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GPS Devices Provide Dealer with Latest Tech

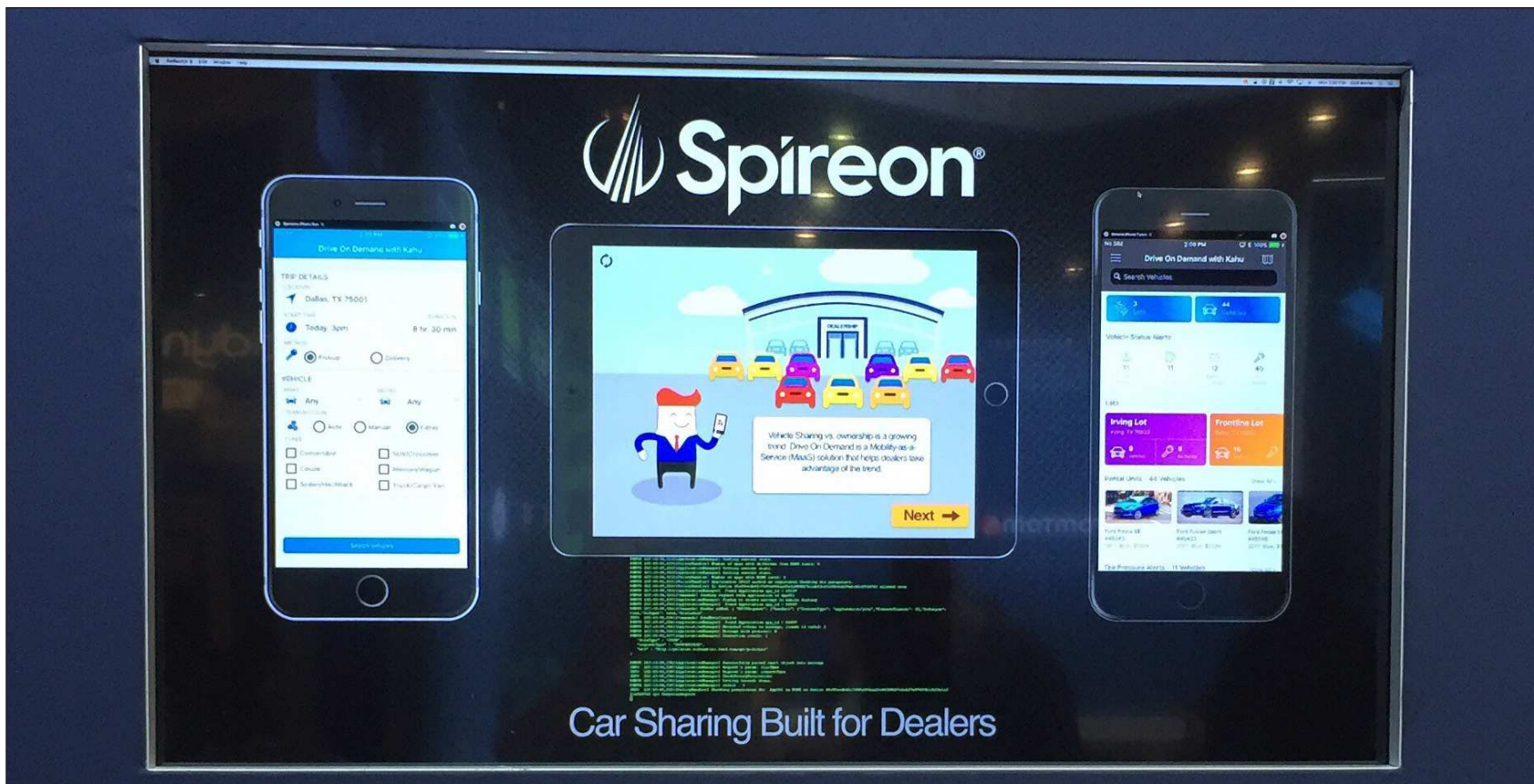


Photo by Jeffrey Bellant

GOOD DIRECTIONS: GPS providers like Spireon (above) have boosted their technologies and features to help dealers do more than just locate a repo. Today, high tech devices can do everything from monitor how someone drives to locate a car once it hits an impound lot.

