

AFTERMARKET

Catching up with technology changes

E-commerce, DMS and CRM providers provide a glimpse of what's now being offered

BY LIZ HOCHSTEDLER

■ ASSOCIATE EDITOR

INDIANAPOLIS — Technology is ever-changing in every business realm, and the powersports industry is no different.

Many dealerships that used to run on little more than cash registers and ledgers now have multiple computer systems helping run the business. And with, at times, reduced consumer demand, dealers are using more tools to help draw in customers.

Powersports Business spoke to several service providers of e-commerce, DMS and CRM solutions at Dealer Expo to discover new or updated products for the upcoming year. Here is what dealers and manufacturers can look forward to:

50 BELOW

To improve its e-commerce services, 50 Below invested heavily in R&D. Employees studied the top 50 e-commerce sites on the Internet, such as Amazon.com and BestBuy.com, and learned what features drew customers to purchase. That work has led to the release of EZ-Shop Instant and upgrades to EZ-Shop. The e-commerce services have moved to a customer-friendly focus to make shopping easier for the consumer.

50 Below's website search bars have been

enhanced. They've been moved to a more prominent part of each homepage and give customers options to select what they're looking for and similar items.

"Customers are now expecting that when they type something in that they'll get good results," Product Manager Doran Nurmi said.

Each product page also has been upgraded with a new layout, larger photos, more information and more options for narrowing results. Each page also gives the option to recommend the product on 300 social networks. Customers who also view product pages will see widgets that show them similar items other shoppers viewed and purchased. The last five products the user viewed also will be cached into the page, and other features are available. The EZ-Shop systems can be integrated into the dealer's DMS.

Dealers already using EZ-Shop will be upgraded to EZ-Shop Instant at no additional charge beginning in early 2011 through this fall, and new dealers to 50 Below will receive the newest version when they sign on.



ADP LIGHTSPEED

New for ADP Lightspeed is the ADP Network Phone, which allows anyone at the dealership using the system to see who is calling before answering the phone.

The Network Phone integrates with LightspeedNXT DMS and caller ID. When a caller phones in, the customer's information, if it's in the DMS, automatically appears on the screen before the call is answered. Dealership staff can see a photo of the customer, their address, other pertinent personal information, types of units

owned, past purchases and current order statuses. For those who aren't yet in the DMS, a phone number and a name, if listed, will appear.

When a call is transferred, the customer's information remains with it, moving to whichever computer in the dealership handles the call next. Missed calls also appear in the system, so dealership staff can follow-up with calls received during busy times or when the dealership is closed. A click to call feature allows any phone number in the DMS to be automatically dialed with the click of a mouse.

The new system allows anyone to help any customer because all information is laid out clearly in the DMS, said ADP Lightspeed Marketing Manager Adam Shiflett.

ADP Network Phone charges vary, but costs are equivalent to traditional monthly service.

ARI

For 2011, ARI has created a new parts lookup solution, a new e-commerce product and a CRM service newly available to the industry.

PartStream, based off PartSmart, offers consumer-friendly parts lookup for any existing website. Features include an auto-complete search bar; search engine optimization for part numbers, assemblies and descriptions; parts ordering directly from diagrams; extensive caching; multi-lingual options and use of multiple currencies.

WebsiteSmart 2.0 is ARI's new e-commerce platform with about 55 updates. Enhancements include automatically updated widgets, an auto-complete search bar, multi-state taxation, billing

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Marshall working on major software upgrade

New system will allow distributor to provide data to help dealers make purchasing decisions

BY MIKE DAVIN

■ ONLINE EDITOR

Marshall Distributing wants to improve the dealer experience, and to do it, officials say they

need a better engine behind the software that runs the company.

For that reason, the company is currently working on an overhaul of that software, known as the Enterprise resource planning, or ERP, system.

The decision to upgrade came in response to a survey of 1,400 dealers conducted last year.

Dealers — especially those not working with a DMS or website provider — are increasingly asking Marshall for data to help make purchasing decisions or feed their online

stores. That data could include inventory information, purchase history or any number of customized requests.

"Our system now has served the company very, very well," said Joe Mooney, Marshall's COO. "We wouldn't have grown to where we are without it. But it's based on older programming that doesn't have the flexibility for mining data that we would like."

The ERP integrates data from across the entire organization, including finance departments, warehouses, inventory systems and

more. Right now, to share that data with a dealer is a manual process that is time consuming for both Marshall and the dealer, Mooney says. Not only that, it's exported in a comma-delimited format that isn't user friendly.

The new system will allow Marshall to provide that type of data more quickly and efficiently in multiple formats, with little effort for the distributor or their dealers. It also will allow Marshall to send information customized to the dealer's needs, for example

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TECHNOLOGY

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for international shipping, a calendar and a news page. Also, customers are able to purchase whole good units from the site, if those sales are approved by the OEM, and the site allows for dealers to post an unlimited amount of photos of in-stock units, rather than relying on stock images. With WebsiteSmart, dealers also can easily change the look of the site without any HTML knowledge.

