



United Servicers Association
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Manufacturers' Access to Technical Information Study

After the recent outpour of dissatisfaction expressed in servicer chat rooms over Whirlpool's decision to move to a fee for access basis for their technical information, United Servicers Association (USA) conducted a study of each OEM's access to information policies. The results are shown in the table below.

Manufacturers' Access to Technical Information Study				by: United Servicers Association www.unitedservicers.com					
Manufacturer	Web-site Address		Tech Line	Warranty Authorized			Non-Warranty Authorized		
	Associated Brand Names	Web Address for Technical Information		Access to Technical Information and Associated Cost					
				Technical Literature Subscription	Technical Help Line	Parts Subscription	Technical Literature Subscription	Technical Help Line	Parts*** Subscription
ASKO		www.askousa.com	800-898-1897	Y (\$0)	Y (\$0)	Y (\$0)	N	N	N
BOSCH	Thermador, Gaggenau	www.boschappliances.com www.thermador.com	800-735-4328	Y (\$0)	Y (\$0)	Y (\$0)	N	N	N
Broan	Best, Allure	www.broan.com	800-637-1453	Y (\$0)	Y (\$0)	Y (\$0)	Y (\$0)	Y (\$0)	Y (\$0)
Dacor		www.dacorservice.com/partscatalog	800-793-0093	Y (\$0)	Y (\$0)	Y (\$0)	Y (\$0)	Y (\$0)	Y (\$0)
Electrolux	Frigidaire, Kelvinator, Gibson	www.frigidaireservicetips.com www.electroluxplatinumstarservice.com www.electroluxservicetraining.com http://electrolux.infoaccessipl.com	888-842-3660	Y (\$0)	Y (\$0)	Y (\$0)	Y(\$0)	N	Y(IPL\$)
Fisher & Paykel	DCS	https://www.cbw.fp.co.nz/login.cfm	888-936-7872	Y (\$0)	Y (\$0)	Y (\$0)	Y \$129.95	Y (Incl)	Y (Incl)
GE	Monogram, Hotpoint, Moffat	www.gecustomernet.com	502-452-0604	Y (\$199**)	Y (\$62*)	Y (\$299)	Y (\$199**)	Y (\$135*)	Y (\$299)
Haier		http://service.haieramerica.com	800-461-8890	Y (\$0)	Y (\$0)	Y (\$0)	Y (\$0)	Y (\$0)	Y (\$0)
LG		www.lgtechassist.com	800-847-7597	Y (\$0)	Y (\$0)	Y (\$0)	Y (\$0)	Y (\$0)	Y (\$0)
Samsung		www.samsungparts.com	866-797-8736	Y (\$0)	Y (\$0)	Y (\$0)	Y (\$0)	Y (\$0)	Y (\$0)
Scotsman		www.scotsman-ice.com	800-726-8762	Y (\$0)	Y (\$0)	Y (\$0)	Y (\$0)	Y (\$0)	Y (\$0)
Speed Queen		www.speedqueen.com	920-748-3121	Y (\$0)	Y (\$0)	Y (\$0)	Y (\$0)	Y (\$0)	Y (\$0)
Sub-Zero	Wolf	http://sc.subzero.com	800-222-7820	Y (\$0)	Y (\$0)	Y (\$0)	N	N	N
U-Line		www.u-lineservice.com	800-779-2547	Y (\$0)	Y (\$0)	Y (\$0)	Y (\$0)	Y (\$0)	Y (\$0)
Viking		http://vikingrange.infoaccessipl.com/default.aspx	888-845-2547	Y (\$0)	Y (\$0)	Y (\$0)	N	N	N
Whirlpool	Kitchenaid, Jennair, Roper	www.servicematters.com www.whirlpool.com	800-488-4791	Y (\$240)	Incl	Y (\$0)	Y (\$499)	Y(Incl)	Y(\$0)

Notes : *cost structure is tiered based on the number of technicians ** \$149 auto renewal *** In many cases parts can be researched through parts distributors

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There are two issues in debate: (1) Should technical literature and parts manuals be available to the industry at large? (2) Should warranty and non-warranty service providers be charged for technical information? 68% of the manufacturers polled allow non-warranty authorized service companies access to their technical information and of those, 27% charge a fee for access.

