

Ferrari

Speedy, unique and full liner: The Ferrari Technical Assistance Service has it all

Luigino Barp, Head of After-Sales at Ferrari, tells us how every single day at the office revolves around providing their clients with complete satisfaction.

Text: **Matthias Ackeret** Photos: **Ferrari**

Luigino Barp, known to everyone as «Gigi», is a determined, multifaceted and quick-witted man: An industrial manager from a by-gone era with his feet firmly on the ground and his mind invested in the future, a man who is relentlessly charismatic and unquestionably authoritative – a man who was born in Venice but has become as Emilian as the Prancing Horse itself.

Barp is 58 years old, married with four children, and has a passion for restoring classic cars and motorbikes. Studying aeronautical construction led him to start his professional career at Aeritalia (now Alenia Aeronautica), where he was the first flight test engineer to trial prototypes of the Tornado, a combat aircraft. He then chose to specialise in meteor drones at the company's site in Monfalcone before moving on to flight test operation on the prototype of the F-104S ASA (Aggiornamento Sistemi d'Arma – Weapon Systems Update). It was precisely this need for speed and fascination for the quintessentially unique that he gained during his early career which later drove him to work for Ferrari.

Barp first passed through the gates of Ferrari's headquarters on Via Abetone Inferiore 4 in Maranello back in 1987, gradually taking on more and more duties and responsibilities over the years to become one of the greatest experts in technical assistance and after-sales the world has ever seen.

He first joined the Experimental Department at Ferrari, where he worked for two years before being appointed Head of Road

Reliability Testing (from 1989 to 1994) for all vehicles. He was then asked to manage the first grand slam, and from 1994 to 1999 he acted as Technical Director of the brand in Switzerland. His success in this role led to another big step in his career: Ferrari (who owned Maserati at the time) asked him to head up the Technical Assistance Service between 1999 and 2004.

From 2004 to 2005 Barp worked in China as After-Sales Director for the Ferrari and Maserati brands, and from 2005 to 2010 he worked as After-Sales Director for Ferrari in Western Europe, first in Paris and then in Lyon.

He assumed his current role as Director of the Ferrari Technical Assistance Service Division in 2010, and in 2015 he added another prestigious string to his bow by becoming Head of the Ferrari Classic Department.

When I put him on the spot and ask him to quote a phrase that sums up his character, he replies with something that Winston Churchill used to say during the Blitz: «Never, never, never give up.» It is this philosophy that helps you understand the nature of a man as strong as the steel his cars are made from. He hesitates to answer just once during our entire interview, when I ask him what his favourite Ferrari model is. He looks pensive, as though he couldn't possibly choose, as though each and every vehicle in the history of Ferrari is a part of his DNA, before finally replying that the cars which occupy a very special place in his heart are the 250 GTO, the Ferrari Testarossa, the 333 and the F12.

And who could fault his choice? These are the cars of our dreams, cars that still bowl us over with their power and their beauty today.

We spend our two-hour interview in the elegant and high-tech surroundings of the beating heart of Ferrari's Technical Assistance Service Division, among close-knit colleagues who clearly know they are part of a team who bear the credibility and stability of the brand on their shoulders.

Mr. Barp, aside from the Sales Department, it's your division of Ferrari that interacts most with clients. What does being responsible for stimulating and nurturing the intimate relationship between Ferrari and its clients every single day mean to you?

The efficacy of our After-Sales Service acts as the ultimate benchmark against which our clients measure Ferrari as a group.

It's the part of the company that's in direct contact with end clients and is responsible for keeping them satisfied.

Ferrari has always fostered one-to-one relationships with its clients. It's rather like managing a pit stop – the speed with which you can react to the situation and decide what to do are absolutely essential in maintaining a level of service that conveys professionalism, seriousness and propriety. This translates into relationships that are based on implicit trust, trust that turns clients into life-long Ferrari aficionados. This is a huge responsibility, which is why the Technical Assistance Service and the men and women who work there need to be personable. In



Luigino Barp, Head of After-Sales at Ferrari.

many ways our profession is like a mission: You can only get through the stressful moments by showing complete and utter dedication.

