planning for unaccompanied and longer than average test drives. This all results in a much lower time commitment for Tesla salespeople, with an average of just four minutes (vs. 20 minutes at traditional automakers).

Tesla turns **1 in 3** qualified leads into a purchase.

Even in subsequent phases, Tesla's sales journey is simpler and faster: Tesla's direct-to-consumer and zero-discount strategy allows for total price and discount control, entirely eliminating time spent on price negotiations. In terms of closing, a Tesla sale is closed either with a representative in a showroom or by the customer themselves online. Customers only need to provide a small number of documents that they can upload without ever speaking to a salesperson. To further minimize the time spent by salespeople, Tesla has centralized activities such as logistics, distribution, and invoicing. All of this results in Tesla salespeople being able to close the deal in as little as five to 10 minutes, compared to up to 25 minutes for traditional automakers.

Additionally, Tesla's whole approach to handover is strikingly different from that of traditional automakers. To minimize effort and maximize efficiency, handovers take place in regional delivery centers, mostly in rural locations, and are organized for customers in groups, instead of providing individual appointments. Customers also receive digital product information beforehand, which fully replaces the need for in-person consultation.

This innovative approach means Tesla vehicle handovers only last between five and 10 minutes, whereas traditional automakers typically need more than 30 minutes for customer-facing and administrative tasks.

And lastly, Tesla benefits from outsourcing and centralizing activities like financial management, human resources, and CRM as well as stock allocation and logistics. This results in lean processes that allow Tesla sales reps to focus on the customer experience.

Although Tesla has a focus on speed and simplicity, its sales journey also emphasizes customer needs. This includes a seamless integration between online and offline channels, with Tesla's online configurator being one of its clear strengths. It does, however, ask the customer to do a lot more themselves than traditional automotive sales experiences.

Time will ultimately tell whether this focus on streamlined self-service leads to higher customer satisfaction and loyalty. It may well, given that Tesla primarily addresses a young and enthusiastic generation of customers, who are less skeptical about digital sales journeys and value speed and simplicity. However, many customers are also raising concerns that time saved during key moments disrupt the sales experience. Group handovers, often in rural areas, as well as inaccurate or inadequate valuations of trade-in vehicles are two frequently echoed examples.

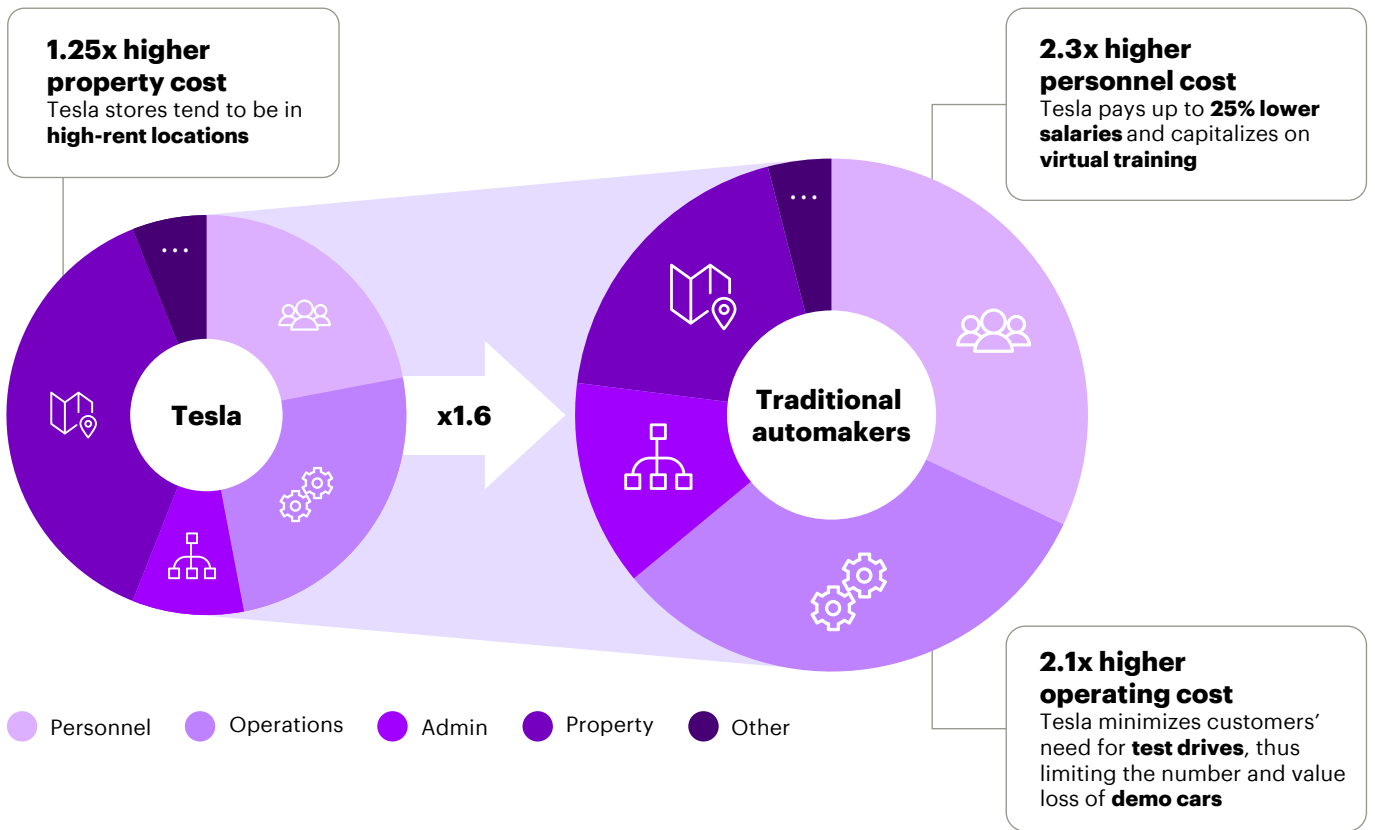
A highly digitalized and self-service-heavy process enables Tesla to close sales in just **5 minutes**.