USA commends OEM's that allow non-warranty service providers access to vital technical information. Today's appliances are far more technologically advanced than those built just 10 years ago. Since the average life span of an appliance is now approximately 8-10 years and the warranties are only one year, there are thousands of non-warranty authorized companies servicing all brands of appliances every day. Without access to this ever changing technology, how can non-warranty authorized technicians stay current on repair techniques? If non-warranty authorized technicians lacking current technology are



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fixing appliances, how can we expect today's consumers to have the best service experience possible? The industry is in agreement that a positive service experience will protect brand loyalty. OEM's that penalize non-warranty service providers by restricting access to technical information are losing market share from dissatisfied customers due to their service experience from ill-informed technicians.

As an association that maintains a basic web site for their members, USA understands that there are substantial costs to maintaining any Internet web site. We know that the sophistication and depth of information required maintaining Whirlpool's "ServiceMatters.com" website is a significant investment for Whirlpool. USA supports any manufacturer who must charge a fee due to their own cost of doing business for access to technical information to any and all service companies. However, the value of the information to the industry must be evaluated in relationship to the return on investment.

A good business manager should know how to set his service rates based on his cost of doing business (CODB). Adjusting rates to cover additional costs is a necessity in running a successful business whether it is a manufacturer or a servicer. USA believes strongly in this concept and our upcoming Appliance Service Training Institute (Feb 9-12, 2011 in San Diego, CA) (www.asti.us) offers instruction on the importance of knowing and calculating your CODB.

Deciding a fair price for access to technical information is a much tougher issue. Charging authorized warranty providers for access to technical information on products that fail due to manufacturing defects seems to be somewhat unfair. Consumers purchase what they believe to be well-built appliances and they do not expect them to fail during their first year of normal use. If they require service during the warranty period and if the service level is less than exceptional, brand loyalty suffers. A typical consumer does not care whether a servicer is warranty authorized or not; they want and expect their product repaired by trained, professional service providers.

Warranty authorized service companies already provide their professional technical expertise at a discount to manufacturers for warranty repairs. Should these servicers have to pay for the information required to fix a warranty defect? In Whirlpool's case, 75% of the calls to their technical help line are for non-warranty service issues. This drives Whirlpool's CODB up. Whirlpool's technical help line was designed to support calls on warranty products and has evolved to more non-warranty calls. Should Whirlpool incur this additional cost for out of warranty technical help support?

Deciding on a fair price for access to technical information is basic economics. If it is priced too high, few will buy it resulting in servicers stumbling over the repairs and consumers will be disappointed in their choice of brand. If it's in warranty, manufacturers may have to replace it, driving their warranty costs beyond the revenue earned from charging for information in the first place.

Servicers want to repair appliances to the best of their abilities and need access to the latest technical information; their goal is to give their customers the best service experience, whether they are warranty authorized or not. Manufacturers want their products serviced in a professionally competent



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manner re-establishing consumer confidence in their brand; this requires that *all* service companies have access to the latest technical information.

USA advocates access to technical information to both authorized and non-authorized warranty providers. Authorized service companies are already paying for this information through their discounted rates. While we recognize that a manufacturer's cost of doing business may dictate a minimal fee-based service, the bottom line is that the information must be made available to all service companies. This ultimately may affect a service company's decision on which manufacturers to service and which brands to recommend to their customers.

This is an important industry issue that will be difficult to resolve. We welcome your feedback. Please contact Tanner.Andrews@unitedservicers.com or Paul.M.MacDonald@unitedservicers.com with your comments or questions. We'll publish any comments that we receive on this issue in future communications.