It's a lot of work but it all becomes worthwhile when you see the satisfied smile of the client you've just helped out. To us that smile is like that of a Formula 1 driver getting out of their car after winning a grand prix.

This is, without a doubt, the product of innovations that have changed the after-sales world by putting clients and their needs first. What innovations have you introduced since you became Head of Department?

As I said before, speed and competence are the real linchpin of our work at the Technical Assistance Service.

To achieve the exceptional speed at which we work and the level of responsiveness we need, I expanded the Help Desk Service in Maranello and set up other decentralised national Help Desks in the USA, Dubai, China and Japan. I then followed those with Help Desks in Northern Europe, Central Europe and, last but not least, Western Europe.

These Help Desks are all interconnected and they all help each other out. They can solve problems at a national level, which can then be escalated to Maranello if need be. In Maranello the Technical Assistance Ser-

vice works closely with Quality Management, Technical Management and the Production Department with the aim of reporting the problem at all levels of the factory and receiving maximum support from them, providing information and resolving any critical situation with everyone's support. Real-time reporting across all parts of the Ferrari group is guaranteed by the «Red on Line» system. This acts as a veritable early warning system, sharing information about individual cases and the solutions to them on a database that each and every division or department has access to. This system is constantly evolving, and having it linked to the DEIS diagnostics system in real time enables us to resolve problems at lightning speed.

What's more, we've been monitoring the performance of our Assistance Network in real time for three years now, assessing it in terms of its responsiveness and measuring the results using the HPPS system, which is linked to local DEIS diagnostics systems.

To achieve these objectives it has been necessary to seek out partners who offer the very highest levels of quality and service and who are capable of meeting our high standards.

How do you go about finding partners like this and what do you require of the people you choose to work with?

The human factor is the most important thing we look for, because you need to attend to the client before you can start attending to their vehicle.

Thanks to the experience I've gained from working in different areas of the company and all over the world, I've been able to pick and choose the best partners who are not only superb engineers but who also have the dedication and the interpersonal skills that are indispensable in this profession.

It's extremely difficult to pinpoint what makes service technicians good at their job – they need to be dedicated and hard-working, but most importantly of all they can't ever give in. It's a continual learning curve and most spend an average of five years «on the front line».

If I understand correctly, some of your partners provide numerous services at the same time and cover all your needs in one specific sector or across multiple sectors. With regard to technical documentation in particular, has having a single point of contact benefited Ferrari?

I truly believe it's better to work with a small number of suppliers and this strategy has proven successful thus far. It means that anyone who works with my group becomes a partner straight away and provides all-round support solutions by preparing themselves to

resolve a variety of different problems. Our selection process was methodical and just one group (STAR Group – ed.) made it through, which they did by progressively preparing themselves to cover all our extra after-sales needs.

This has enabled us to boost our efficiency with a clear framework agreement in which effort and cost are discussed in multi-year plans, which guarantee to give this partner visibility and flexibility in the face of peaks in workload.

You've patented the DEIS Intelligence system for diagnosing and solving problems with in-car software from your office in Maranello – what exactly is this and how does it work?

Ferrari has patented the DEIS system – this is an advanced diagnostics system that allows mechanics to use a mobile device in their workshop to communicate with Maranello in real time, interfacing with the Help Desk, diagnostics archives, repair manuals, spare parts and anything else they need to make an accurate, definitive and rapid diagnosis.

Do you manage to arouse the same passion that we can hear in your words and see on the calm and collected faces of the people you work with in your network of dealers around the world?

As I said before, the men and women working in the Technical Assistance Service have passed a meticulous selection process that we have developed over a number of years. These staff know they're part of an elite and they take pride in that, which gives them a positive outlook all through the day because they know they can rely on an organisation that is always ready to help by sharing the load and the challenges, but also sharing the satisfaction that comes with success.

How do you train your dealers and evaluate your assistance network?

