

Improving Customer Service and Support

Forestry Equipment Manufacturer Uses Blank Data Plates and QR Codes as Part of Customer Care Strategy

People who work in the forestry industry need high quality, labor-saving equipment to do their jobs. They are the customers that Fecon Inc. targets with equipment designed for rugged conditions. For more than 20 years, Fecon has produced products for and provided services to customers involved with land clearing, right-of-way cleaning and maintenance, firebreaks, pasture restoration, wildlife restoration, and bio-mass harvesting.

“Our products and processes are highly customizable,” says Kevin McCann, Fecon general manager-product support. “The customer chooses the configuration he wants.” For instance, there are more than 25 options for a mulching head, which is based on different variables, such as the customer’s machine type, motor, and intended use.



THE DOWNSIDE OF CUSTOMIZATION

Customization is especially challenging for Fecon’s product support team, which handles everything after the sale from the warranties to spare parts.

“The product manual is daunting to our customers and dealers,” Kevin says. “If you buy one of our products, you may not know which replacement part to order. If the dealer looks up the part number in the manual, he might not be sure he is ordering the correct number.”

Fecon uses serial numbering to identify all its products, which it prints on metal name plates. Previously, the serial number plates were inconvenient for customers to access and required that a panel be removed. Often what happened is that when a customer’s equipment

broke, he went back to the office to call the dealer. He didn’t realize that he needed the serial number.

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“This caused a lot of frustration and delays for our customers,” Kevin says. “We work with a lot of mom-and-pop operations. If their machine is down, they’re not working.”

A PLAN FOR IMPROVEMENT

Several years ago, Fecon sought a solution to make ordering parts easier for its dealers and customers. The company wanted to use its serial number data more effectively to connect to its product manual. It also planned to attach the data plate on the outside of its equipment.

Fecon’s customer service project involved multiple phases, including software development that linked a quick response (QR) code to Fecon’s product manual. When the customer scanned the QR code with his smartphone, it displayed the correct replacement part.

Another consideration was the type of metal to use for the data plate. Fecon needed a material that could withstand long-term outdoor

exposure and the abrasive environment of the forest and backwoods. Plus, the company planned to use its own CO2 laser to print the labels in house. For Fecon, DuraBlack laser markable aluminum fit the bill.

“Making this change has done a lot to improve our reputation with our customers and dealers.”

“DuraBlack allows us to create a durable QR code on demand for each piece of equipment – no matter how much customization has been done – and easily attach on the outside of the equipment,” he says. DuraBlack is available in a wide variety of sizes with 3M 350 Series adhesive and/or holes for mechanical attachment.

CUSTOMER RESPONSE HAS BEEN POSITIVE.

“Before we started using dedicated QR Codes, there was too high of an incidence of sending our customers the wrong part,” Kevin says. “Making this change has done a lot to improve our reputation with our customers and dealers. People think we’re easier to work with.”

About DuraBlack:

DuraBlack® is CO2 laser markable aluminum for durable, on-demand marking for harsh operating environments. In side-by-side tests, DuraBlack outperforms black anodized aluminum and laser markable acrylic tape in select applications. DuraBlack is resistant to sunlight (UV-radiation), abrasion, high-temperatures, salt-spray and chemical exposure. Because of its ability to perform across a range of challenging environments, DuraBlack meets several government, industrial and military specifications including MIL-STD 130N, A-A-50271 (≈MIL-P-514D) and MIL-STD-15024F, Type L.



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