By Jeffrey Bellant

GPS devices are taking dealers in new directions as technology improves and data becomes more accessible.

Today, tools that track how a car is driven, as well as where it's driven are now a value proposition for the consumer, too, said Spireon's Carla Fitzgerald, chief marketing officer.

"It's not just a matter of tracking for the purpose of repossessing anymore," she said. "I think the industry has changed dramatically when it comes to that."

Firms like Spireon, Imetrik and PassTime offer a variety of options

and tools and some of their representatives have explained what these mean for the industry.

Jeff Karg, director of marketing for PassTime, said advances in technology across a dealer's business make integration of these tools more important than ever.

"It's about making things easier on the dealers and finance companies using our products," Karg said. "We continue to invest in web service functionality."

PassTime most recently has partnered with Megasyss - which provides loan-servicing systems.

PassTime now has about a dozen integrated partners to help dealers

utilize PassTime devices with their systems.

It helps dealers skip the double entries and helps the DMS automatically sync up with the device.

"Then, dealers can often utilize their DMS systems to perform some of the functions of the PassTime device itself," Karg said.

Overall, devices are becoming smaller, quicker, more efficient and less expensive as technology grows, Karg said.

One big addition for PassTime is its Trax 6 GPS tracking device, which is a first in the industry for LTE Category M network.

This is a "machine to machine"

technology.

"It's the newest iteration of LTE," Karg said. "We're the first one to be on that network."

"The big thing for customers is network longevity."

Chris Desnoyers, director of business development, for Imetrik, said changes in technology standards along with regulations are issues Imetrik is addressing.

The bulk of Imetrik's customers are banks and finance companies. As some competitors struggle with the transition from CDMA to 4G or LTE, Imetrik is getting ahead of the game, Desnoyers said.

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“We’re already on GSM (global system for mobile communication), on 2.5 G, so we can focus on other stuff rather than just catching up with technology.”

Desnoyers said keeping up with laws and regulation are critical in this environment

A new regulation on privacy and data – called GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) – implemented May 25 across Europe not only affects companies there, he said.

The regulation has to do with data breaches and data collection, Desnoyers said.

“It’s something we’ve been working on for the last year or so – making sure data is secure and privacy is secure,” Desnoyers said.

What helps Imetrik is that it doesn’t have to rely on outside firms.

“We’re an engineering firm, so we develop everything in-house,” Desnoyers said. “We do the hardware and firmware. We have our own (telecommunications license) so we’re like Virgin Mobile.

“We’re a one-stop shop. There’s no finger-pointing.”

Since Imetrik has its own cellular network, it doesn’t have to negotiate with a Verizon or T-Mobile.

Also, the amount of data that Imperil has allows it do offer dealers all sorts of tools.

It’s an issue that Spireon also looks at. It handles a lot of franchise and large dealership groups where tracking inventory is a big concern, more than repossessions.

Tracking vehicles on different lots, those that are in the shop, on test drives or finding stolen inventory used to be difficult.

Fitzgerald said now GPS can track things like battery status, how a car is driven – whether it is speeding – and other things.

Brian Deeley is senior director of product management for Spireon’s Goldstar product line, which focuses on the buy-here, pay-here space.

One Goldstar feature has preloaded thousands of impound lots to help track down a lost vehicle.

“It’s one of those features that really shines,” said Deeley. “It was introduced earlier this year. It takes tracking and GPS to the next level.”

The curated database has more than 10,000 tow/impound lots throughout the U.S.

“It detects when a vehicle goes into a lot and how long it’s been in that lot,” Deeley said. “That can cost hundreds of dollars a day, depending on the state.”

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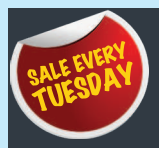
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