

DIGITAL Dealer

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MPK Automotive DMS System The Power of Microsoft in your Dealership

If you're a dealer, you have a Dealer Management System (DMS). Ever feel like it's a double-edged sword? You need it to manage virtually every facet of your dealership including: sales, accounts receivable and payable, inventory, service details, and so much more. But, you're not alone if you've ever fantasized about smashing it with a hammer. There are a lot of DMS solutions out there that far from solving your problems, just make your life more difficult. Maybe it's because they're cumbersome to use, inflexible, or impossible to upgrade. Sandi Jerome, in the January 2007 issue of this magazine, remarked on the number of dealers who figuratively broke down her door when Microsoft announced the development and upcoming release of a Microsoft DMS. These dealers wanted to become a beta test site, and they were

hoping Sandi would put in a good word for them. Obviously, quite a few dealers were, and are, looking for a new system, and were intrigued by the reputation of Microsoft. Sandi ended up recommending one dealership for a Microsoft beta test site, but for the rest of you we have a suggestion: why compete with other dealers when virtually the same system, a Microsoft DMS, is readily available, proven to work, and easily attainable? It's from a company called MPK Automotive, and it just may be exactly what you've been looking for.

MPK Automotive Systems (MPK), headquartered in Norcross, GA, and deriving its name from Mark, Paul, and Kyle – the partners who founded the company – built its DMS using the Microsoft Dynamics NAV business platform. A commercially available accounting and ERP

system, the Microsoft Dynamics NAV platform is like the bones in our bodies – it's the infrastructure that bears the weight of dealership information and keeps it all in its proper place. The MPK DMS is like our skin – it is the dealership's interface with the outer world and between departments, dependent upon its Microsoft "bones" to keep its shape. The Microsoft platform takes care of all the accounting and inventory functions for every dealership using the MPK system, and the MPK DMS does the rest.

Benefits of a DMS built on the Microsoft platform

It can be argued that Microsoft is the scion of the technology boom; the company at the forefront of technological innovations that continues to debut new and ever more inventive software and applications. MPK Automotive is a direct recipient of that pioneering work, and as a result, so are its DMS users. The benefits of having the system on the Microsoft platform are numerous:

- The MPK DMS is Windows-based, so it's easier to learn and to use. "We tell our dealers that they can now do more with the people that they have and get more done in the same amount of time," says Mark Stephenson, president of MPK.
- The acquisition cost of the MPK DMS is 30 to 50 percent less than that of the big DMS vendors. "We can provide all the functionality of the big DMS vendors at a cost-effective price because by using the Microsoft platform, our costs of business go down. Our programmers don't have to reinvent the wheel every time we add a module or make a change. We pass those savings onto our customers," says Stephenson.
- A dealer will spend 40 to 50 percent less on ongoing support for the MPK DMS because it is so easy to train employees to use it effectively. "Because our system is built on the Microsoft platform, we can easily and quickly tailor it to our dealers. Other competitors have a rigid system that is not customizable," says Stephenson.

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—Mark Stephenson

The MPK DMS modules

The MPK DMS consists of six modules: financial management and control; sales, F & I and Customer Relationship Management (CRM); vehicle management; service; parts; and factory communications (DCS). The modules are sold as a packaged system for a good reason: it's simpler and it keeps the system cost down. When every dealership receives the complete system, they never have to buy additional modules when new innovations came out. Every MPK customer receives the upgrades; it's that simple. Besides, as Stephenson notes, "90 percent of dealers want all of the functionality."

MPK takes another note from Microsoft in the way it charges for its system. A dealer buys the system and all the functionality for a flat price, and beyond that a user-based license model is in place. The dealer controls how many users he wants to license, and MPK does have discounted tiers in place: as the number of users goes up, the price per user goes down.

Again, due to its Windows format, the functionality of all the modules is very high. Notable for its easy access to information, the entire system offers drill-down detail in important fields, as well as the ability to send reports to fax, e-mail, or HTML. Other features include an indefinite transaction history for all departments, the technology to open multiple windows simultaneously, and the ability to send e-mails and connect to the web from within the MPK DMS.

Financial management and control module – Giving you access to all the information you need to spot trends and gain insight, this module includes: an integrated general ledger, bank account management and reconciliation, accounts receivable and payable, electronic purchase orders, floor plan management, human resources management, payroll, and more.

