



## **Building Business Through Standards-Based Technology Highlights of the 2007 Aftermarket eForum**

*By Ron Garand, Vice President, Vertical Development*

Implementing technology is not only easier than you think, but it benefits every level of the aftermarket, as evidenced by real-world examples and dynamic presentations made at the 2007 Aftermarket eForum in July. Following are highlights of this year's presentations.

*IS Outsourcing for Manufacturers* provided insights on outsourcing components or entire IT functions to subcontractors, including those in India and other countries. Manufacturers need to consider the challenges of communicating effectively, dealing with rising pay scales in those countries and implementing quality control processes – issues that can negatively impact their estimated cost savings.

*Pursuing Excellence in Data Management* covered such topics as best practices for data management and how it applies to manufacturers, suppliers and business partners. Vertical Development clients will attest that while being an early adaptor is not always easy, its benefits and cost savings far outweigh waiting.

*eMarketing 2.0* reviewed using the Internet to expand sales and grow customer alliances. One Vertical Development client has an eBay department dedicated to keeping their store updated with the latest products. But they're not bypassing distribution channels; they're selling obsolete or non-interchangeable items from stock lifts, generating revenue from parts that they used to scrap.

*Global eCommerce Collaboration* discussed the progress made by TecDoc and AAIA to bring European and US standards in sync. It provided an insight into the collaborative global aftermarket of the future, and how all suppliers can be part of it. Vertical Development is already working on TecDoc initiatives to meet this need on behalf of our clients.

*Best of Inventory Efficiency Award Practices* detailed how to improve efficiencies in inventory management and featured innovations in supply chain management that provide a quick return to the bottom line. Good clean data is the key to implementing any inventory management project, and PIES can help companies refine their data to make it consistent.

*Technology Success in the Real World* demonstrated that while technology might sound expensive, small IT shops can produce quick results with a great return on investment through creative programming and leveraging open standards. Anne Coffman, Beck/Arnley's CIO, discussed standards-based initiatives that their staff of FOUR has implemented quickly and inexpensively. Recently, Beck/Arnley partnered with Vertical Development to replace their Affinia A.D.M.S. catalog and product management system.

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## *Building Business Through Standards-Based Technology – Continued*

*Current Trends in Online Retailing* was a panel discussion on how manufacturers can use the Internet to their best advantage. For example, many manufacturers today sell to virtual WDs or retailers who don't even own warehouses. This new marketplace powered by Amazon.com and e-Bay is readily available to manufacturers who have implemented ACES and PIES standards.

*Standards-based IT Solutions for Manufacturers* provided participants with real-world examples of the standards-based technology used at Federal-Mogul, one of the largest companies in the aftermarket with operations worldwide. CIO Mario Leone discussed how they used technology to address some of their greatest IT challenges.

*Technology at a Crossroads in the Aftermarket* provided eye-opening insights on the availability of high-speed Internet connections compared to just a few years ago. It was presented by Babcox Publications, which drew from its extensive research on distributors, stores and shops in this technology-enabled market. This is great news for Vertical Development clients utilizing our Web-updatable CD product and Web application guides.

*Industry Leader CARQUEST– IT in Support of Corporate Culture* provided an insightful look into the upcoming requirements for ACES and PIES data from their vendor partners. A recent mandate will require all CARQUEST vendors to be AAIA ACES and PIES compatible in 2008. CIO Joe Zuccherro discussed their heavy investment in open, standards-based technology as part of their overall customer support strategy, with the WorldPac division already running a completely ACES-driven catalog system.

*Breakout Sessions* touched on other important industry initiatives such as *Connecting the Dots*, which covered on-line ordering and other revolutions happening at the parts counter; *A Supplier's Take on Global Data Synchronization*, which emphasized technology's importance in today's connected world; *e-Training*, which covered "blended learning," a mixture of classroom and Web-based courses; and *SEMA\_BTC Pilot Project in Data Synchronization*, with success stories on implementing ACES and PIES standards in the SEMA marketplace.

*PIES 6.0 Available* - PIES version 6.0 represents a significant advancement for the standard, and is available by visiting the "Standards & Technology" page at [Product Information Exchange Standard \(PIES\)](#). Among its enhancements are significantly improved documentation including data definitions, simplified standards with unused fields removed, commonly used codes from third party sources, plus fully revised and compliant XML schema including constraint checks to ensure more reliable and accurate data exchange.

All of these sessions demonstrated the same thing – that the aftermarket is more technology dependent than ever before, and implementing standards-based technology can help businesses become more efficient and profitable.

That's where Vertical Development can help. Since being the first company to receive CCI/Triad Certified Development Partner Status, VDI has grown to become the preferred partner for more than 60 leading distributors and manufacturers – from small, cost-conscious companies to large organizations with complex integration needs. Our comprehensive systems are capable of managing applications, pricing, products, specifications and a myriad of other information. In addition to our own CD and Web solution extracts, our systems export seamlessly to industry standards such as AAIA ACES, Legacy, PIES; NAPA PartsPro and Attribute and retailer-specific formats.

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## *Building Business Through Standards-Based Technology – Continued*

Our solutions are based on each organization's needs, so customers own and have ready access to their data locally. Our mapping services are available for small and large projects, and require no multi-year contracts. We even offer catalog management services for companies that need a part-time catalog manager.

Companies preferring to outsource mapping and catalog management can now receive those services from VDI. What's more, they have ready access to the same team of industry experts available to all our clients, putting over 100 combined years of expertise to work for them.

With VDI, you can get your data to market faster and more accurately, giving you an incredible edge over your competition. To start your standards-based initiative, or for a FREE consultation and software demonstration, just call Vertical Development at 847-609-9540, or send an email to Ron Garand: [rgarand@verticaldev.com](mailto:rgarand@verticaldev.com)

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