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Ford of Europe Electronic Parts Catalog Solution

Summary

Ford of Europe utilizes a browser-based electronic parts and service catalog (EPC)—called "FordEcat"—built on the Enigma 3C® Platform. With FordEcat in place, parts managers and service advisors at 4,900 Ford dealers in more than 42 European and Middle Eastern countries receive up-to-date information on parts and service for 45 different car models in 17 different languages via DVD. The FordEcat system enables faster and more efficient parts and service identification, including access to labor information, while boosting Ford's overall aftermarket footprint across the region.

In less than two years, more than 70 percent of Ford of Europe's dealer network has chosen the FordEcat system over alternate solutions, solidifying the aftermarket revenue stream and establishing centralized management and control of service and support content.

Challenge: Streamline Delivery of Parts and Service Catalog Information to Ford Dealers

Ford of Europe's challenge was to find a better way to distribute and update parts information to a wide-ranging network of dealers with different needs, in different countries. Prior to implementing Enigma 3C, it was time-consuming for Ford to change the catalog features and data because the company relied on a third-party vendor to develop and distribute their electronic parts catalog. Furthermore, it was difficult to get timely feedback from the dealerships regarding parts and service information.

Solution:

Enigma 3C connects to Ford's IT infrastructure, integrating catalog, labor and service information into one unified browser-based application that delivers the exact parts and service information required by parts technicians and service advisors. FordEcat brings together 600,000 parts records and 15,000 technical illustrations from 45 vehicle-model catalogs and other service and support documents, including supersession instructions and labor, service and parts pricing, into an easy-to-navigate dynamic encyclopedia. Ford provides the software to dealers on a subscription basis, making it easy for dealers to get started with the new system. By taking the EPC process in house, Ford has established a direct link to its dealerships and reduced the time to distribute new materials.

With Enigma 3C, Ford of Europe has been able to create a customized catalog that gives them control over the features, functions and data sent to the dealers. Ford now posts a dynamic catalog online, providing incremental updates whenever information is changed or modified. If they need to promote a new product, Ford can put hot links into the login screen, upload a PDF document, or create some other campaign, all of which is functionality they did not have previously.

FordEcat ties directly into various dealer management systems (DMS) for parts ordering and warranty information. The DMS is a repository of information about parts inventory, location, quantity, pricing,

warranty and customer discounts. Because there are dozens of different dealer management systems in use across Ford's dealers, it is noteworthy that the Enigma 3C solution incorporates dedicated SOAP-based protocols for seamless integration. Most DMS vendors have already integrated into FordEcat.

FordEcat offers powerful customization features that enable dealerships to tailor the application to their specific needs. For instance, dealerships can supplement content from Ford with their own service and parts information, including localized pricing. Technicians can add relevant comments to FordEcat, by creating electronic notes (eNotes) that are attached to catalog items and can be shared with other technicians. These eNotes provide information to other users about new problems or emerging best practices that may impact current maintenance procedures or part sales. Technicians can also bookmark specific tasks and create shopping list templates for common configurations and repairs, which accelerates parts ordering.

Enigma 3C's advanced VIN decoding (vehicle identification number), searching and filtering features allow parts managers to filter the catalog and match the parts according to the exact automobile being serviced. Parts technicians and service advisors can find what they need by simply entering one of the 20 million unique VINs, or through a progressive model/configuration filtering process, that presents them with the precise information needed to service a specific vehicle.

Service technicians like FordEcat because they can customize how repair instructions are displayed on screen and in print, providing greater or less detail depending on personal preference and the type of job being performed. With multiple navigation options—table of contents, visual access and search screens—all relevant parts information is only a mouse click away. The result is a feature-rich catalog that offers technicians vector-based illustrations, viewers, bookmarks, e-notes and multiple search and navigation options.

Benefits: Reduced Costs, Faster Repairs and Satisfied Dealers

- Ford of Europe now has full control over the features within the electronic parts catalog, and over the data quality they release to the dealers. Previously, the company had to send raw data to an EPC provider, and the process was out of Ford's control. FordEcat has helped improve data quality and reduce dealer support calls.
- Ford of Europe controls licensing and distribution of the software to its dealers. As a result, the company reduced the cost of creating the Ford Motor Company catalog system, and reduced the cost charged to each dealer because the dealer site license is no longer charged per user but by size of dealership.
- The direct link to dealerships has allowed Ford of Europe to realize a 100% increase in frequency of data updates. Changes are now posted online twice per month using Enigma's incremental update mechanism and can be downloaded by DVD users on an as-needed basis. DVD updates are sent whenever there is a software change or a change to a large amount of data such as the introduction of a new vehicle. The combination of DVD and web-based capability allows Ford to save time and money by not having to mail out DVDs to each dealer for small changes.
- FordEcat makes life easier for Ford parts managers. Managers can quickly identify which parts are needed to service a vehicle, thus reducing misorder rates, reducing maintenance costs and increasing mechanic efficiency.