

The president's hotline

What can software do for you?

COLUMN BY JIM THOMAS

Three years ago my business relied on hand written invoices, seat-of-the-pants ordering methods and inventory control. We had to look up a customer to see what special requirements were needed to do business with them—purchase orders and list prices shown on every invoice; tax/no tax; who was authorized to sign for the account; where to mail the statement; to whose attention; and on and on.

Today all of these items and many more are handled by the computer system that includes a server and seven work stations. The system covers all our needs from point of sale to information access and bill of materials for the rebuild shop. The information access work stations allow the techs to visit OE Web sites and use other software like ALLDATA and Mitchell, as well as all of the on-line sites for our suppliers including CARQUEST, NAPA, Federated and O'Reilly's.

The bill of material softwares include: APPTRAK Software, Lester Catalog, Electric Motor Service, J&N Auto Electric, Romaine Electric, Boston Auto Electric, and many more. We have one work station dedicated just to internet sales and research related to internet sales. We have an e-mail account for all departments and management people with instant messaging direct to many of our main source suppliers and their key people. We can communicate with them without being tied up on the phone on hold—thus keeping our phones free in the process.

We now can place a stock order to all of our suppliers based on actual sales from the previous day, week or month via the internet and receive the incoming order without having to input a single item. We can globally change prices at anytime for any product line or all product lines in minutes.

Printing accurate statements with correct addresses and current information is done in a heart beat. Changing terms and prices to any individual account for any part number or line can be done with a few keystrokes. Making sure all of a specific customer's needs are met—no problem. This is what a good software system should and can do for you—mine

does—does yours? If not ask me what could work for you. I can answer your questions.

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