

**OEM Website Audit Steering Committee Conference Call Notes
January 27, 2005**

The seventh meeting of the OEM Website Audit Steering Committee took place by conference call on January 27, 2005. Participants on the call included Holly Pugliese (U.S. EPA), John Daley, Steve Douglas, Eddie Ehlert, Ron Garrett, Charlie Gorman, Bill Haas, Dean Hermano, Aaron Lowe, Donnie Seyfer, and Ron Turner. Monika Chandra, Doran Stegura, and Twohy Murray from Perrin Quarles Associates, Inc. were also on the call.

A. Introduction

PQA began the meeting with an informal roll call. There were no additions to the agenda.

B. Communication

A link to EPA's Service Information regulation issued on June 27, 2003 was added to the OEM audit website based on discussion in the Steering Committee's January 20, 2005 conference call. The Web page can be accessed by selecting "Service Information Website Regulation" from the toolbar on the left side of the OEM audit website. There were no suggestions to improve or change the website.

C. Technicians Who Have Applied to Perform Evaluations

PQA announced that 113 technicians have registered for the OEM audit as of 1:30 PM Eastern Standard time Thursday, January 27, 2005. Ninety four of the technicians have applied online, while nineteen had previously expressed interest at the OEM Audit Conference in November 2004. PQA noted that the Steering Committee's initial goal was to acquire between 200 and 260 applicants. One member noted that he had contacted several Pennsylvania technicians, directly asking them to participate in the audit. The member asked PQA how many applicants were from Pennsylvania. PQA responded that there are currently 19 Pennsylvania applicants. The member encouraged other committee members to contact technicians in a similar manner.

EPA noted that NADA had been contacted since the last conference call and had agreed to post information about the OEM audit. EPA added that Mark Johnson from Auto Body Repair News plans to write an article about the audit in the magazine's upcoming issue. One member questioned whether ASE had been contacted. A member responded that Dave Cappert Calfer had posted information relating to the audit on ASE's website. EPA noted that ASA had also posted information on its website. EPA asked Steve Douglas whether OEMs with service information websites had been contacted. Steve responded OEMs had not been contacted, but that he planned to send an email soon.

One member asked when the complete technician application would be available online. EPA reminded the member that the application must first undergo internal review by the EPA. The application needs to be approved before it can be added to the OEM audit website. The audit questionnaire will have to undergo a similar evaluation. Once the questionnaire is finalized, EPA will submit both documents for review. It is unclear how long this process will take.

There was one revision to the technician application based on the January 20, 2005 conference call. The revised question asks applicants to define their company as an "independent dealer," "mass merchandiser," or "franchise car dealer." PQA asked for comments on this change. One member suggested changing "independent dealer" to "independent car dealer." The member also suggested providing examples of mass merchandisers. Another member suggested removing "franchise" from franchise car dealer. A third member suggested providing "used car dealer" as a fourth OEM option. Another member suggested adding "franchise" to "mass merchandiser." One member disagreed but felt that examples of mass merchandisers should be provided.

In an effort to move the discussion forward, one member asked the Committee why the question was necessary. A committee member expressed his concern that new car dealers would be allowed to evaluate their company's OEM website. This would create an obvious conflict of interest. One member responded that this could be avoided by simply asking applicants if they were a new car dealer and if so, for what brand. Another member added that even this was not necessary. Dealer technicians could be identified simply by evaluating the company name, which applicants are required to supply. A fourth member noted that some dealer technicians work for multi-brand dealers. A member reminded the Committee that the basic premise of the audit was simplicity and that the question seemed to complicate the application.

One member agreed and suggested that the question be deleted. However, several other members felt that the question had statistical value. One member disagreed and stated that a technician's association with a dealership would be clear from the company name provided. The member estimated that 90% of dealer technicians could be identified using the company name. PQA noted that most of the 113 applicants appeared to be independent technicians. Only one dealership technician could be identified by PQA based on the company name. EPA suggested that the question be removed. In all cases where the applicant's status as a dealership technician is in question, EPA suggested contacting the applicant directly. The Committee agreed.

D. Revised OEM Website Audit Questionnaire

Content

Several revisions were made to the content of the draft audit questionnaire based on the January 20, 2005 conference call. PQA asked for comments on these changes. Segment 1 and Segment 2 were not revised.

