



WORK TRUCK TECHNOLOGIES

PART 4

Kathryn Schifferle, CEO | 2018

In our previous articles, we revealed the fragmentation in the work truck industry supply chain that makes it difficult to track final configurations of work trucks and vans. We then learned how that missing data and the fragmentation of information affects business. Finally, we talked about the trends in partnering and mergers that could ultimately improve that fragmentation. In this final article, we are going to wrap up our series with a snapshot of a new technology, and a view of what the future brings.

The Current Trend

Today, the work truck industry is extremely devoid of technology. Even the largest manufacturers have limited technology. There are no “niche” ERPs for this industry, and manufacturers are slow in adapting to change. The OEM pools, body manufacturers, and their distributors are not connected digitally and as a result, there ends up being a lot of paper on clipboards and spreadsheets by email, adding an estimated 40 percent inefficiency to the process.

As a result, unfortunately, commercial truck buyers end up buying the wrong truck due to both time constraints and the lack of choice. Not just the time it takes for the “right” truck to be found and delivered, but also the time they cannot afford to wait while their old truck is out of commission or a new job starts. They are forced into a decision to buy the “wrong” truck out of necessity. Current market opacity, dealer culture, along with normal consumer behavior (i.e., smaller companies not being able to plan further ahead) fuels this process.

What’s to Be Done

Solving the problem of wrong work trucks being purchased requires strategic linking of information currently fragmented across the supply chain. In addition to providing information for the truck buyer, the solution must improve the knowledge base for the dealer sales channel personnel, supporting the “hand-off” of the buyer to the seasoned work truck sales professional (truck pro) in the dealership. It should also keep the truck pro up to date with vocational product information. The solution should be in the Cloud, and should be a single source or service that provides all the information necessary to deliver:

- An easy-to-use picture library/catalogue of vocation-specific trucks that quickly searches and returns the number of trucks or chassis/body combinations available
- Simple but detailed information on specifications of all chassis and body types
- Exact costs and shipping times, eliminating the need for additional emails and phone calls
- A “save” feature that allows anyone to make detailed and specific selections and save them for further referencing and design to share with their dealership
- Instant notification to any cell phone and/or email for quick follow-up
- Transparent linking to all dealers’ inventory nationwide, with availability through the dealership’s website

Incorporated into the solution would be a system that improves the process of efficiently processing the truck buyer inquiry at the dealership level, regardless of contact method. As noted, one of the pain points in the process that contributes to the wrong truck being purchased is the fact that the truck pro may not be involved early, or at all.

Bringing Solutions

This situation is why Work Truck Solutions was founded in 2010—to build just such a solution. It is a company of seasoned professionals with knowledge and depth in the work truck industry, as well as an understanding of the automotive industry culture and environment in which the commercial sales channel exists. The company has developed a Cloud-based solution that addresses the current problems outlined in this series. Its solution is a single platform that quickly provides all key stakeholders in the work truck sales process—the buyer, the dealer, the distributor, the body manufacturer, and the OEM—with accurate information on all upfitted and commercial inventory available, including location and tools to help close the deal.

In addition, Work Truck Solutions aggregates information from the body manufacturers, linking that content to information on the specific chassis VIN. The company’s vocational “carousel” lets the truck buyer visually select the type of finished truck they need for their business application. The inventory is searchable by chassis and body type, with a simplified online process for finding, quoting, and floor planning work truck inventory. Once the body type is selected, the truck buyer can easily view a list of the built vehicles currently available through their dealership, plus they can easily request more information on a specific configuration they may need to order. Additional filters speed the search for exactly the right truck or van.

Getting It Right

Today, with almost 900 commercial dealers in its network, Work Truck Solutions' inventory and data is growing rapidly and delivering value for both dealers and truck buyers, for OEMs, fleet management companies, body manufacturers, and distributors across the country.

Work Truck Solutions' platform shortens the time and delivery of accurate information for the "right" work truck to be located and delivered to the "right" place at the "right" time. The platform delivers this with unique applications specific to each stakeholder in the buying process, which eliminates confusion and simplifies the work truck buying and selling process across the entire supply chain. In fact, Work Truck Solutions also provides "Locator" buttons for body manufacturers, such as Knapheide, Reading, Supreme, and others, so that customers interested in that specific brand, or interested in their product line, can easily find upfitted vehicles on dealers' lots in their market area.

Work Truck Solutions is continuing to develop unique values for everyone in the industry—someday soon truck buyers may even be able to choose from "best practices" configurations for their specific vocational needs, have it customized and then delivered within weeks, without having to spend massive amounts of time searching for the right truck.

this article is part 4 of a 4-part series, including:

Work Truck Technologies Part 1

Supply Chain: How a Work Truck Gets to the Dealership

Work Truck Technologies Part 2

Missing Data: the Fragmentation of Industry Knowledge

Work Truck Technologies Part 3

Growing Pains: Partnerships, Mergers, and Missing Technology