Our analysis finds that Tesla's lean new-car sales journey positively impacts cost of sales. The absolute costs incurred per vehicle sold by dealers of traditional automakers are approximately 1.6 times higher than for Tesla showrooms (see Figure 4).

There are several reasons for this:

- The high demand for its vehicles allows Tesla to apply a zero-discount strategy, whereas traditional automakers invest about 12 percent of the initial list price in discounts. This may change as EV competition intensifies, but Tesla's direct-to-consumer model at least rules out any intra-brand competition between showrooms.

Figure 4: Cost of sales comparison (Tesla vs. traditional automakers)⁹



- Tesla has lower operating costs: 0.9 percent of the final transaction price, whereas traditional automakers spend roughly 3.2 percent. The difference is largely down to Tesla’s centralized logistics, accurate demand forecasts, and low stock volumes in delivery centers and showrooms.
- Tesla spends just 0.9 percent per sale on personnel costs, compared to 3.1 percent at traditional automakers. Specifically, Tesla pays its salespeople a lower salary than the competition due to the leaner nature of the role in its showrooms. Salaries range between €43,000 to €51,500 per annum versus €52,400 to €55,500 for traditional automakers.

Tesla does, however, spend significantly more on property costs. This is because its showrooms are in high-rent city-center locations (although the automaker is now expanding to smaller cities and less-frequented locations). Moreover, compared to traditional automakers, Tesla’s footprint is still minimal. Across Europe, Tesla’s showroom network now includes approximately 150 locations, with a strong presence in Germany and the UK. Volkswagen, in contrast, has over 800 passenger car dealerships, and Mercedes-Benz has more than 500, across the same region.

Compared to Tesla, traditional automakers’ cost of sales are **1.6x higher.**

As a result, Tesla’s average sales at each location are higher: between 620 and 950 vehicles per location per year compared to 420 to 506 for traditional automakers. This combines with Tesla’s core audience’s high willingness to pay, which lets Tesla charge an additional premium compared to the majority of traditional automakers. In combination, this allows Tesla to generate superior margins per car sold.

How should traditional automakers respond?

What lessons can other automakers take from Tesla's approach? Accenture's view is that there are five key actions that they can consider immediately.

1. Digitalize the point of sale (up to 35 minutes saving potential)

Equip showrooms with digital displays to present the most relevant vehicle information – including prices, fuel consumption, and emissions – to customers. Digital infrastructure and interfaces significantly reduce the time needed to update vehicle information.

2. Simplify vehicle configurators (up to 70 minutes saving potential)

Look to radically streamline car configuration and make this process independent of sales channels. Enable customers to configure their preferred car with minimal time and support – ideally in less than ten clicks.

3. Consider an ambassador program and rethink returns (up to 110 minutes saving potential)

Establish an online platform to connect potential customers with enthusiastic owners (“ambassadors”) who will drive conversion by reducing the need for traditional test drives. Additional trust can be built by allowing customers to return their new vehicles within the first weeks of ownership if they are not totally satisfied (subject to damage and/or mileage limitations).