Segment 3

Five questions were added to segment 3. The additions included questions 3.9 through 3.13. The five questions were moved to segment 3 from segment 4 based on their content. There were no comments on this revision.

Segment 4

Holly Pugliese and Donnie Seyfer made several revisions to segment 4. Holly summarized the changes and noted that she had tried to clarify the language of the questions. One member commented on the wording of question 4.2. The member noted that based on the wording, question 4.2 appeared to be only applicable to auditors answering "yes" to question 4.1. Question 4.3 presented the same problem, according to the member. The member was concerned that auditors who had not performed reprogramming or reinitialization would be discouraged from answering the questions in segment 4. As a result, the input of technicians, who access reprogramming and reinitialization information without using it, would be lost. As a solution, the member proposed replacing the past tense "were you able" with the present tense "are you able" in questions 4.2 and 4.3. In addition, the member suggested adding the phrase "for this OEM" to question 4.1.

Another member questioned the objective of question 4.6 and asked for clarification of the term "software." Donnie Seyfer, the author of the question, responded that 4.6 was necessary because many OEM websites do not provide software information. He noted that questions 4.5 and 4.6 apply specifically to reflashing software. In response, one member suggested substituting "reflashing" for "software." Donnie noted that OEMs were required to provide other software in addition to reflashing software. A member asked Donnie to define reflashing. Donnie explained that reflashing software was used to acquire calibration information and to update the module. He explained that his intent was to determine which OEMs provide calibration software. The Committee decided that "calibration software" should replace "software" in questions 4.5 and 4.6. Still some members were concerned with the use of the word "software." One member suggested using "update" instead. Another member suggested substituting "vehicle calibration" for "calibration software". Donnie Seyfer restated the objective of questions 4.5 and 4.6. He

explained that question 4.5 was designed to ask, "Were you able to find the information necessary to select the proper calibration?" The question will be revised to more accurately reflect this objective.

One member noted that questions 4.4 through 4.6 also appeared to be only applicable to technicians who had performed reprogramming. Another member agreed and suggested asking questions 4.2 through 4.6 before question 4.1. The member also reiterated the earlier suggestion to use the present tense in questions 4.2 to 4.6. Similar changes were proposed for questions 4.8 through 4.12, which concern reinitialization. One member suggested moving question 4.8 to the end of segment 4. The Committee agreed.

A committee member noted that many vehicles do not require reinitialization. As a result, a large number of technicians will enter N/A for questions in segment 4. Another member noted that most questions required a "yes" or "no" answer. However, the questionnaire asks technicians to rank their answers on a one to ten scale. Segment 1 is the only segment where the ranking system applies exclusively. One member suggested clarifying the type of answer required in the introduction of each segment. A fourth member expressed concern that there was a bias against N/A answers. PQA explained that N/A answers would not be included in the statistical analysis of the survey results. One member described a scenario where an auditor might assign a ranking to a question that obviously required a N/A response. The member questioned how such a response would be analyzed. There were other concerns among the Committee that auditors unable to answer a question might assign a ranking rather than entering N/A, which would suggest a failure on their part.

One member noted that the comments field might help understand the auditor responses. The member felt that more could be done to encourage comments. A second member agreed. He described his experience searching for information on an OEM website. Unable to find the necessary information, he was forced to call the website's service information center. He noted that poor quality of the OEM website could not be accurately conveyed with a "yes" or "no" answer. He supported the one to ten ranking system and the encouragement of comments. One member suggested that comments could be encouraged by asking auditors to explain all negative responses. The Committee agreed but noted that adding such a phrase to every question would complicate the questionnaire. Instead, it was agreed that the phrase would be added to the questionnaire's introduction. EPA noted that auditors could also be contacted directly and asked to explain their responses.

Segment 5

Two revisions were made to segment 5. Question 5.2 was revised based on Mark Warren's suggestion that auditors be asked to draw on their experience prior to the audit. Question 5.7 was also revised. Japanese was removed as an OEM option. There were no comments on these revisions.

