

Budget busting cars for business

A company car is most often perceived as a benefit for employees, depending on their position and job requirements. Providing a member of staff with a vehicle means that they no longer need to purchase or upgrade one themselves and it helps to ensure that they are able to get to work reliably, but there are so many motors on the market that it can sometimes feel overwhelming to know which make and model to invest in. We've picked three economical, yet credible cars for business which, following the Budget, might just help you narrow down your list

Kia Optima 1.7 CRDI '3'

The Kia Optima is a convincing choice for business. It looks sharp and handles any commute admirably. It is sold only with a diesel engine – a new 134 bhp version of Kia's smooth and efficient 1.7-litre CRDi 'U2' power unit – but the car contains every essential for the corporate user. Features include a high-end Infinity audio system, self-parking, heated and cool-ventilated seats, cornering lights, panoramic sunroof, reverse parking camera and an automatic cabin defogging system.

The Optima is based on an all-new platform which ensures it has class-leading passenger space. The boot is roomy, and there is a lower lip to make loading the car less strenuous. It is a safe car too. All versions have Electronic Stability Control to counter any tendency of the car to skid out of control because of bad weather or over-exuberant driving. This is linked to Vehicle Stability Management. To alert other motorists to emergency braking, an Emergency Stop Signalling system is also fitted. This flashes the brake lights rapidly to warn following drivers.

The Optima features Kia's EcoDynamics fuel-saving, CO2-reducing measures, including Intelligent Stop and Go and aerodynamic drag-reducing

technology. The diesel engine develops similar power and torque to the 2.0-litre units in European and Japanese rivals, but from a smaller capacity. Acceleration from 0-60 mph takes 10.2 seconds, and the car can reach a top speed of 125 mph. Better still, the Optima can achieve 57.6 miles per gallon, and it only pumps out CO2 emissions of 128 g/km.

The Optima's ride and handling provide the perfect combination of stability and agility with refinement and comfort on the long motorway drives that are a fact of life for many business drivers.

Price £24,495 on the road.

Peugeot 508 Active HDi 140

This executive car from France is excellent. The stylish exterior design is elegant and full of 'French chic', while the interior combines hi-tech with the use of high quality materials.

Exceptional room, a very generous boot, and good standard specification provide interior comfort and convenience of a very high level. The simple and smart style of the fascia, the materials chosen, the thorough finish, the durability and the technologies deployed (colour 'head-up display', four-zone air conditioning,



Peugeot 508 Active HDi 140





Kia Optima 1.7 CRDI '3'

'keyless' entry and start-up) add to the ambience of the passenger compartment.

Behind the wheel, the steering is accurate, the 0-62 mph time of 9.8 seconds feels fine and with a maximum speed of 130 mph this 1997cc 140 bhp oil-burner has plenty of go.

Returning an average MPG of 58.8 this version of the 508 is very economical too. The engine benefits from Peugeot's e-HDi Stop and Start system helping the car deliver CO2 emissions of just 125 g/km. This is the first of a new generation of stop and start systems which offers improved driveability and economy

enhancements of up to 15 percent.

The Peugeot 508 not only looks good for business, it will also serve as an excellent main family car. It'll seat four adults comfortably or five at a push. It's a very safe car as well and has been given an overall five star Euro NCAP rating.

Price £21,050 on the road.

Alfa Romeo MiTo 1.4 TB MultiAir 135 bhp Distinctive

The classy MiTo offers a refreshing alternative to its mainstream

competitors. This is made possible by trendy good looks, and a host of technologies, including Alfa Romeo's dynamic control system (known as DNA), and its award-winning MultiAir engine.

The latest 1.4 TB MultiAir 135 bhp 'Distinctive' version is mated to 135 horses and has a 0-62 mph dash of 8.4 seconds going on to 129 mph. This dovetails perfectly with respect for the environment, reflected in CO2 emissions of just 129 g/km and a combined fuel consumption of 50.4 mpg.

What's more, the MiTo's innovative DNA system offers three distinct 'vehicle personalities' tailored to driving style and the prevailing road characteristics and conditions - Dynamic (sporting), Normal (suburban/town driving) and All weather (maximum safety, especially in low-grip conditions). A three-position switch, situated beside the gearlever, alters the throttle response and steering set-up for the different driving environments. In Dynamic mode, the throttle response is quicker, the steering is sharper and the handling is more direct. For icy and loose surface environments the All weather mode provides a more gentle response.

On the practical front, the Alfa Romeo MiTo is comfortable for commuting long distances and the boot is surprisingly deep. Its chic image is agreeable for business too.

Price £15,950 on the road.

Alfa Romeo MiTo 1.4 TB MultiAir 135 bhp Distinctive

