

## **The Next Consolidation: “Competitive advantage through intelligent information management”**

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Information exchange between channel partners, customers and suppliers is at the forefront of discussions for many organizations. Demands for real time and accurate information is increasingly a requirement to secure preferred partnerships. By utilizing your information assets you can compete. By intelligently managing your information assets you are on your way to achieving competitive advantage.

Intelligent information management extends and adds versatility to your existing technology investments. It provides multi-location automotive repair organizations with a single global view of their business. All information assets of the organization are seamlessly integrated into one solution so there is no need to access multiple applications to analyze your business. Duplicate data entry is eliminated which frees up resources and produces a rapid return on investment. AutoHouse’s generis product utilizes intelligent information architecture and is the first solution designed to meet the specific needs of the automotive aftermarket.

Market consolidation continues to advance, aided by numerous organizations and channel partners promoting the emergence of repairer networks. The power of the network provides a member with benefits that were previously unattainable or financially prohibitive. These include increased market presence, increased buying power and management consultation. The trend thus far provides benefits through the consolidation of tangible assets such as multiple locations, wide geographic coverage, professional branding and buying discounts – all of which reflect positively on financial results.

Capitalizing on the intangible assets within the repairer network is a challenge worth pursuing, but is not yet common practice. Intelligent use of the data accumulated by each member repair facility and the consolidation of that data yields significant business advantage. Reporting of Key Performance Indicators (KPI’s) from across the network enables network managers to identify risks and capitalize on opportunities in real time. Operational efficiencies are attained through benchmarking and analysis of best practises. The value of the network increases.

Ironically, factors that provide tangible benefits to the network act as hurdles to unlocking the value of the intangible. These hurdles include multiple locations, wide geographic diversity and a variety of autonomous applications. Consolidation of data and having a diverse network of repair facilities act, react and report as one cohesive unit is worth further discussion.

### **Intelligent Information Management**

In today’s competitive business environment, information is power and organizing that information internally - between channel partners, customers and suppliers - can provide a competitive edge. Intelligent information management architecture is based on the premise that organizations interact with numerous software applications in their day-to-day operations. Intelligent information architecture connects people,

applications and data into a seamless federation that allows you to react to market conditions in real time.

The adoption of technology over the past two decades results in organizations accessing critical business information in a multitude of independent applications. Consolidating this data requires manual intervention and is resource intensive. Intelligent information architecture connects all applications and allows information to flow freely throughout the organization. Adding a central data repository to the solution allows any data within the enterprise to be consolidated and reported on regardless of data source.

In a multi-location automotive repair organization intelligent information architecture allows all data sources at the repair facility to be seamlessly integrated. As one application is updated with new data all other applications are also simultaneously updated. No process change is required and the user goes about their day-to-day operations as usual, unaffected by the hidden transactions taking place behind the scenes. Any data that the central site would like added to the data repository is mined from the applications at the repair facility and forwarded to the data repository at scheduled intervals without user interaction. This allows organizations to leverage existing investments in people and technology while gaining the benefits of an enterprise wide information system. Hard and soft costs of implementation are minimized since no disruption occurs at the repair facility.

At the central site, consolidation of all data occurs. The central repository receives data from multiple repair facilities and enables reporting and the viewing of KPI's. Business intelligence is achieved in real time from across multiple locations and multiple applications. You act and re-act as one cohesive unit allowing you to capitalize on opportunities your competitors don't even know exist.

Intelligent information architecture provides an additional benefit at the central site. Not all data is required to enter the data repository. It can be sectioned off and seamlessly integrated into other enterprise applications such as financial, scheduling or contact management. Rapid return on investment will be achieved here if your organization currently allocates resources to re-key data from one application to another, no data entry errors and no manual interaction required. This functionality reduces maintenance and support costs of a large, all-inclusive data repository but still delivers the data to the target destination where it is needed most.

Mitchell International partnered with AutoHouse in the development of generis for ABS. Generis extends the versatility and functionality of ABS, the industry's leading collision repair management system. Multi-location collision repairers can now implement a flexible and scalable enterprise information system which provides a snapshot of their entire business, not pieces of it.

In the foreseeable future automotive organizations will continue to interact with multiple applications while managing their businesses. They need to capitalize on their diverse and distributed information assets and utilize them to advance their initiatives. Intelligent information architecture provides a solution that addresses the need. Technology alone cannot provide competitive business advantage. Understanding that intelligent technology is most powerful when applied to age-old

virtues: delighted customers, strengthened partnerships and satisfied suppliers is a step in the right direction.

*A note about the author- Mike has 20 years experience in the automotive aftermarket and is the founder and President of AutoHouse Technologies Inc. Generis, AutoHouse's enterprise information system, has been specifically designed for the automotive aftermarket and utilizes intelligent information architecture. Mike can be contacted at [mike@autohousetechnologies.com](mailto:mike@autohousetechnologies.com) or at 604-760-9115.*