4. Allow customers to educate themselves (up to 15 minutes saving potential)

Use digital channels to provide potential customers with the tools and content they need to fully understand the vehicle, thus reducing the effort of salespeople in product presentation and handover. This might include, for example, introduction videos tailored to specific vehicles.

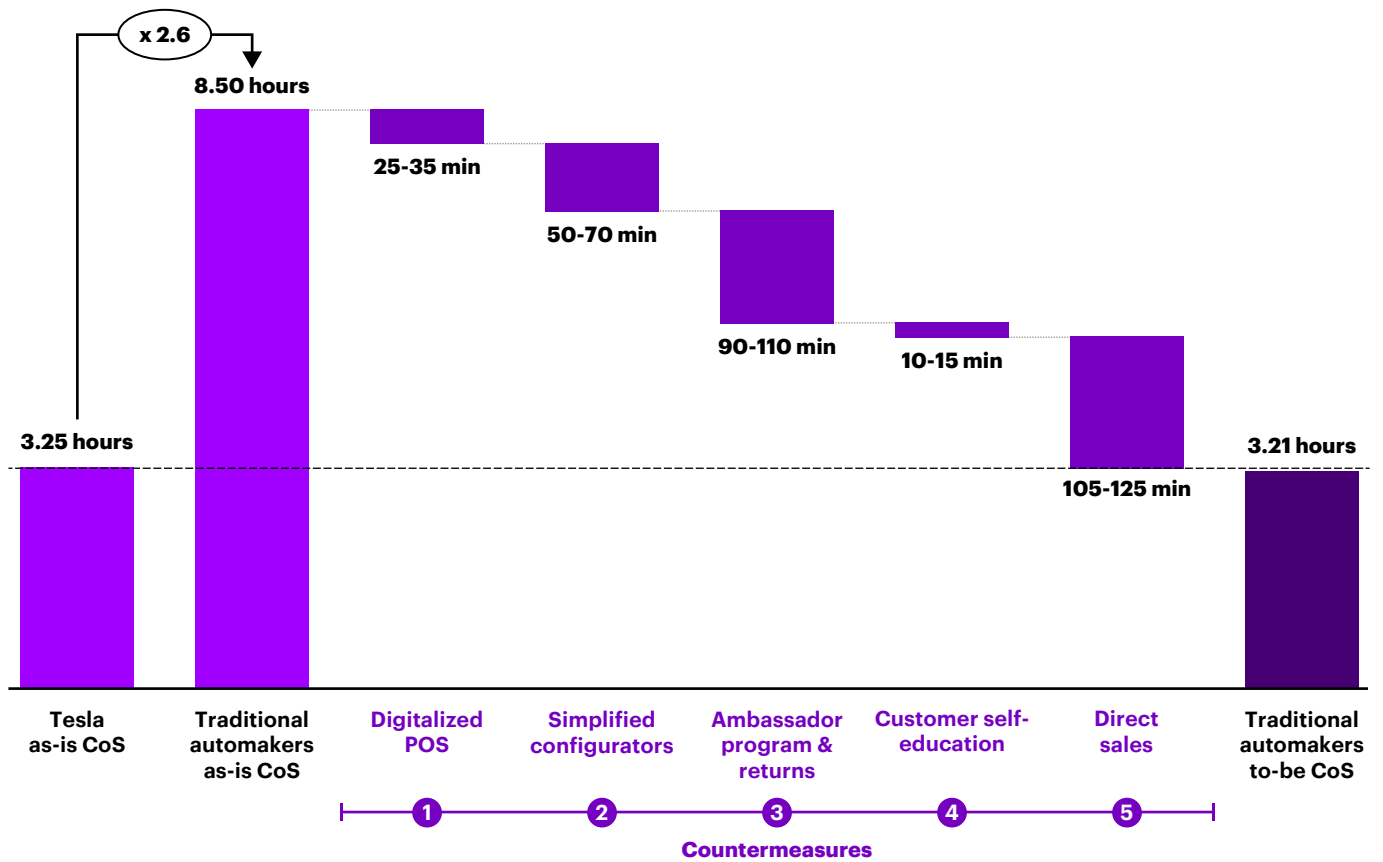
5. Look to direct sales as the sales model of the future (up to 125 minutes saving potential)

Shift to direct sales (together with the retail network) by introducing an agency model. Enable seamless online and offline experiences based on valuable customer insights, realize cost synergies from the centralization of administrative activities, and eliminate intra-brand competition through central price steering.

These actions can deliver significant time and cost of sales savings for traditional automakers. However, this improved efficiency and effectiveness should not come at the cost of traditional automakers' core strengths, especially in customer advisory and brand experience.



