

VIN Explosion: How Important Are VINs to You?

In this new age of technology, the automotive industry is exploring new areas of providing valuable customer service. In the search for valuable service, research and discussions are focusing on the uses of today's Vehicle Identification Number (VIN). Special correspondent, Tim Moran for *Automotive News* reports that "some people in the industry believe the VIN, a combination of 17 characters and letters stamped on a metal plate on the dashboard of a vehicle, holds much more potential – but not without drawbacks."

"Identification numbers were standardized in the 1970s. That is when manufacturers, insurers, data gatherers and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration agreed on the benefit of setting a single approach to serial numbers. The combination of letters and numbers includes placement of key information mandated by the government agency and unique sequences selected by manufacturers."

"VINs rarely identify such consumer-interest items as vehicle color. And only a few large-scale option packages are reported in many brands." "It doesn't go very deep, so in terms of options on the vehicle you're completely in the dark," says Jeremy Anwyl, president of Edmunds.com. "The marketplace doesn't know what's on the car. 'The VIN should be a number that unlocks a trove of valuable consumer information for many kinds of transactions.'"

"Whether a change to the physical VIN is needed to extend that knowledge is unclear. Informal industry discussions have taken place about the potential for lengthening the VIN to identify more information for manufacturers and consumers, but the conversations have not led to any concrete action," says Bill Weber, managing director of software services at R.L. Polk & Co. "There are some things that could be done in standard format today that would be adding additional information not contained within the VIN today. Such information could include trim level, a more detailed description of options included on the vehicle, color and other market-useful notes."

Simon Phipps, network expert for Sun Microsystems is concerned that although the VIN could help automakers and service providers track personal data to a car being driven, the consumer's privacy may be compromised. Skeptics are concerned that it could serve as an account identifier for tolls, taxes, and parking. "When they begin tying driving behavior and other types of promotions through telematics, there's going to be some pretty significant privacy issues that the OEMs and service providers... are going to have to contend with", says Scott Fredericks, Carfax's vice president of marketing.

Moran concludes that "Balancing utility and privacy will need to be added to the discussion about VIN use before any changes are contemplated." One thing is certain, extensive discussions will continue on whether revamping the VIN to provide additional vehicle information will actually serve customers better.

What's New

- 1 VIN Explosion: How Important Are VINs to You?**
- 2 Labor Day Schedule**
- 3 Phone Shop Perfection!**
- 4 New Enhancements**

Labor Day Schedule

We extend our warm wishes to you over the holiday weekend! Although our office will be observing Labor Day on Monday, September 3rd, our Client Services staff will be available to assist you from 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time. Call us at **1-800-523-8477, option 5**.

Have a happy and safe holiday!



Helping to provide the best in client and customer satisfaction!

Phone Shop Perfection!

Congratulations to all those who received a 100% score on Phone Shops for the month of July. They all gave to-the-penny quotes, did not transfer the incoming callers to alternative departments, and asked the caller for their business.

Balise Chrysler	Lorraine
Brandywine Porsche	Jason
Classic Cadillac	Lisa C.
Clemons Inc.	Lou
Del Toyota	Sue
Five Town Porsche	Chris
Grappone Toyota	Doug
Hammersley Motors Isuzu	Kim
Harley Swain Subaru	Lyle
Shelton Porsche	J.R.
Southern Oregon Mitsubishi	Jason
Southern Oregon Volvo	Jason
Tansky's Sawmill Toyota	Mark
Terry Shaver Pontiac, Inc.	Steve, Tim
Toyota of Puyallup	Steve
Tri-County Toyota	Eric
Uebelhor Buick	Jasper

NEED SUPPORT?

You can reach us at ...

1-800-523-8477

Fax: 301-294-4979

Accounting – press 1

Sales – press 2

Installation – press 3

Client Services – press 5

ServicePricing™ Changes – press 7

New Enhancements



As always, we are working hard to add all the new developments that you have requested. If you would like to see an operation added that isn't currently included, please let us know.

The following are the latest improvements:

- **Audi US:** Now contains 2001 model year information for the Internal and Retail Accessory sections.
- **Audi Canada:** Now contains 2001 model year information for the Internal and Retail Accessory sections.
- **Ford US:** New operation - Battery Load / Charge Test (EL 63) - has been added.
- **Honda Canada:** Now contains 2001 data for all sections.
- **Mitsubishi:** The following sections have been updated with 2000-2001 model information: Engine and Service Menus. This completes the 2000-2001 model year update.
- **Subaru:** The following sections have been updated with 2002 model information: Service Menus, Maintenance, Tune-Up, and Brakes.

40 West Gude Drive, Suite 200
Rockville, MD 20850



Client Services Support 1-800-523-8477, option 5
Visit www.DealerSuite.com