

IT'S ALL ABOUT TECHNOLOGY

The internet is a terrific thing. It is now the first, and sometimes only, place many of us go for research and shopping. We are using a (relatively) new technology to find other new technology. The strength of an Internet search is that the information is fast and plentiful. You will find businesses worldwide that you would never have found using more traditional methods. And occasionally you will stumble across complimentary products while conducting your main search. We all have gone to the store for one item and walked out with 3 or 4 things. We didn't know we needed the other things until they were presented to us in the store.

Truck Equipment Association (NTEA), Fire Department Instructor's Conference (FDIC), American Ambulance Association (AAA), and the National Mobility Equipment Dealers Association (NMEDA) are prime examples of associations that gather seller information and provide product information to their members via newsletters, websites, press releases and other newer media delivery systems (can you say LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, etc...?). Sixteen Ford dealers are active members of the NTEA and other Ford dealers are members of NMEDA. If you are not taking part in these associations you may be missing out on new technologies

tional Construction Utilities & Equipment Expo, the American Ambulance Association Expo, and probably the two most recognizable trade shows for Ford dealers – NADA and SEMA/APEX. Did you attend one or more of these expos? If not, you may be behind the curve on new technology for fleets.

Next steps...

Do the research and make the commitment to attend a new trade show or join a new trade association that you think will benefit your customers. The next NTEA Work Truck Show is in Indianapolis March 6-8, 2012. There will be an Alt-Fuels Truck show all day March 5th, for those who are interested in learning more about Alt-Fuel technology. In addition, you can attend the National Ford Truck Club's (NFTC) Annual Member Meeting, tentatively scheduled for March 8th. Also, officers of all Regional Truck Clubs are invited to attend an NFTC Officers' Roundtable Breakfast expected to be held on March 9. If you can't attend, you should be sure that your Regional Club sends its President so he can report back on all the new and exciting products that Ford and its BodyBuilders will offer in the coming year.

Don't just sit back and wait for some new technology to fall into your lap – that usually means you are the last to hear about it. Be proactive! Talk to the vendors at the trade show. Tell them what you do and what your needs are and then ask them point blank "How can your product help me better serve the needs of my customers?" If you don't see what you need, ask the vendors who have products that are close to your needs about the possibility and costs associated with a custom solution.

Remember: You can't find an answer unless you ask the question – and there are plenty of answers both now and coming in the very near future from Ford and from an after-market supplier near you.



The downside to the Internet is that it can be very impersonal and a bit of a crap shoot. You probably won't know the company you are dealing with nor will you develop the personal relationship most of us are used to in a buy/sell situation. The old adage of 'buyer beware' (caveat emptor) is a good one to live by when dealing strictly over the net.

Don't forget to use the NFTC web site to review new products and technologies (www.nationalfordtruckclub.com), as we post new products, information and links on a monthly basis there.

So, what are the other, more traditional options that would let you touch the technology before buying? Vocational trade associations and trade shows offer you the opportunity to find new products within a more focused environment. Associations like the National

and losing out on bids to dealers who do know how to keep up on the solutions the customers want/need.

Trade shows are the best place to touch a product and learn first-hand about a product from the supplier. The Work Truck Show (hosted by the NTEA) is one of the premier, general-purpose work truck shows in North America. This year there were 86 new products launched at the show, 49 new green products on display, and more than 400 people testdrove 21 vehicles equipped with green technology. The FordPros that walked the floor of this show are in the know. Over 150 Ford dealer personnel participated in the expo and the best guess is that every one of them sells commercial trucks and vans. The NTEA also hosts Product Conferences for its members. The stories are the same at shows like FDIC, the Interna-