Figure 5: Countermeasures to close the cost of sales gap⁹



Spotlight on aftersales and service

How BEV adoption impacts dealer profits – a case study from Norway



Automotive aftersales and service is set for a radical transformation. Given the electrification of the European automotive market, traditional automakers and their workshops are facing a key question: How to secure the profitability of servicing and repairs?

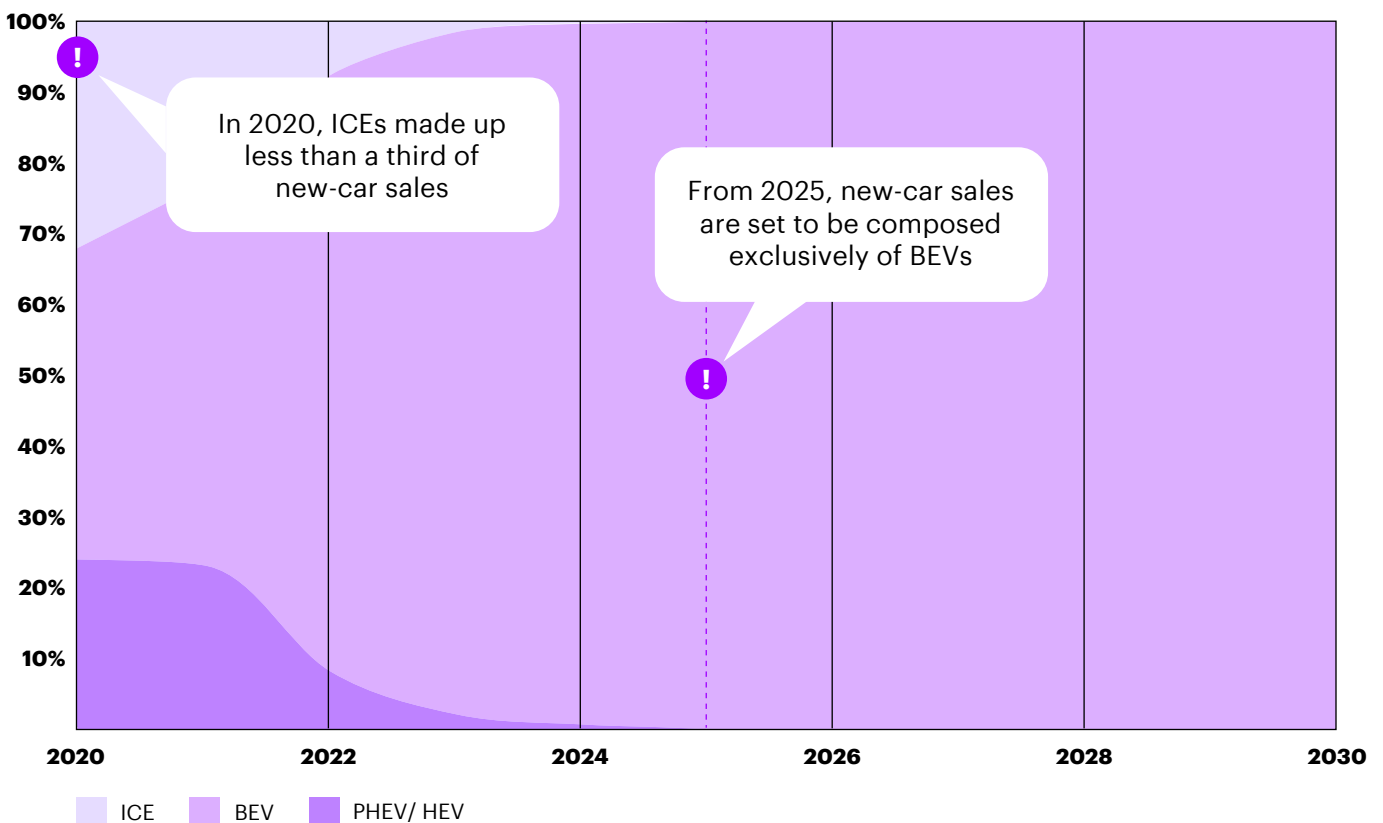
Markets in which EV adoption is already more advanced offer a look into the future. Norway, for example, is considerably ahead of other European countries in the electric revolution and holds valuable lessons for automakers and dealers.

By comparison, in 2020, Norway had outpaced the average BEV adoption of other European countries by a factor of 10. In that year, almost every other newly sold car in the Norwegian market was a BEV (Figure 6). For the EU27, EFTA, and the United Kingdom, we can see that the share of EV sales increases between 2020 and 2030, albeit more slowly than in Norway, reaching roughly half of total new-car sales by the end of the decade.

