

Speak to anyone in diagnostics and you'll get the same view. Yes, the systems should be thought of as tools, but today they are critical to technicians' understanding of faults. Why? Because trucks, trailers, buses, coaches and vans are technically sophisticated and heavily dependent on networked systems that defy mechanical examination.

As Mark Palin, Volvo Trucks' national technical manager, puts it: "Often today, you just can't establish truck issues using measurements and experience alone. With the scale of vehicle electronics, technicians have to rely more on their diagnostics to extract truck information, understand root causes and decide appropriate remedial action."

Delphi sales manager Paul Sinderberry agrees. "It's very difficult to run a fleet of trucks or buses without diagnostics. Even resetting brake pads requires recalibration. Then, for Euro 6 vehicles running SCR [selective catalytic reduction] after-treatment, there are prescribed diagnostic tests." And Antony Alexander, of Knorr-Bremse, adds: "To work on EBS systems ... diagnostic software is a must. Without it, repairs can be costly and time consuming."

GUIDED DIAGNOSTICS

Indeed, for Volvo, its guided diagnostics - which focuses on symptoms, rather than fault codes - is a prerequisite for dealerships making warranty claims. "The software ensures the right diagnosis in the right timeframe."

But whose system should you select? If you're part of a dealer network, you won't have a lot of choice: the vehicle OEM calls the shots. But, if you run a mixed fleet or you're an independent workshop, you might choose one of the all-makes systems - such as Delphi's or Texa's. Or you might elect to go for OEM diagnostics for mainstream work. It's all about the trade-off between

Choice is yours

With technicians' dependence on diagnostics forced by increasingly sophisticated vehicles, Brian Tinham looks at the options

pricing, functionality and ease of use. And although received wisdom has it that OEM kit is costly, it depends.

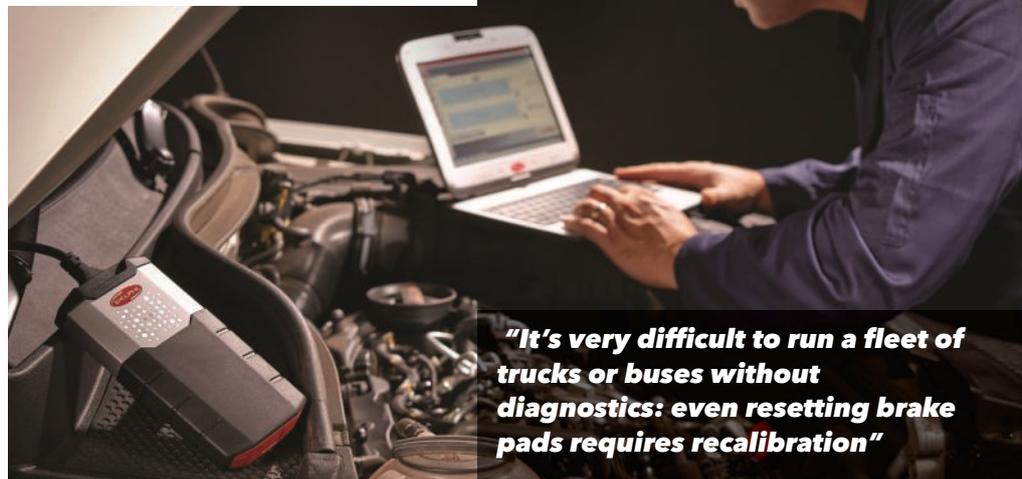
Palin says Volvo's Tech Tool software is not a great money spinner. And he adds that, while third party systems may be good, OEM diagnostics are "far more comprehensive and updated via the internet all the time". Additionally, the tool lets you search for parts and service information on built-in catalogues.

While conceding the software updates point, Sinderberry says users can expect comprehensive functionality, certainly from Delphi. "Our software covers vans, light commercials, trucks, trailers, buses and coaches. Yes, it's an uphill battle to keep up with the OEMs, but we now have Euro 6 coverage, with online updates and the mandatory OBD [on-board diagnostics] programme. Also, one licence covers everything and technician training is FOC."

What's more, its software goes way beyond Delphi's injection systems to include engine ECUs, transmission controls, braking systems, suspension, dashboard instrumentation, etc. The DS series also handles intermittent faults, with in-flight road test data recording.

What about the future? "Soon diagnostics will carry out remote programming. So, if an operator wants to change road speed or PTO settings, for example, that could be done without a trip to the workshop," suggests Palin.

But, initially no doubt, only when you use OEM diagnostics. [TE](#)



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