Data Collection

Volvo Cars shortens inspection process by three weeks

When a company's reputation is based on the safety of its products, quality assurance is of the utmost importance. Such is the case with Volvo Cars (www.volvocars.com), where safety and quality are synonymous with the Volvo name. To maintain this reputation, Volvo continuously inspects its vehicles – from manufacturing to showroom floor – as part of a rigorous quality assurance program. Inspection data, combined with warranty claims and audit information, allows Volvo to find and resolve any anomalies and maintain the safety and quality for which Volvo is famous.

Across North America, 125,000 Volvos arrive annually at four different ports, and each car requires inspection. Volvo inspectors used to record data on clipboards for up to 40 different items. The forms were hand-separated and given to a vendor for database entry. By the time data was compiled, up to three weeks could have passed. Adding to the challenge, inspection forms were frequently updated to meet current inspection criteria. "The whole paper-based system was very difficult to deal with," said Art Rybin of Volvo's Port Operations group.

That's when Volvo decided to improve the cumbersome process. Working with TikiSoft, Inc. (www.tikisoft.com), a Palm™ Solutions Provider, they devised a solution to fully automate data collection and compilation.

Today, inspectors record information on Palm V™ handhelds using pick-lists and check-boxes. Every evening, Palm HotSync® technology is used to transfer data to a central location where it is consolidated and analyzed. Now, inspection results are immediately available.

"The Palm OS® -based system is so easy to use, not only for the inspectors, but for the managers who update the inspection forms," said Marc Weiss, President of TikiSoft, Inc. "Inspection points can be modified for a particular model or make of auto, at any time, without our technical assistance or additional development costs," added Weiss.

"We chose the Palm handheld because of its size and durability. It doesn't have any moving parts – no lids or keyboards to get damaged – which is perfect for our mobile workers," commented Rybin. As an environmentally-conscious company, Volvo especially liked the Palm V handheld's rechargeable batteries.

Not only has the Palm OS-based solution completely eliminated manual data entry, overnight mailings, and the need to update and print new forms, it's also reduced data turnaround from as much as three weeks to one day. Now, if an inspector notices an anomaly, Volvo resolves it weeks earlier, with significant savings of time and money.

Initially used at Port Hueneme, CA, Volvo now uses over 100 Palm V handhelds at all of its North American ports, enabling the company to fully leverage its quality control information to maintain its reputation as a provider of safe, high-quality automobiles.

Enterprise: Volvo Cars

Industry: Automotive

Application: Automated data collection process for inspecting automobiles

Profile: Widely recognized for safety, quality and environmental care, Volvo cars rank as one of the world's most respected automobiles.

Mobilize Your Enterprise

One of a series that profiles real-world handheld computing solutions on the Palm OS®.

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