However, pressure to accelerate EV adoption in Europe may grow in the coming years. To meet emissions targets set by the Paris Climate Accords and the EU's Green New Deal, institutions such as the International Energy Agency predict that EV sales need to reach almost 80 percent of total new-car sales by 2030.

80% of all cars sold in Europe would need to be BEVs by 2030 to meet the goals of the Paris Climate Accords.

Figure 6: New-car sales forecast for Norway, 2020-2030¹⁰



Even if the shift to EVs may still seem comparatively small, it will without a doubt place fundamentally different demands on the aftersales and service business models of traditional automakers and dealers. A key reason for this is that EVs require many fewer spare parts than ICE vehicles. There are approximately 2,000 moving parts in a typical ICE. An EV engine has about 20. This huge reduction in parts will significantly reduce the need for maintenance and impact the sale of spares. And while EVs are undoubtedly more dependent on critical software updates and upgrades, the overall effect is to reduce the need to visit the workshop over the course of a vehicle's lifetime.

The warning lights are flashing for aftersales and service profitability. To quantify the impact on revenues and profitability, we carried out a detailed comparison of the forecast for ICE vehicles and BEVs.

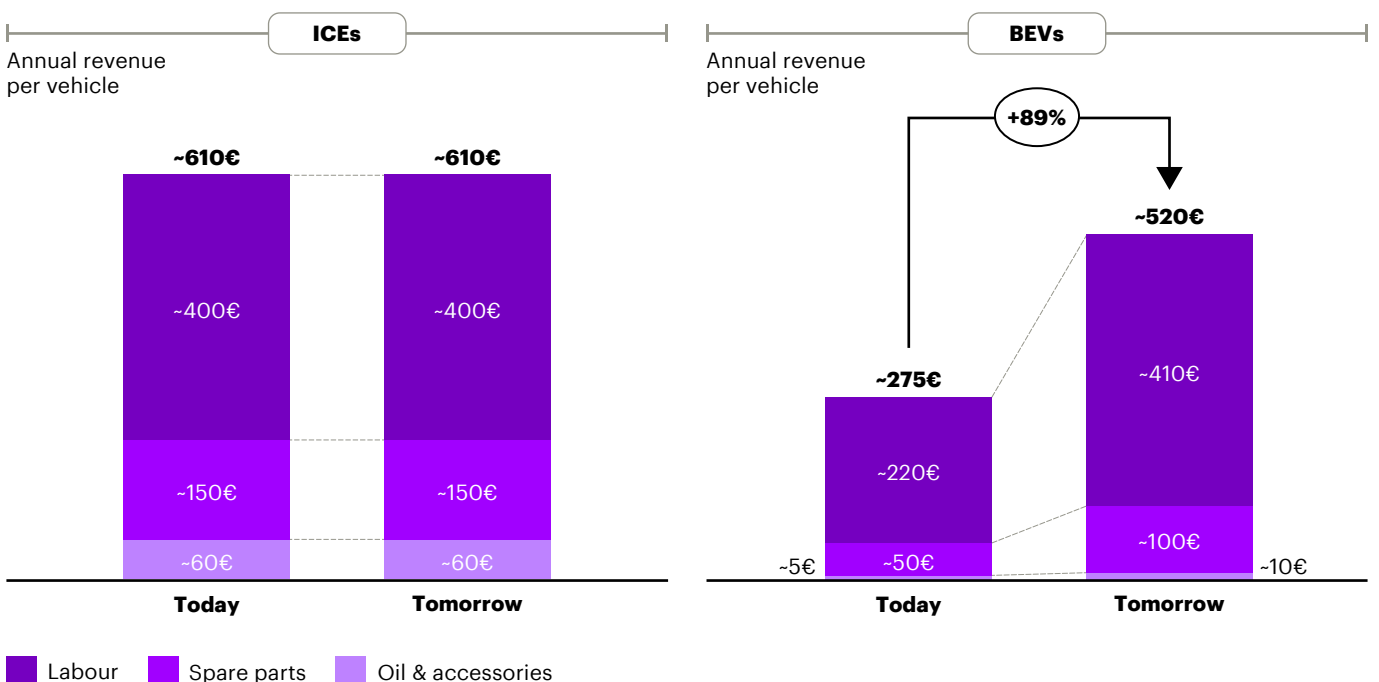
89% increase in annual revenues for customer-paid business per BEV expected within the next few years.

