

In Pursuit of Parts Perfection

It is well known throughout the industry that Mercedes-Benz has an outstanding record of order fill and quality parts via the dealership parts departments. This is due largely to the fact that most parts are ordered based on the vehicle's VIN, which is a highly accurate basis for ordering.



Al DiFranco

Yet there can be the occasional case when a part may have been superseded, a running change may have occurred, or an improved replacement part made available. There are also cases where parts are needed for an older model Mercedes-Benz, and even the very rare instance of a mislabeled or mispackaged part.

Enter Al DiFranco.

Based out of MBUSA's Atlanta headquarters, Al heads up the 13-person Parts Assistance Center. This group of highly-trained parts specialists is the go-to team when a parts professional at a Mercedes-Benz dealership has any kind of parts question – whether it be related to application, fitment, availability, or technical data about a particular part. This Parts Assistance Center is of particular value to owners and technicians at independent repair shops who can, via their local dealership parts professional, glean all the information they need to purchase the correct part and quickly satisfy their customers' needs.

And Al is just the right guy for the job. His entire 17-year career has been within the Mercedes-Benz family, having started as a dealership valet shuffling customers' cars, quickly becoming a lane technician performing speedy yet important services like replacing light bulbs and wiper blades. His penchant for hustle quickly led him into increasingly responsible jobs within the MBUSA family, including parts warranty, training, and, ultimately, Supervisor of the Parts Assistance Center.

The PAC handles most parts inquiries via telephone from dealership parts departments, providing definitive answers or resolution of issues during the first phone call nearly 90 percent of the time, most often with the first agent who takes the call. If for some unusual reason the first agent is not able to resolve the matter, the call is referred directly to a Level 2 specialist who has access to comprehensive engineering data and also direct and immediate access to resources in Germany. Some issues are simple, some are complex, but virtually all are answered to the satisfaction of the dealership making the call and its ISP wholesale customer.

The PAC has a laser focus on parts issues, not on service procedures. Yet the PAC can be a valuable resource, as agents do have access to technical service bulletins and other resources that can save repair shops time and money. For instance, a wholesale customer may request a COMAND head unit for a 2012 or newer vehicle and the dealership parts person might have trouble specifying it, so he or she could escalate this case. PAC agents are familiar with a technical bulletin that can actually solve many COMAND problems with a simple software update, eliminating the time and expense of replacing the entire head unit. If necessary, the agent can immediately email the relevant bulletin to the inquiring dealership parts professional.

DiFranco thrives on being a problem solver. His motto? "We play to win." |