

By Gigi Ho & Tom Moore

Let's Talk ACES

And We Don't Mean Texas Hold 'Em



■ Not only is it important to manufacture parts that fit properly, you must also send that information to point-of-sale systems so that you can *sell* the parts.

At this point, you might be thinking “Who cares? I already *have* a parts catalog with year, make and model,” or “I sell performance parts, and my customers couldn't care less about year, make and model configurations.” Or maybe you're thinking both. But neither is a reason to ignore ACES.

Why Is ACES Important to SEMA Members?

ACES is a *data* standard for application information. That means it's a standard way of referring to vehicles that makes it perfectly clear to an unthinking computer which part fits which vehicle. With a data standard, two computer systems can communicate and understand electronically cataloged product information without human intervention. And that saves lots of time and money. Said Lou Lobsinger, the National Sales Manager for Proform Parts: “Using the AAIA standards, we've been able to not only deliver data to our distributors, but we've also been able to publish our product data onto our website for visitors to search and find what they're looking for without having to manage multiple files, databases and documents.” That means Lobsinger has fewer calls to customer service and fewer returns for wrong orders.

Having a catalog in your own format is fine if none of your customers use electronic catalogs or if you sell only

So if we're not talking about poker, what are we talking about? We are talking about ACES, or the AAIA Catalog Enhanced Standard, which is a way to very specifically define what part fits what vehicles.

You might ask yourself, “Why do I need to learn about ACES, and what will it do for me?”

Consider that, on the upside, using ACES can expand your market reach, increase your sales and reduce your overhead. On the downside, ACES will create an opportunity for your competitors to move ahead of you if you choose to ignore it.

What the Heck Is ACES?

ACES is the standard way of defining and describing vehicles and the different attributes or features they have that affect which parts fit them. There are actually 54 different characteristics that a vehicle may have that impact how parts fit—things such as year, make, model, engine, body, transmission type or even

fuel delivery, or the presence of accessories such as air conditioning or power steering. ACES provides the ability to electronically match parts with the vehicles they fit using a single standard format. Simply put, ACES allows all members of the supply chain to easily and consistently communicate what parts fit what vehicles.



direct to consumer. Increasingly, more and more big resellers are insisting on getting the data they need in standard formats so that parts may be sold quickly and accurately. Computer systems must be able to communicate with point-of-sale systems with minimum human intervention. Data standards allow for that. Since standards will allow products to get into point-of-sale systems quicker, they reduce lost sales and increase customer satisfaction while reducing sales that cause returns. All that can be achieved by adopting ACES.

While it is a fact that most performance parts buyers and sellers don't need year, make and model data to sell their parts, ACES includes much more than just those three attributes. The ACES standard includes information about engine type, displacement, wheelbase,


transmission type and bed configuration that may meet many of the specializations of performance parts. And because ACES is in a relational database format, it allows programmers of websites and electronic catalogs a lot of versatility when building their products.

To a manufacturer, ACES is a standardized tool set used to create and maintain electronic catalog information. ACES provides for one accepted and recognized format for delivering application information about products. Some of the largest parts retailers and even performance and racing parts distributors have either already adopted or are moving toward adopting the ACES standard, so requirements for their catalog data is more important than previously thought.

"Being able to have our parts data centralized and standardized in the ACES format has enabled us to easily maintain and enhance our product info as well as meet all our distributors' data demands to get our desired market

reach," said Bob Sheid, vice president of Fianza Engineering. By adopting ACES, the manufacturer saves time, expense and resources in delivering data to multiple customers. Imagine the market growth and all the new consumers that could be gained.

The most important thing to remember is that *data is an asset!* Having clean, standardized data will make it easily possible to sell more products more efficiently. It will help increase sales and market share while reducing lost sales, minimizing returns and, ultimately, lead to greater customer satisfaction.

Don't hold back; sell more parts. Show 'em your ACES! 

Digital Performance is an e-business solutions provider with products and services tailored for the automotive aftermarket. Digital Performance is based in Long Beach, CA. For more information, visit www.digitalperformance.com.