This focused on the two main components of the aftersales and service business, which together account for the majority of revenues:

- **Customer-paid business**, which includes workshop visits for unforeseen repairs and regular maintenance appointments that customers usually pay for themselves.
- **Warranty services**, which include repairs and replacements of parts specified in the warranty agreement within a predefined period. These repair services are typically provided free of charge to the customer, and the manufacturer reimburses the service-provider through contractual warranty agreements.

Our analysis suggests that in the customer-paid business, revenues and profitability per vehicle for ICEs will remain relatively consistent in the future – with approximately €610 revenue per vehicle per year on average (see Figure 7). For BEVs, however, it's a different story. Today, the annual revenue per BEV is approximately €275, but this increases to €520 in the next few years (a huge 89 percent rise). Aftersales and service margins are therefore expected to remain stable for ICEs but increase considerably for BEVs. The main driver of this is the increasing share of older BEVs in the market over this period (and thus a greater need for workshop visits). Despite this growth, both revenue and profit margin per vehicle are expected to remain lower than the equivalents for ICE vehicles.

Figure 7: Customer-paid business – comparison of ICEs and BEVs⁹



The future decline of the oil and accessories revenue pool is also evident in these results. Whereas ICEs generate approximately €60 per vehicle per year, each BEV will bring in only €10. As BEV numbers grow, revenues and profits will gradually decline in this area.

Interestingly, our research suggests that BEVs generate significantly higher warranty revenues per car today than ICE vehicles (€970 versus €530, see Figure 8). This is due to the more complex nature (and higher error rate) of newly launched BEV models, as well as the high prices of batteries and connectivity components.

However, while warranty service revenues for ICE vehicles are expected to remain stable in the upcoming years, BEV-related revenues will dramatically decrease over this period by approximately 39 percent. At the same time, profit margins currently realized through the repetitive handling of error-prone technology in newly launched models will disappear.

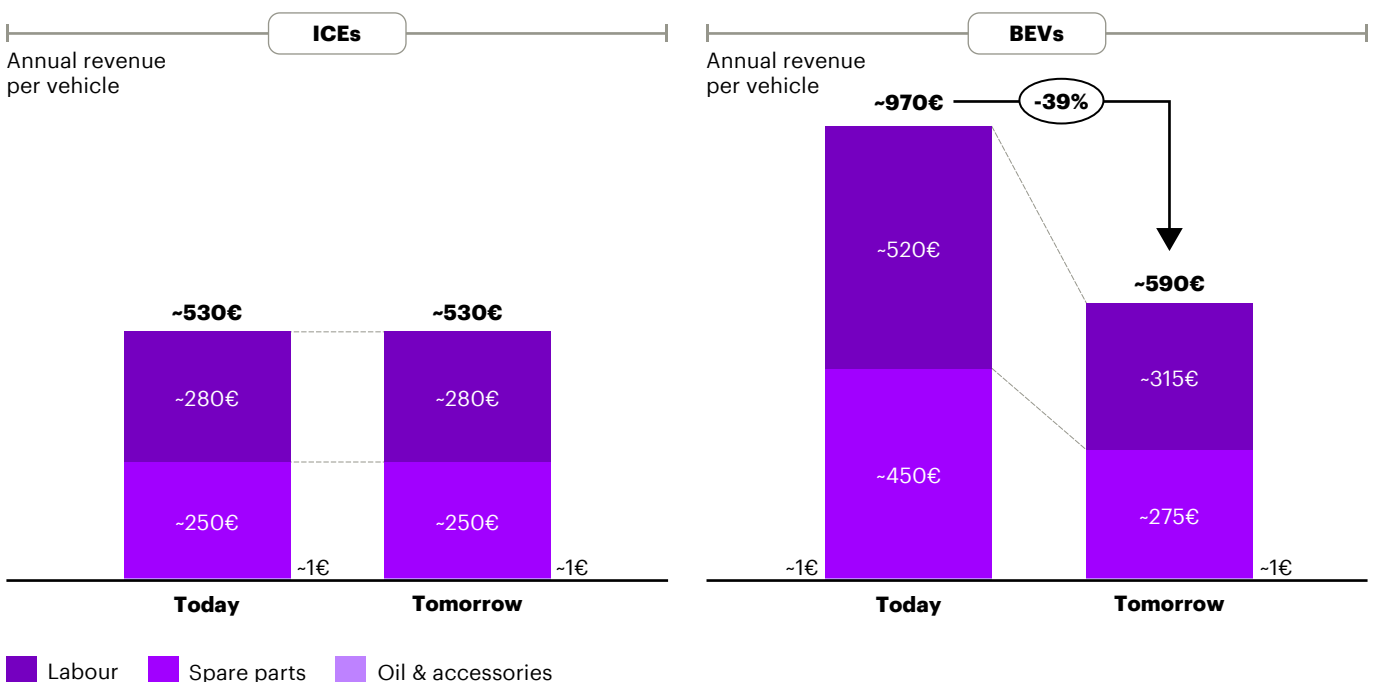
Traditionally, margins associated with warranty service cases are small or non-existent, as is evident in the ICE business today. So, while the automaker will reimburse a dealer’s labor and parts costs, the dealer does not turn a meaningful profit.

