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Tue, 27 Sep 2011

Audatex Developing Virtual Window Into the Shop

Rick Tuuri explains two recent acquisitions lend some of the technology to make it work.

According to Rick Tuuri, Vice President, Industry Relations for Audatex, the company's recent acquisition of AutoWatch is part of a larger strategy to create a "virtual window into the shop." That strategy will focus on what he calls the "insurer and repairer" marketplace, as opposed to the "insurer or repairer" market.

In early September, Audatex announced that it had acquired See Progress, Inc., the company behind the AutoWatch system. The online application provides repair status updates to consumers along with digital images of their vehicle's repair progress in the shop.

Rick Tuuri
Vice President, Industry Relations, Audatex

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 The AutoWatch acquisition, said Tuuri, "dovetails nicely" with the February acquisition of the AutoFocus shop management system owned by NewEra Software. A product that Audatex said in February, "will be a key offering in our body shop suite of products."

"About a year and change ago, Audatex, actually Solera, earmarked $140 million to invest into the U.S. marketplace. And these latest acquisitions, particularly AutoWatch and NewEra, are the culmination of that, with more to follow," Tuuri said.

Tuuri explained that the company's strategy is to link the insurers, repairers and consumers through a "virtual window" into the shop, a concept that emerged through discussions with its Strategic Advisory Council, a customer feedback group composed of shops and insurers.

"We've been talking for several months now with that group about creating a virtual window into the shop," said Tuuri. In fact, he said the idea emerged as "the number one priority" of the Advisory Council.

Tuuri explained, "The virtual window into the shop allows the insurer and the consumer to 'see' the repair progress of the vehicle. The management system allows the repairer to determine who they share repair status with and how they share it. It enables the ability to 'passively' share status updates, so that when the insurer or consumer wants to know, they could view progress, probably on a website, eliminating the need for telephone calls.

"The shop could also 'push' information to the insurer or consumer using e-mail or text messaging as an example, however the receiving party would like to be contacted," Tuuri said.

According to Tuuri, the entire system ultimately saves time and money, and improves customer satisfaction. "All of this provides systemic contact between all parties, eliminates interruptions, frees up resources, improves the ability to plan all steps of the process and improves communication," Tuuri concluded.