"It means we have a lot of components that make it easier for dealers to make a really up-to-date website without having to do any coding at all," Product Manager Brad Smith said.

The company also is introducing its new-to-the-industry lead management system called Footsteps Channel Connect. The program allows dealers to log CRM data, while targeting marketing to individual customers.

"You can drive exponential sales once you really create an individual relationship with a customer," said Jon Lintvet, vice president of product.

Manufacturers also can use Footsteps to watch their supply through the distribution chain as well as follow the status and movement of leads.

WebSite Smart will be rolled out automatically to WebsitePro customers, as will PartStream for PartSmart clients. Footsteps will be upgraded for those already using that system in other industries, and all three are or will soon be available for purchase for new customers.

IDEAL COMPUTER SERVICES INC.

Ideal Computer Services Inc. has upgraded its dealer management software for 2011, which

includes an optional fully-integrated F&I module.

"We're going to start releasing our newest version, Ideal 7.2, to our customers beginning in March and new users will receive Ideal 7.2 when they implement their new system," said Erin Zein, Ideal's marketing coordinator.

Any Ideal customer paying support fees will automatically be upgraded to the new 7.2 version, with the option of adding the F&I module, within the coming months. Ideal 7.2 also will be available for new customers upon sign up.

The F&I module allows an entire F&I transaction to be integrated into the DMS, including customer history and accounts receivable. Accounts payable and general ledger modules are optional. Menu selling options are programmed into the system, and from the DMS, dealers will be able to print titles, registration, odometer statements, disclosures, insurance, warranties and other standard and customizable forms.

"Ideal F&I will help dealers make more money because having an in-house, fully integrated system can easily add more to their unit sales," said F&I dealer services consultant Troy Simon.

POWERSPORTS NETWORK

PSN's dealer websites are undergoing upgrades for 2011. Its e-commerce module, which will include a number of enhancements, is in the final development stages.

Features of the new e-commerce platform will include auto-complete and predictive search, a consumer option to "Shop by Price," an improved layout, a listing of on-sale items shown in the navigation within a selected category and "Best Match" and "Price Sort" keyword search results. For the first time, PSN also will offer a fitment module that will allow customers to search for parts and accessories by make, model

and year. Also, social sharing will allow consumers to share pages on Facebook and Twitter.

The virtual showroom has new features, including Facebook-style photo galleries, quick quote requests and mouse-overs for larger photos.

The e-commerce updates — except for the fitment module, which comes at an additional price — will be updated automatically for PSN users. New PSN customers also will receive the new pages.

Along with the e-commerce updates, PSN also is offering for 2011 Web site Flix, which posts videos directly to the dealer site and Facebook; mobile sites for all PSN website customers; and Facebook inventory integration that automatically posts dealers' unit inventory on Facebook.

V-SEPT

V-Sept is introducing its Digital Marketing Engine and updates to its CRM platform for 2011.

The Digital Marketing Engine connects to DMS platforms to target and mass market customers within the database. With the program, dealers can send out targeted letters, e-mails, postcards, surveys, social network posts, coupons and more.

The web-based CRM has been newly linked with Twitter and Facebook, allowing dealers to post on both sites without leaving the CRM dashboard. Also, V-Sept has cataloged videos of nearly every vehicle in the industry, giving sales staff the opportunity to show customers the video on-site or in a follow-up e-mail. Also, as each customer calls in, if it's from a listed landline, the customer's address will be automatically filled into the CRM.

V-Sept is integrated with ADP Lightspeed, 50 Below, Auction123, NADA, Black Book and eBay. **PSB**

YUASA

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entire organization to understand the whole picture.

"I wish for people to lead themselves. Not just me. For it to happen, people need to feel comfortable to speak freely and to know they are listened to," Ohta said. "Internal bridges should be in place all over. Creating such an environment is an essential responsibility for everybody, but it has to start with me."

LOOKING AHEAD

Yuasa, a longtime leader in OEM powersports batteries, has been impacted by the recent recession. "We are very involved at the original equipment level and have a lot of focus in that area. We would like to see that grow back," Majesky said.

The company remains committed to improving battery technology as it works to ensure its product can power the increasing number of accessories that are being added to touring motorcycles and other powersports vehicles.

What about lithium batteries, a power source for some electric vehicles coming to market?

Ohta noted Yuasa already manufactures lithium ion batteries in Japan for different applications, including hybrid cars and applications in space programs. How quickly price points can be reduced to accommodate powersports consumers remains to be seen, Yuasa officials said.

In the meantime, Ohta will maintain and reinforce those important bridges by ensuring proper communication throughout Yuasa's staff. "It is an essential element required for our continued growth," Ash said. **PSB**



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