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Mercedes-Benz Financial upgrades sales strategy with iPad point-of-sale system

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By PETER FINOCCHIARO

Mercedes-Benz Financial is enhancing its dealership experience with the addition of iPads into its point-of-sale system.

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The auto finance company is distributing 3G iPads to 355 dealerships nationwide. The dealers will be able to use the distributed iPads to access Mercedes-Benz' MB Advantage point-of-sale software to mobilize the leasing process.

"This release is really part of an all-encompassing mobile strategy," said Andreas Hinrichs, vice president of marketing at Mercedes-Benz Financial, Farmington Hills, MI. "We just had our one-year anniversary of our mobile strategy after we launched a consumer iPhone app last October, and this iPad approach is basically the response on the dealer side.

"The dealer body in the United States is a very important constituency for us, and we wanted to make sure they can access our proprietary MB Advantage portal via the iPad," he said. "[This initiative] really gives the customer experience a lot more transparency, and it is vehicle-centric.

“Rather than going into an office with a stationary desktop computer, we take the system to wherever the sale happens.”

Daimler AG-owned **Mercedes-Benz Financial** provides financing for dealership inventories and their retail customers.

Advantage: Mercedes-Benz

Mercedes-Benz said that MB Advantage on the iPad lets dealers increase the mobility and efficiency of their sales forces.

The software is designed to streamline the sales and leasing process whether consumers are taking out financing for their initial lease or turning in their vehicles at the end of a contract.

Mercedes-Benz launched a pilot program with 40 dealerships in June to test out the viability of the iPad as a point-of-sale device ([see story](#)).

Mr. Hinrichs said that dealership feedback was overwhelmingly positive, so the company felt it needed to expand nationally.

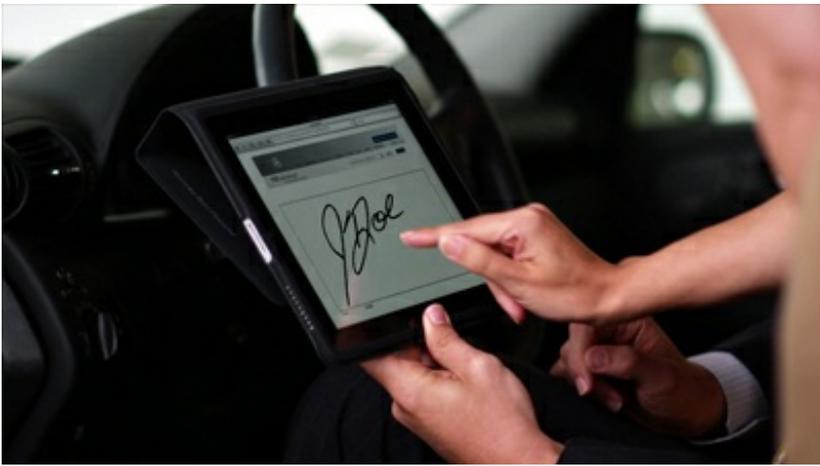
The iPad functionality lets sales representatives and consumers start filling out credit applications and check special marketing programs right on the showroom floor.



Here is a screen grab of MB Advantage for the iPad

Additionally, starting in October consumers will be able to sign their signatures on documents using the iPad.

The functionality will expedite the vehicle turn-in process by letting dealership officials complete the inspection report and odometer statement on the iPad, right next to the vehicle, per Mercedes-Benz.



Here is a screen grab of the signature functionality

The company is educating dealers about Mercedes-Benz Advantage for the iPad via its field representatives, and analyzing early results to figure out its next move.

“We will continue to monitor what is happening,” Mr. Hinrichs said. “It’s very hard to predict the future because the iPad created a brand new category of devices.”

Putting the ‘mobile’ in ‘automobile’

This initiative follows on the heels of Mercedes-Benz’ launch of a consumer-oriented mobile Web site and iPhone application last year ([see story](#)).

Mercedes-Benz claims to be the first auto finance company to create a dedicated mobile application where consumers can manage their accounts.

The company has received more than \$10 million in monthly lease and finance payments via the application since its launch.

“One thing we’re very proud of is that we were the first company in our space to make the iPad a business tool,” Mr. Hinrichs said. “This is after we were also first to release dedicated consumer iPhone app.

“We believe this is cutting edge,” he said. “Mercedes-Benz as a brand stands for cutting edge and we’re following that mantra here.”

Final Take

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