Whenever somebody new joins, all the people working in the newly authorised workshop are required to undertake assessments followed by preparatory training – both in the classroom and in the workshop – in order to promptly bring their skills into line with those of the other Ferrari workshops. We make them go through this process to discover hidden talent and close any gaps in their knowledge.



Luigino Barp's most favourite Ferrari cars.

Training is held at the Ferrari Academy. Participants complete a work placement with the Maranello Technical Assistance Service, where they get to meet the people in charge of the various departments and learn the different strategies. Joining the Group in such a pragmatic way also gives them the opportunity to really get to know the people they will be working with in the future.

Would it be fair to say that Ferrari owners not only have a unique and magnificent vehicle but also a fascination that will last as long as they have that vehicle?

Choosing to drive one of our racers is a sign of passion, maturity and the desire to stand out from the crowd. This warrants our undivided attention, attention that will definitely be rewarded by being faithful to our brand.

Once someone becomes a Ferrari fanatic, they will be a Ferrari fanatic forever.

We all believe, especially those of us in after-sales, that Ferrari owners are like F1 drivers at a pit stop – they're unique individuals who require unique assistance of the highest calibre.

You're also Head of the Ferrari Classiche Department. Tell us a bit about that: Tell us what it's like to work not only on maintaining and restoring splendour but also, first and foremost, on ensuring that tangible pieces of Ferrari's history will be preserved for posterity. It must be magical.

Ferrari Classiche is the heart and soul of the Ferrari world. I'd dreamed of heading this department for many years and finally, after slipping in almost unnoticed, I've had the pleasure of making the magic happen for two years now. I think it's the most coveted position for an experienced engineer who has dedicated more than half his life to Ferrari.

The department houses archives that are more complete and more confidential than those of any other car manufacturer. They contain technical drawings, the assembly instructions for all the Ferraris ever made, right from the first 125 S, our event race books, plus records of the details and features that enable us to restore the original splendour of all the vehicles our clients around the world ask us to refurbish and certify.

Restoration work starts with detailed research to find out how the car was furnished and equipped when it first left the factory. Then, with the owner's agreement, we decide how we're going to proceed.

Restoration work is entrusted to Ferrari's best and brightest mechanics and engineers, because the Ferrari Classiche Department is the epitome of excellence – it's a place for people who've spent their entire lives devoted to our red racing cars.

The department is steeped in history, the smell of mechanisms and machinery that are still at the forefront of technology fills the air; the magical feeling about the place is hard to describe, but it's a feeling that every sports car enthusiast should experience at least once – although it's difficult not to fall under its spell and start longing for your own unique piece of history afterwards. With regard to issuing classic cars with a Certificate

of Authenticity, it's important to know that an approval committee meets once a month, which is chaired by the engineer Piero Ferrari and all the men who hold keys to the gates of that inimitable world.

Ferrari is the world's most famous and most respected car brand. This alchemy of passion and mastery is practised in a small centre in the province of Modena, where the air in Maranello and the surrounding area is thick with steel and octanes: What is it that makes this region so special (Lamborghini and Maserati are but a few miles away)?

Enzo Ferrari made the right decision in bringing his Scuderia workshops to Maranello thanks to the modesty and tenacity of the people who live here, people who are capable of sacrificing anything simply to hear the distinctive purr of an engine that you can discern even from many miles away. Whilst equally worthy of the utmost respect, the other brands

in the region are our rivals, and their role is to continue spurring Ferrari on to achieve excellence across the board – excellence that drives and inspires those who decide to produce unique cars from sporting DNA.

One last question: What does the future hold for Luigino Barp?

And what a fitting question! Despite spending 30 years at the company, I still have all the spirit I did when I first arrived. I find it hard to imagine living a life without the engines, the problems and the cars that I'm working on today with the same passion that I've always had. Who knows what the future has in store for me? Whatever it is, as always, I'll be ready to greet it!

We say our good-byes and I shake the hand of this man whose expression and whose sparkling eyes bear witness to his abiding, almost carnal passion for his job and his factory: Ferrari. □



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