Sales, F&I, and CRM module – Giving you targeted knowledge about your prospects and customers, this module includes: sales activity management, quick quotes, driver's license scanning, deal desking, F&I deal write-ups, F&I forms printing, customer follow-up, sales campaign management, wholesale and dealer trade reports, and more.

Vehicle management module – Your inventory is your biggest investment, so manage it well. The vehicle management module can help with: vehicle receiving, vehicle inventory management, rental vehicle management, vehicle service history, vehicle customer history, ability to print window stickers, and comprehensive reports.

Service module – If you want lifelong customers, you've got to offer superior customer service. This module can help with: service appointments, repair order write-ups, electronic VIN queries, electronic repair orders, factory claims, service reminders, repair order work and WIP Queue Management, and more.

Parts module – Organize and manage your entire parts inventory with the tools in this module: parts inventory, parts ordering, parts sales, parts catalog integration, quick parts list, special order integration with service, parts super sessions, and unlimited parts movement history.

Factory communications (DCS) module – To improve business operations from the factory, MPK has an impressive list of manufacturer interfaces: Audi, DaimlerChrysler (Master Certified), Ford, GM, Hyundai, Kia, Mazda, Subaru, Suzuki, and VW.

New additions to the MPK DMS system:

Like Microsoft, MPK is committed to continually revising and enhancing its offerings. The latest manifestation of this commitment is a partnership with bridgeSpeak. Also a Microsoft partner, bridgeSpeak uses Microsoft Speech

Server to provide an interactive voice system that is equipped with speech recognition. The bridgeSpeak solution is a connector between the MPK DMS and a dealership's phone system, automating customer calls that are normally made by the salespeople or BDC. For a dealer, having the MPK DMS equipped with bridgeSpeak is like having an around-the-clock cheerful phone operator who never calls in sick, gets lazy on the job, or provides sub-par customer service.

The bridgeSpeak system is engineered to help you stay in close contact with prospects and customers while also freeing up staff time, or even enabling you to cut back on staff. Among the benefits are:

- The ability to customize your dealership "caller" with your voice or a member of your team's voice, so that calls never seem automated or computerized
- Pre-set the automated caller with specific lists, including: prospect calls, day-before service reminder calls, marketing calls, etc.
- Pre-set CSI calls

MPK's partnership with bridgeSpeak can even help your dealership's marketing efforts. Using the abilities of the MPK DMS, you can isolate specific customers who are due for a service appointment, and send them a unique message. This message may offer them a free oil change if they come in for a service within the next two weeks, for example.

If you're frustrated with your DMS system, or intrigued by the idea of a Microsoft DMS, MPK Automotive is worth checking out. The MPK DMS is simple to use, easy to maintain, and built on one of the most powerful operating platforms in the industry. Implementing the MPK DMS could mean the end of your ambiguous relationship with your dealer management system.



For more information, call 866-587-9776, sales@mpkauto.com or www.mpkauto.com.

Mark Stephenson

President

Stephenson founded MPK after a management buy-out of the automotive business from a previous employer. He has held numerous positions in the IT and software development industry since 1977. His first automotive software project began in 1986 when he was co-inventor of an automotive Heads-Up Display. Stephenson oversees MPK's business interests and is currently responsible for MPK's marketing and sales efforts.

Kyle Hardin

Vice President, Customer Service

Hardin is responsible for customer service, which consists of customer satisfaction, help desk, and IT support. A Georgia Tech graduate, Hardin has been part of the DMS management team since 2001 and is one of the original shareholders of MPK. Prior to that, he has 12 years experience in computer science and management, ranging from code development to design and implementation of an international wide-area network to help desk management.

Paul Gracy

Vice President, Development

Gracy is responsible for software development, including factory communications. He also aids in release management. In the early 1990s, he worked as a software developer for an inventory management company, followed by a stint in network development and management, before returning to programming in client server environments. He has been working in the Microsoft Dynamics NAV environment since 2000, becoming vice president of Development in 2003 and was one of the original shareholders. Gracy is also a licensed pilot and certified flight instructor.

Daryl Joubert

Vice President, Consulting

Joubert is responsible for consulting and implementation, and assists with the product roadmap and release management. Previously, he worked for a Volkswagen-owned IT provider in the UK as the product manager for a Microsoft Dynamics NAV-based DMS implemented in Europe, Africa and Asia. He has been involved in developing, implementing, selling and supporting DMS solutions since the mid-1990s and joined MPK in 2006.