

White Paper

Training Continues to Evolve – Customers Deserve Full Support August 2012

By Rick Martin, Manager of Training – Meritor, Inc., Troy, Mich.

Meritor's intention with product training from the start has been to exceed its customers' expectations for support and education in a way that maximizes the life and performance of the company's drivetrain and braking component systems.

Training methods have evolved over the decades from basic maintenance modules and troubleshooting manuals to videotapes to CDs and DVDs. Technology has continued to make it easier to use the Internet as a training tool, with sites that include Meritor's Literature on Demand and the Meritor BullPen (www.meritorbullpen.com).

However, no matter how technology changes, there is a common denominator: Share comprehensive training and proven service procedures with operators of trucks of all sizes, as well as with their service facilities and staffs.

"New technologies bring little value if they are not used to their potential or understood," said Jim Burg, President – James Burg Trucking Co., Warren, Mich. "Whenever our operation gets new technologies, we want the vendor to give us a demonstration at our facility. It maximizes our technicians' time, and allows us to even use our own equipment as the (learning) chalkboard.

"Personalized training sessions are a necessity for effectively educating our customers about the critical features of our products," said Matt Stevenson, General Manager – North American Field Operations and Marketing. "These detailed courses are a great tool for dealers, fleets and technicians interested in Meritor products and the benefits they provide to fleets."

"Our team understands customer service and is an online training pioneer. We know it's a team effort, and we expect technicians to get their fingernails dirty as they strive for optimal service procedures and best practices for long vehicle life," he added.

Brakes and wheel ends warrant far greater attention than they've been receiving in the field. Service violations or Compliance Service Accountability (CSA) incidents often involve brakes.

Meritor created an online training curriculum covering drivetrain and braking component systems, with more than 100 online courses to provide the transportation industry with a comprehensive learning curriculum for fleets and dealers. Training has shifted from an as-needed effort to an integral part of the supplier's offering.

While many small- and medium-sized fleets make use of the different training methods offered, a few major national fleets often request customized programming of online courses. A large fleet might use 30 to 40 courses in its own curriculum. The Meritor system allows this type of customization, helps administer specific courses and tracks the progress of technicians.

The Meritor BullPen

To help educate fleet and dealer personnel on correct preventive maintenance and inspection procedures for Meritor products, the company developed an online learning management system called the BullPen (www.meritorbullpen.com). The Meritor Learning Management System (LMS) is a blended program that incorporates self-guided online learning and instructor-led classroom training to provide a cost-effective, hybrid learning experience that promotes knowledge and skill retention better than either type alone.

In addition to technician training, the LMS offers training modules on aftermarket parts, driver education and sales training.

Curriculum Teaches, Builds on Basics

Online Learning – At the level-one stage, technicians progress through a series of four modules that teach them to identify and describe the Meritor product, operate components and systems correctly and perform preventive maintenance and system diagnostics.

The system diagnostics modules include interactive, full-motion video and still images to help technicians learn as quickly as possible, and a series of tactile "Apply It" opportunities enables technicians to virtually assemble or disassemble components with the click of a mouse.

Instructor-Led Training – Recently, Meritor announced its new instructor-led training (ILT) courses. In addition to the more than 100 online courses currently available through the Meritor BullPen, several new in-depth and hands-on classes are now available for those interested in learning specifics about Meritor's diverse range of products and services.

These in-person training courses are offered at the Meritor Tech Training Center and are led by Meritor DriveForce™ Training Group professionals. Attendees receive up-to-date product information and personalized instruction from industry experts who collectively have an average of more than a quarter-century of industry and product experience.

The multiple-day courses cover rear-drive axles and front non-drive steer axles; foundation brakes; trailer suspensions, including wheel ends; vehicle dynamics/controls/compression and braking; and transfer case/front drive steer axles and drivelines. The courses provide a mixture of product basics and hands-on skills training that covers component identification, system operation, preventive maintenance, disassembly, assembly, adjustments, diagnostics, and parts failure analysis related to specific products.

Meritor also maintains partnerships with many of the nation's best vocational institutions, which enables the company to provide the best instructor-led training for a small tuition fee in a convenient location that has appropriate service bays, tools and other equipment.

Competition Brings Out the Best in People

Competition usually brings out the best in people. That's why Meritor's training organization has a long history of participation in vocational skills development programs and technical competitions organized by industry associations and fleets. Involvement allows Meritor technical experts to share knowledge and build participants' skills.

Involvement also provides an opportunity for participating students and industry technicians to interact with high-level component supplier and OEM engineers, executives and fleet personnel to gain knowledge and forge relationships to further the participants' learning. Some of the skills competitions in which Meritor participates include SkillsUSA, TMC SuperTech, FedEx Top Wrench and Ryder Top Tech.

From years of experience and a dramatic progression in training methods, Meritor's training team professionals have learned a couple of valuable lessons worth sharing: Most technicians are just awesome and really take pride in their fleet vehicles and their profession, and nothing can replace the hands-on method that allows them to touch, feel and even "taste" the components.

We've seen a huge evolution in training methods, but we still encounter ambitious technicians who take the full manual and read it. It all depends on you and your state of mind, and just how much you want to learn.

Meritor's BullPen is designed to work as a blended program that incorporates elements of self-guided online learning and instructor-led classroom training to provide a cost-effective, hybrid learning experience that promotes knowledge and skill retention better than either type alone. Designed to cover tractors, trailers and bus-coach vehicles, the Meritor training curriculum consists of modules addressing foundation brakes, vehicle dynamics and control systems, rear drive axles and non-drive steer axles and all trailer suspensions.

The company's customer support is further enhanced by Meritor DriveForce – the company's North American sales and service organization – and the OnTrac™ technical support center, collectively staffed by more than 150 dedicated professionals to assist commercial vehicle customers with customized solutions before, during and after the sale.

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