

**OEM Website Audit Steering Committee
Conference Call Notes
December 2, 2004**

The second meeting of the OEM Website Audit Steering Committee took place by conference call on December 2, 2004. Participants on the call included Holly Pugliese (US EPA), and John Cabaniss, John Daley, Steve Douglas, Eddie Ehlert, Bob Everett, Neal Zipser (Paul Foley's proxy), Ron Garrett, Charlie Gorman, Bill Haas, Aaron Lowe, Dave Scaler, Donnie Seyfer, Ron Turner, and Mark Warren (see the official Steering Committee roster for each member's affiliation). Bill Balcke, Twohy Murray, and Monika Chandra, from Perrin Quarles Associates, Inc., were also on the call.

A. Introduction

PQA began the meeting with an informal role call of Steering Committee members. Major points from the last meeting were summarized, and the agenda of the meeting was briefly described.

B. Auditor Application

During the previous meeting, Bill Haas, Mark Warren, and Paul Foley volunteered to develop an application survey for technicians. Bill Haas described the creation and objectives of the draft survey. Each committee member was given a chance to comment. One member commented that the survey questions seemed like marketing questions and expressed a concern that the survey did not mention specific tasks the auditors might perform. Mark Warren reassured the member that the subcommittee created the survey with the intention of characterizing experience and ability.

Another member believed an introduction should be added explaining that a range of technicians were needed and desired. The member was concerned that some technicians would not apply if it appeared that the survey targeted only one type of technician. The same member noted that applicants should be asked to list their years of experience. Bill Haas volunteered to make this addition to the survey. In addition, PQA agreed to add an introductory comment to the survey.

Next began a lengthy discussion regarding the final question on the draft survey. This question requests technicians to indicate, by percent, the extent to which they use different types of technical information resources. The discussion began when one member questioned subdividing the list of ten resources. The member believed three resources, repair manuals/printed publications, electronic service information (ALLDATA, Mitchell, etc.), and OEM website, should be listed in a separate resource category. Mark Warren commented that the subcommittee chose the ten resources based on a question in the Babcock surveys.

The draft survey asks applicants to list their use of the ten resources by percent. One member questioned whether the percentage was actually necessary. Mark Warren agreed that the question should be rephrased. A second member agreed, commenting that asking technicians to select a percentage was too subjective and tedious. As an alternative, the member suggested that applicants simply check the resources with which they have experience. Another suggestion was that applicants rank the resources on a one-to-five scale from most used to least used. Several members agreed with this suggestion.

The discussion then returned to the earlier proposal to subdivide the final question's list of ten resources. One member suggested two categories, repair information and training resources. Several committee members agreed. Another member suggested that the resource listed as "on-line services" should be revised to read "technician online hotlines."

A third member questioned whether an applicant's resource use was pertinent to the selection process. Several members commented that the question was necessary to select a broad range of technicians with variable training and ability. EPA agreed that questions pertaining to use of service resources were important while questions concerning training resources were not necessary but could yield interesting information about the applicants. EPA suggested subdividing the resources into service resources and training resources.

One member agreed that resources could be more easily ranked if they were subdivided into service and training resources. However, the committee remained divided as to how technicians would rank their resource use. Most members favored a one-to-five scale, agreeing that it would be much simpler than the percent scaling proposed in the draft survey. Other members expressed concern with the one-to-five scale believing applicants would answer the question giving little thought to their answer. By listing all 5's on the final question, an applicant would discredit other responses on the survey. The group finally agreed that the resources should be subdivided into two groups, and the resource question should be simple and brief. It was decided that a one-to-five scale was the most effective way to accomplish this goal.

Bill Haas agreed to revise the survey. PQA summarized the three revisions, which will include 1) adding a question addressing years of experience, 2) subdividing technician resources into service resources and training resources, and 3) rephrasing the final question of the survey to include a one-to-five scale rating system for technician use rather than the percent rating system recommended in the draft survey.

EPA made an additional suggestion that the survey state that applicants not selected for the OEM audit project could still be selected for future projects. Several members agreed with the suggestion. PQA agreed to add this comment to the survey's introduction.

C. Selection Criteria

PQA began the discussion of selection criteria by asking two questions. First, do technicians need to be certified? And second, will applicants be selected by the entire Steering Committee or by a selection subcommittee? Referring to John Cabaniss' email, one member stated that technicians should not be required to have L1 ASE certifications. Limiting technician ability would limit the variety of applicants. In the previous meeting, members agreed that the audit process would most successful if technicians had a variety of experience and ability. Several other members agreed that requiring L1 ASE requirement would violate this stated goal. One member commented that many good technicians do not have L1 certifications. Another noted that some specialist have no need for an L1 certifications.

EPA noted that a selection process will only be necessary if too many technicians apply. The major points from the previous discussion were again restated. The survey should not be used to discourage or limit the applicants. The group agreed that a broad survey was necessary to encourage a mix of applicants and maintain a balanced perspective in the audit process.

Although the committee agreed that a selection process would only be necessary if too many applicants applied, EPA suggested a small subcommittee begin discussion of the selection process. Committee members agreed that a small group would be most effective. Holly Pugliese, Donnie Seyfer, and Eddie Ehlert volunteered. PQA encouraged other members to volunteer through email.

D. Method for Conducting the Audit

PQA noted that during the last meeting, the committee agreed that interim deadlines were the most effective way to ensure ongoing participation by technicians. PQA suggested auditors be given four to five groups of ten questions for each interim deadline. Each set of questions would be categorized and apply to a different website feature. PQA then proposed three methods by which auditors could evaluate websites. The three methods included a one-to-ten scale system, a pass/fail system, and an open ended response system.