Wrap-up on Questionnaire Content

At EPA's request, PQA agreed to revise the questionnaire based on this conference call and distribute the survey for final review by the Steering Committee. The revised questionnaire will be emailed to committee members by Tuesday, February 1, 2005. Committee members should respond with any final comments within 24 hours. EPA noted that EPA's internal review process would take at least one week. Once the survey is finalized the Steering Committee's technicians should test the survey's real world applicability and offer feedback to the Committee.

Format

With the survey's content nearly finalized, the discussion turned to the survey's format. The survey is currently formatted as a Word Perfect document. PQA has also converted the survey into an Excel document. The Excel document contains a separate worksheet for each segment and has several advantages. An Excel version would allow auditors to submit individual segments by modifying the spreadsheet. In addition, the survey data would be easier to manage and analyze in Excel.

Donnie Seyfer suggested Adobe Acrobat as an alternative to Excel. Adobe Acrobat tables can be exported as data files, which can be opened using Excel. Like Excel, Adobe Acrobat files would allow auditors to use an electronic form. Adobe Acrobat 4.0 and higher has these attributes. In addition, he added that most technicians do not have access to Excel.

One member questioned whether the survey would be distributed as a single document or in segments. PQA felt that the survey was too long to distribute as a single document. PQA added that distributing the survey in segments would force auditors to gradually submit their responses. One member supported sending the document in segments and noted that Adobe Acrobat files could be emailed as bookmarked sections. A second member disagreed. The member felt that the survey should be offered to the auditors as a single document. Technicians could encounter information relevant to any section at any time during the three month audit. Another member added that segment 4, which concerns reprogramming and reinitialization, could be answered any time during the audit period. EPA agreed, but recognized the concern that most of the auditors then may wait to submit their entire survey in one piece at the end of the audit period. As a solution, one member suggested requiring a response from auditors every two weeks. The Committee agreed with this suggestion.

One member recognized that requiring technicians to submit only parts of a completed application could create technical difficulties. To quickly identify surveys with revisions, one member suggested asking auditors if any changes had been made since their previous submission. A second member noted that Adobe Acrobat would be advantageous

in this respect as well. The member described Adobe Acrobat's overwrite options. EPA and PQA agreed to examine the feasibility of using Adobe Acrobat. Donnie Seyfer agreed to send EPA and PQA an example file.

E. Next Steps

PQA reminded the Committee that the finalized audit questionnaire would be circulated by Tuesday, February 1, 2005. Any comments or revisions should be submitted to PQA by COB Wednesday, February 2, 2005. PQA encouraged the Committee's technicians to begin their evaluation of the survey. The technicians should be prepared to provide feedback during the next conference call. The next conference call will take place on Thursday, February 10, 2005. The time of the call is scheduled for 2:00 PM Eastern Standard time.

EPA noted that the OEM audit remains on schedule. Once EPA's internal review of the OEM audit application is concluded, the complete application will be posted on the website. The application that is currently available on the OEM audit website asks technicians to submit their name, email, company, city, state, phone number, fax number, and position. PQA is maintaining a list of the applicants. One member introduced a new concern relating to the audit of low volume OEM websites. This issue will be discussed further once the application period has come to a close.

F. Action Items

- (1) PQA will remove the OEM application question that asks applicants to define their company as a "independent dealer," "mass merchandiser," or "franchise new car dealer."
- (2) PQA will replace past tense verbs used in questions 4.2 through 4.6 and 4.9 through 4.11 with present tense verbs.
- (3) PQA will revise question 4.1 to include the phrase "for this OEM."
- (4) PQA will revise questions 4.5 and 4.6. "Calibration" will be used instead of "software."
- (5) PQA will revise the order of questions 4.1 and 4.8 in segment 4. Question 4.1 will follow question 4.6. Question 4.8 will follow question 4.12.
- (6) PQA will add instructions in the questionnaire's introduction to encourage auditors to elaborate on all negative responses.

- (7) PQA will distribute a revised audit questionnaire by Tuesday, February 1, 2005. All comments should be provided by COB Wednesday, February 2, 2005 at which time the survey will be considered finalized.
- (8) EPA and PQA will examine the feasibility of using an Adobe Acrobat format for the audit questionnaire. Donnie Seyfer will send EPA and PQA an example file.
- (9) The next conference call will be held on Thursday, February 10, 2005. The call is scheduled for 2:00 PM Eastern Standard time.