



Delivering on the Warranty Promise

“Why automating the claims process
will provide manufacturers a vital
source of business intelligence”



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Warranty Administration is a Complex Business.....

When a consumer or business buys a product they are buying the promise from the manufacturer that it will work and another promise that they will fix it quickly, efficiently and without any fuss if it fails under warranty. Getting the product working again to the customers' satisfaction can make or break a brand – if you have bought a luxury yacht, you may only have time to use it for a few weeks a year, so the manufacturer needs to work with its dealers and parts suppliers quickly and efficiently to get the boat back on the water; if you make cooling systems for commercial vehicles, the customers business depends on getting these vehicles serviceable as quickly as possible.

Whilst the principle is simple, the practicalities for manufacturers are anything but simple. Process challenges include:

- Logging and managing claims, often involving an independent dealer network
- Managing resources to assess claims
- Detailing the claim by its constituent part and labour costs
- Agreeing what is covered and what is not (and sometimes carrying out non-warranty work during the fix)
- Ordering parts and labour
- Keeping stakeholder expectations managed

However, the wider business challenge is being able to report on what is happening with products once they leave the factory, to help management continuously improve the business:

- Which parts repeatedly fail?
- Which area of the product is the biggest issue (is there a team or individuals that need further training?)
- What issues are being missed at pre-delivery inspection?
- Creating and maintaining Service Level Agreements around claim resolution
- Costs and time by claim type

If the business had access to this kind of information, they would be able to act immediately to improve processes, reduce costs and ultimately create a better customer experience.

....yet many manufacturers still rely on manual processes

Often manufacturers businesses grow organically and a manual process using emails and spreadsheets was good enough to manage warranty claims when they started out. But when a business reaches even a modest scale, there are too many aspects to the warranty process to rely on manual processes. The central question for manufacturers is whether they honestly believe they have all the data that they need about what goes wrong with their product when it leaves the factory and why.

The first step

Setting out to tackle this warranty question needs to start with a data model that allows the relationships between all the key entities to be established:



- Employees – most departments will have an interest in a warranty claim, from sales to finance and administration
- Customers – allowing for personal and business customers, with contacts able to be associated with both
- Products and their variants
- Dealers
- Parts
- Suppliers
- Claims (and the claim line items that build up the Claims)

Creating claims processes within a collaborative community

Once the data model is established, virtual teams should be created around customers which include all the internal departments, the dealers and suppliers – being careful to construct permission sets around who may access each claim or customer to ensure confidentiality – particularly where dealers compete for customers. Portal access to a sub set of the data model should be created for dealers and suppliers, to make sure their part in the process is efficient but only gives them access to what they need and are authorised to see.

Salesforce already has a largely ‘out of the box’ solution

Salesforce has grown rapidly from its beginnings as a pipeline management tool. Its range of applications now includes Field Service Lightning – which has all of the features needed to manage warranty claims ‘out of the box’ or requiring simple configuration only. Salesforce can also easily integrate to legacy product systems to enable parts selection and the creation of purchase orders to add to a warranty claim. Adding a Partner Community provides the portal access to the data model and claims creation and edit for the dealers.

Manufacturers can now report on any aspect of the warranty process

One of the key features of the Salesforce platform is the native ability to report any aspect of the data held there. So, once the data model and any integrations are in place, this gives management visibility of which parts of their product and process need attention.

Businesses can now understand what they need to do to deliver on the brand promise.



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