One member did not believe that website features could be easily categorized into different groups. In addition, the member stated that the audit should answer two primary questions: 1) is the technical service information available, and 2) can the information be easily found? The member felt that all website features were addressed by these two questions and did not believe any one rating system could provide a complete and accurate response.

Mark Warren of PWR Training responded by discussing his own experience evaluating OEM websites. He stated that open ended questions were not sufficient. The

survey developed by PWR used a checklist of topics from the regulation, and he suggested that the Steering Committee use a similar method. However, Mark also noted that a rating system was critical and that the pass/fail method would be ineffective. An example was given using the website search engine feature. Pass/fail gives no information regarding the effectiveness of the search engine. He commented that search engines can work on several levels (e.g., keyword search, title search, partial word search, etc.), and the quality of each should be evaluated. The survey should include some easy questions but should remain specific, according to Mark. As a solution, he suggested a checklist with a rating option, allowing the auditor to note the effectiveness of specific features.

Another member believed a rating system alone would not provide useful information. The member felt an auditor's rating would depend largely on the auditor's personality (e.g., optimistic versus cynical). The member suggested that the auditor be asked to explain their rating in a notes column.

Several members were concerned that a notes column would complicate the survey and would dissuade auditors from offering thorough and accurate responses. Mark Warren noted that in PWR Training's evaluation of OEM websites, each survey took a minimum of two hours to complete and some took up to five. One member commented that busy shop owners would be unwilling to commit several hours to a website evaluation. EPA noted that the questions should remain practical and that a PWR type analysis was not necessary or reasonable given the scope of this project. As a solution, one member suggested technicians only address questions pertaining to the technician's current project. For instance, if a technician was working on Mod 6, then the technician could address questions relating specifically to Mod 6 technical information, leaving the rest of the survey blank.

Another member believed this could also be accomplished simply by changing the survey's focus with each interim deadline, as originally suggested. The committee selected two weeks as the interim deadline for each survey period. One member in support of interim deadlines noted that deadlines were necessary to identify and drop nonrespondents. However, another member felt that interim deadlines were unreasonable because technicians may not have to use their assigned site during the two week period. As a solution, the member suggested each technician be assigned three sites, thereby allowing the technician some leniency. In the interest of time, PQA suggested further discussion of the audit process be discussed through email. Mark Warren agreed to email documents pertaining to PWR's website audit. Ron Turner and Holly Pugliese also agreed to share their ideas on the audit process as an alternative to the PWR analysis. Committee members agreed that the list of important audit topics/questions found in the meeting agenda was complete.

E. Communication

PQA also asked for comments on the Draft Site Map for the OEM website. The committee gave its approval of the website design.

PQA suggested an Excel spreadsheet be used by technicians during the audit. One member commented that some repair shops do not have access to Excel but noted an Excel reader is available on Microsoft's website. However, the member cautioned the committee on the reader's potential incompatibility with existing versions of Excel. The committee agreed that an Excel spreadsheet would be used but if a technician did not have access to Excel then a PDF document could be used and even faxed to the technician.

One member asked PQA and EPA if a website address had been selected since Motor Magazine has a two month lead time to publish information. PQA responded that the address had not been assigned but will be shortly. The group agreed that the address should be publicized in Motor Magazine and other industry related sources. Members also agreed that the website should be activated as soon as possible. If the website is not completed prior to the acquisition of a website address, then the site should be activated with a statement posted on the website's homepage.

F. Next Steps

PQA summarized the major action items of the meeting and asked for any further comments by committee members. One member questioned whether dealer technicians would be selected as auditors. EPA stated that participating technicians should be independents. A Ford dealership technician evaluating Ford's OEM site would create an obvious conflict of interest. The OEM audit was designed to be an independent evaluation of the industry. However, several members saw no reason to dissuade would be applicants and stated that few dealer technicians would even apply. Those that did apply would be clearly identified as dealer technicians using the auditor application, which requests the technician's place of business. The group agreed to discuss the issue further following the completion of the application period.

PQA asked for further comments. Bob Everett of Alliance of Automotive Service Providers (AASP) suggested the committee use a discussion forum rather than emails to share comments and ideas. AASP's discussion forum is currently online and available. Bob Everett agreed to share the link. Before concluding the call, Charlie Gorman announced that he would be unable to attend the next meeting.

G. Action Items

- (1) Bill Haas will make several revisions to the technician application survey. One new question will be added to the survey relating to overall technician experience. Two changes will be made to the survey's final question, which relates to resources used

for technical information. The ten resources listed in the original question will be divided into two groups, service resources and training resources. In addition, the question will be rephrased to include a one-to-five scale rating system, which will replace the existing reference to percent use. Applicants will be asked to rate the resources from most used to least used.

- (2) Holly Pugliese, Donnie Seyfer, and Eddie Ehlert will design a selection process. The process will only be used if the committee receives too many applicants.
- (3) The discussion of the audit will continue via email. Mark Warren will share documents from PWR Training's survey of OEM websites. In addition, Holly Pugliese and Ron Turner will share more information regarding their suggestions for the audit process.
- (4) Bob Everett will email committee members a link to AASP's discussion forum. Committee members will decide via email whether this is a viable alternative to email discussions.
- (5) The Steering Committee's next conference call will be held on Thursday, December 9, 2004 at 2:00 PM Eastern Standard time. If a Steering Committee member is unable to attend, a proxy may be sent.