

## *The mother of Abraham Lincoln.*



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# special

by Mike Peltier, Managing Editor of  
BodyShop Business magazine,  
ImportCar's sister publication

## OEMS COLLABORATE Eases Access Issues for Techs Looking

From Acura to Volvo, manufacturers' repair information is now accessible to independent shops through one site. Thirty-five auto manufacturers worked together to launch **OEM1STOP.com**, the result of an ongoing effort to simplify Internet searches for OEM repair information.

Each quarter, Asian, European and U.S. auto manufacturers meet at the OEM Roundtable to discuss issues that affect their customers. At the last OEM Roundtable of 2006, held during Industry Week in Las Vegas, independent shop owners voiced frustration over what they felt was a lack of sufficient vehicle repair information.

"Each car manufacturer has embraced the availability of information, but it may be one of the best kept secrets," says **Eric Bondus**, **Parts Sales Manager at Hyundai** and the de facto leader of the project.

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"Each has offered information at varying levels and over time invested tremendous energy and personnel, and spent considerable amounts of money to put that material out on the Internet." That information is offered to franchise dealers, independent repair facilities (IRFs) and even consumers – if they can find it.

The OEMs had spent millions trying to make their information accessible but were getting feedback that suggested otherwise. And for the independent shop, time spent searching for each manufacturer's respective website, and then searching within that site,

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## ON WEBSITE PORTAL

for Repair Information



means time away from repairs. None of this was "lost" on the OEMs.

"Collectively, we all made the observation that the independent facilities seem to be of the opinion that we haven't done enough to give them the information that we're giving our dealers," Bondus notes. But he and his peers knew the information was out there — it was just an *access* problem.

The OEMs surveyed current offerings that helped independent shops reach their information. Bondus says the best was probably the National Automotive

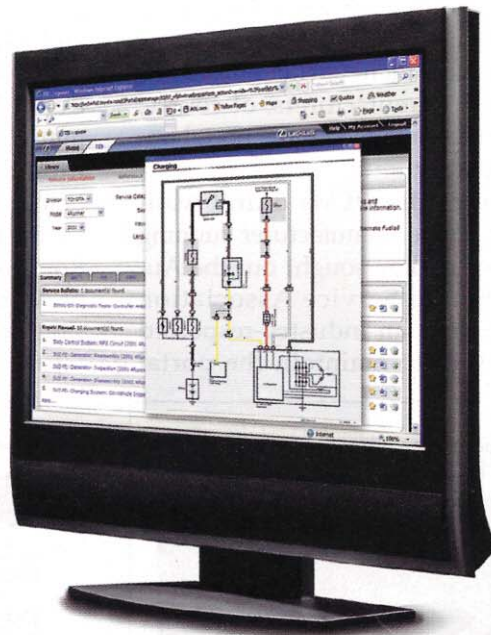
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Service Task Force (NASTF) site with many OEM links, but based on IRF feedback, it apparently wasn't reaching enough independent shops.

At the next OEM Roundtable in January 2007, the group began drafting plans for a convenient, easy-to-use grid that would comprise links to OEM repair sites. Simplicity would be key. The group wanted a single-page, graphical portal where users could click on an image — a manufacturer's logo — and go, with no long URLs to click and no cutting and pasting.

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After they came up with a template, the team reached out to each OEM for buy-in. "Therein became one of the challenges," he says. "When you use logos, you're using a trademarked item, not just a URL." All OEMs, though, pledged strong support. Bondus notes that as many as 10 additional brands could be included, but the team hasn't solicited their participation yet. Those manufacturers, of course, are welcome to join the portal immediately.

Since the OEMs didn't want any single manufacturer running the site, they sought out the Automotive Service Association (ASA) as an industry-respected partner to maintain the portal



and address any concerns, technical or otherwise. "[ASA President] Ron Pyle has attended many of our meetings, listened thoughtfully, offered his own points and suggested we centralize it," Bondus notes. "Ultimately, Ron's dual role as vice chairman of NASTF led us to partner the site with NASTF."

Just one year after the OEMs

feedback from independents seriously! Use it and we will make it stronger for you."

The site has received positive feedback so far, as well as some suggestions, such as providing two portals per brand — one for mechanical information and one for collision repair information. Whether OEM1STOP.com takes that idea further depends on independent shops' feedback. After all, their needs are what started the site.

Bondus says that the collaboration among the OEMs is unique in his nearly 30 years in the industry. But while each manufacturer has worked as partners on the portal, they're still separate entities. "The OEMs set their own

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“ For the independent shops, the best thing they can do to make OEM1STOP.com more powerful is to use it. OEMs take this kind of feedback from independents seriously! Use it and we will make it stronger for you. ”

— Eric Bondus, Parts Sales Manager, Hyundai Motor America

planted the seed, the site came to fruition at Industry Week 2007, complete with stickers and a PR campaign. (The site is also accessible at OEMONESTOP.com to aid recall.) NASTF will tally the number of visitors and other data to gauge its success. "For the independent shops, the best thing they can do to make this more powerful is to use it," Bondus says. "OEMs take this kind of

website policies so they aren't all the same. But just by their adjacency on OEM1STOP.com," Bondus says, "each company can quickly toggle back and forth and look at how its site compares with the offerings from other brands." He believes this could result in a "best-practices" model in which OEMs continually improve their sites in an attempt to have the most efficient and effective. ©

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