Where does this leave traditional automakers and dealers? Simply put, without countermeasures, aftersales and service profitability could decline dramatically as BEVs become an ever-greater part of new-car sales. In fact, our research suggests the worst-case scenario could see annual profit decline by as much as 50 to 60 percent (see Figure 9). This is mostly driven by reduced demand for spare parts, oil, and accessories. The strong decline of oil sales alone accounts for six to nine percent of the expected profit decrease.

Our observations from Norway suggest that alternative profit pools in the aftersales and service business for EVs are limited. Some have suggested that the greater weight and torque of EVs may require tires to be replaced more frequently, or that the complex encasing of high-voltage batteries may require additional body and paint work. Based on our research, however, we cannot confirm these suppositions.

Moreover, aftersales business models revolving around connectivity and over-the-air updates are still struggling to find wide-spread adoption. Often, the role and profit participation of dealers still remains to be determined. Traditional automakers and their dealers must look for other ways to effectively offset the imminent decline in aftersales and service profitability.

Figure 8: Warranty services – comparison of ICEs and BEVs⁹



How should traditional automakers respond?

What lessons can automakers take from the developments in Norway's aftersales and service business? We have identified three robust countermeasures for immediate consideration, each of which can potentially help reduce the decline in profitability.

1. Harness customer loyalty (up to 25 percent profit uplift)

Monetize the fact that BEV owners typically have higher customer loyalty than other vehicle-owners. Achieve this by providing first-class aftersales and service that goes beyond the offering of independent service-providers, including licensed software updates, battery maintenance, staff expertise, and charging infrastructure.

2. Increase workshop efficiency (up to 10 percent profit uplift)

Accelerate the servicing of EVs compared to non-EV models by improving workshop productivity. Essential work should only be interrupted for value-adding activities such as customer handovers or securing additional sales. A Norwegian dealer group increased workshop productivity by almost 10 percent in three months by leveraging vehicle data from other brands and suppliers and automating administrative tasks.

With the right countermeasures, profit decline in aftersales and service can be limited to only 10-30%.

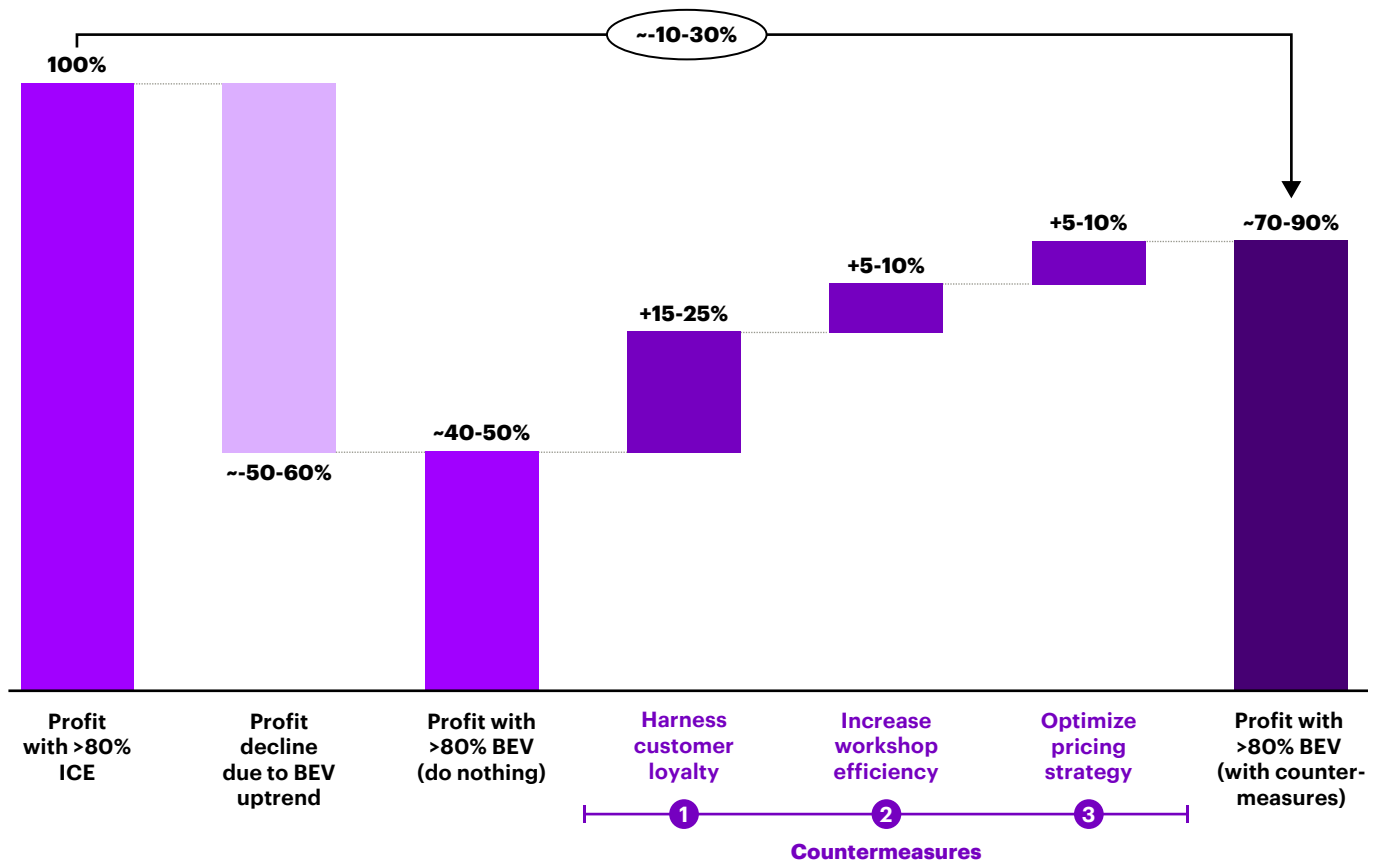
3. Improve the pricing strategy (up to 10 percent profit uplift)

