

EMACS Launch Upgrade

by J Barton

EMA Computer Systems (EMACS) has been running a series of user meetings to introduce current customers to the new improved version of their computerized bodyshop management system. The company would like to encourage all current customers to upgrade to the new version of the system (free) as it is obviously easier to provide technical support to a group who are all working with a common product. With a current customer base of around 100 installations, the company also hopes to attract new custom.



Before launching EMACS in 1995, Alan Hargreaves was After Sales Director of C.D. Bramall, Wakefield - where he perceived the need for a formal bodyshop loading system. He devised a spreadsheet to do just that and working with his brother Eric (whose background is in computing) worked evenings and weekends to turn the spreadsheet into a program. "It's remarkable to think that what started out as a simple spreadsheet 10 years ago has evolved into the industry's most advanced bodyshop management system."

Company founder **Alan Hargreaves** worked with colleagues **James Grunsell** and **Danny Irving** to talk customers through the new features of the system, using a sophisticated projection and computer-driven screen presentation to illustrate points 'live' for the audience. The company chose the outstanding



Chartwells has around 15 workstations networked to operate the EMACS system (Chris of Chartwell is on left).

facilities at Chartwells, the Derby bodyshop owned by **Mark Grogan, Peter Gibbs** and **Chris Brightmore** who conceived a business plan for their premises with a view to creating the most modern, contemporary premises in the UK to attract the luxury vehicle owner. The shop is so impressively designed and kitted out that it is probably the only one to this standard throughout the world **[readers may know of other contenders for this title - let us know]**. Consequently, attendees were very comfortably accommodated for the presentation in the Chartwell training suite.

The current upgrade involves only Bodyshop Manager and Business Manager systems although Mr Hargreaves does have plans to expand the functions covered by Invoice Manager to include some employee admin functions such as time sheets and holiday records.

EMACS claim to have developed the most sophisticated management tool available to bodyshops and their client list shows that the product appeals to the luxury-car dealerships and independents alike. The company is driven by user-requirement and during the presentations, Mr Hargreaves was actively inviting comment from users, both about the new features and current module use. Ideas that were thrown up

were recorded for further development and incorporation in the new system.

EMACS currently has 3 different versions of their computer management system on the market:

- Bodyshop Manager for dealers who want to integrate bodyshop management software with non-EMACS dealer management systems
- Business Manager is aimed primarily at independent bodyshops who need a full system that includes stock control and invoicing modules (and can be integrated with other-makes account packages)
- Invoice Manager, which was developed for the small business user not requiring full automation of the many admin procedures that slow larger businesses down

The EMACS system aims to automate time-consuming admin tasks and offer managers real time information that will help them maximise use of their resources - labour, workshop loading, and courtesy cars. Admin tasks that



The latest EMACS version now shows 30 Status Panels that show all key management information.

have been automated include SMS text messaging to car owners, triggered when certain pre-determined stages of the repair are reached; letters (eg estimate follow-ups) can be automatically generated while mailshots can be quickly set up and printed.

Improved management control functions include a shared Site Diary that provides a view of the current and scheduled activities of all staff, an internal Messaging System facilitates communication (with unactioned messages escalating to senior personnel) and a Loading Graph of Hours Available, which is now updated every 6 minutes. Data can now also be exported to estimating tools such as Audatex and Glassmatix. There has also been emphasis on minimising key-in of information and most details will automatically transfer over from screen to screen (eg from estimate to job card).

Key points of the EMACS mission came through their presentation – they want to help bodyshops become

more efficient with transparent processes that can be demonstrated to work providers and car owners in the most professionally presented, yet economic manner. Mr Hargreaves clearly understands the demands placed on bodyshop management and has much expertise that is put to the benefit of his customers.



The EMACS team demonstrating the latest features of their Bodyshop Manager system to current users.

He says “Some of our UK customers have been using EMACS tools for 10 years, and not a single bodyshop has had to increase its administration personnel even though the shop’s throughput has increased by up to 50%”.

EMACS has produced a free demonstration CD-ROM that readers can request via RS 27A. Alternatively the demo can be downloaded from their website: www.emacs.org.uk/demo.htm