



For Immediate Release

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NASTF STEPS TO CLOSE GAPS IN TECH EDUCATION

March 8, 2013; Overland Park, KS – Four automaker (OEM) executives presented revealing details about their requirements for service under their dealer franchise agreements. Five aftermarket experts followed by examining the current status of service-readiness among independent shops. This unique conversation between OEMs and the aftermarket is the hallmark benefit of efforts by the National Automotive Service Task Force (NASTF) and unfolded before a diverse industry audience during VISION2013 at the 2013 Spring NASTF General Meeting in Overland Park, KS on Friday, March 8.

Kelly Geist, Service Engineering Manager for Subaru; Mark Saxonberg, Service Technology Manager for Toyota; Bob Stewart, Aftermarket Service Support for GM and Jim Von Ehr, Manager, Technical Information and Serviceability of Nissan each gave valuable insight into their service department business models. Saxonburg explained “the availability of service information doesn’t, itself, make a tech service-ready.” He listed five additional resources as necessary: factory diagnostic functions, product knowledge, tech assistance support, factory parts options and a commitment to learning. Stewart extolled the benefits of GM’s long-term strategy in technician development demonstrated in GM’s ASEP (Automotive Service Education Program), which is a partnership with their franchise dealer spanning from high school through a tech’s working career. Geist described Subaru’s requirement of minimum tool investments from Toughbook laptops to some 400 special tools costing about \$50,000. “We roll out about 20 new special tools a year and they are shipped automatically to our franchise dealers,” revealed Geist. Von Ehr described the Nissan MSTR (Minimum Service Training Requirements) and showed their positive correlation to the F-1 scores (Fixed Right the First Time Score) for Nissan dealers. In closing, Von Ehr argued our industry needs more than just highly-qualified techs. “We need more techs at all levels,” he said. “With the right training requirements in place, we’ll get more highly-qualified techs from that larger pool of techs.”

Bob Augustine of Christian Brothers Automotive, Bob Beckmann of Beckmann Technologies, Aaron Cherrington of Identifix, Jeff Minter of Madison Technical College and Rusty Savignac of Paxton Garage followed the OEM Roundtable and dug deeper into solutions for closing the service-readiness gap among independent shops. “It’s harder today to fit all the necessary training into just a two-year college program,” says Minter. He’s concerned that education is too focused on pattern-failures and not enough depth in system understanding that would be useful in developing diagnostic skills. Cherrington points out that today’s techs must be resourceful. “A 2010 Ford has about 11 million lines of software code,” he says. “A tech today must have information partners.” Augustine encourages shops to develop a “training roadmap” with compensation incentives for higher skill levels. Savignac, who operates Paxton Garage in Massachusetts, contends that independent shops must accept responsibility for turning tech school grads into qualified techs. “My two best techs came from post-secondary schools and got OJT, refined,” he explained. Beckmann is a Euro-specialist and contracts to assist shops with service in advanced systems not yet mastered in their shop. “One difference that separates troubled [shops] from successful [shops] is their attitude towards asking for help,” notes Beckmann. “The successful will reach out for help quickly.”

“NASTF, too, needs to reach out,” said Skip Potter, NASTF Executive Director announcing his recent membership in the Automotive Training Manager’s Council (ATMC). “It is NASTF’s strategy to engage with them to efficiently and effectively close the education component of the service-readiness gap. In fact,” he continued, we seek partnerships with any industry organization that has the existing mandate and resources to help close the gaps between dealership and independent capabilities.”

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The slides for the two panel discussions may be viewed from the NASTF website at www.nastf.org/GeneralMeetings.

In addition to the complex service-readiness topic presented during the Spring 2013 NASTF General Meeting, other significant content filled the afternoon program. The opening presentation, ***Why Automakers Should Support Aftermarket Telematics***, by Charlie Gorman, Chairman of NASTF and President of the Equipment and Tool Institute points out that quality new cars sold by today's OEMs are becoming quality used cars serviced in the aftermarket. "Embracing aftermarket diagnostic solutions," says Gorman, "pays dividends because it makes for happy owners; and happy owners have a tendency to become loyal to the brand". Gorman described, in detail, a technical strategy which would consolidate competing telematics technologies into one, efficient network, taking advantage of the creative free marketplace in developing multiple solutions to benefit the consumer.

To close the afternoon program NASTF committee chairs participated in a unique panel format to discuss their charters and initiatives with the NASTF Executive Director and the audience. Bob Chabot (Collision Committee), John Cabaniss (Communications Committee), Karen Miller and Rob Morrell (Education Committee), Steve Douglas (Service Information Committee), Greg Potter and Donny Seyfer (Equipment & Tool Committee) and Mark Saxonberg (Vehicle Security Committee) participated. Committee reports and meeting summaries which are normally presented at the General Meeting are made available from the webpage of the individual committee. For the charter, meeting notes, the roster and committee responsibilities visit www.nastf.org/committees.

NASTF was established in 2000 to identify, communicate and resolve gaps in the availability and accessibility of automotive service information, service training, diagnostic tools, and equipment for the benefit of automotive service professionals and their customers. NASTF was incorporated in 2006 as a 501(c)(6) not-for-profit organization. Additional details can be found at www.nastf.org.