Look to capture aftermarket demand through lower prices for commodity parts and/or higher prices for certain captive parts. By using key pricing levers such as low-cost pricing, value-based pricing, and more innovative models such as subscription or pay-per-use, attractive profit margins can be achieved. Invest in analytics capabilities to respond rapidly to shifts in revenue and profitability and change prices for spare parts across the ecosystem.

However, our analysis suggests that, even after taking all proposed countermeasures into account, a profit reduction of at least 10 percent could be inevitable if the worst-case profitability decline materializes (see Figure 9). Traditional automakers must face up to an unpalatable truth: The future aftersales and service business is likely to be less profitable. It is merely a question of how much.



Figure 9: Annual customer-paid business profit for ICEs versus BEVs⁹



The road ahead

BEVs represent the future of the automotive industry. Traditional automakers recognize this and are planning to transform their product portfolios accordingly. But the electric revolution is also a sales and aftersales revolution, urging automakers and their dealers to rethink their business.



As a leading member of the vanguard of all-electric market disruptors, Tesla benefited from being able to build a “greenfield” automotive sales model from scratch. As a result, its sales journey is typically simpler, faster, and has a higher conversion rate than that of its competitors. Tesla has also been able to drastically rethink the role of key moments in the customer journey, such as test drives and vehicle handovers.

Traditional automakers can learn from Tesla, applying its approach in the context of their own business and thereby shaping tomorrow’s best practices. This may require investment to help secure their own market position, digitalize and accelerate the new-car sales journey, and help reduce the cost of sales. And there is no time to waste. As agile, customer-centric organizations, Tesla and its pure-BEV peers will be looking to continuously hone their sales experiences and supporting operations. Traditional automakers should act now – or risk being overtaken in the race to capture the booming BEV market.

Norway benefited from strong governmental incentives to pull far ahead of the European average for electric vehicle adoption. Automakers and their dealers can already sense the impact of an electrified market and what that will mean for aftersales and service. If no action is taken, profits could collapse by 50 to 60 percent. However, they have found countermeasures that have the potential to reduce the decline to just 10 to 30 percent.

Together with their networks, automakers should start ramping up the capabilities needed to safeguard their aftersales and service business. To capitalize on Norway’s working initiatives, investments in new service offerings, the digitalization of workshop processes, and a state-of-the-art technology foundation are all indispensable.

Besides the increasing margin pressure in both new-car sales and aftersales and service, there is an opportunity to capture future value-pools in the industry’s rapid electrification and digitalization. While this will not, of course, happen overnight, neither will the countermeasures taken by traditional automakers and dealers. The time to act is now.

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- ⁹ Accenture Research (2022).
- ¹⁰ MarkLines (2022), Accenture Research (2022).

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