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**iATN BECOMES WORLD'S LARGEST
NETWORK OF AUTOMOTIVE TECHNICIANS**

Brea, CA — The International Automotive Technicians' Network (iATN) started in 1995 as a simple idea: Use the communication benefits of the Internet to educate, train and address the technical needs of automotive technicians and repair shop owners throughout the world. It was a simple concept that caught on, growing quickly in size, content and industry-wide acceptance.

Today, iATN (www.iatn.net) is the world's largest Internet-based community of automotive technicians, repair shop owners and other allied automotive service professionals with more than 33,000 active members from 113 countries. Through iATN web-based and email networks, members collectively benefit from their combined 609,000 years of shared experience.

Sharing that depth of experience has been the basis of iATN from the very

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beginning. In 1995, iATN began as an email-based communication service for automotive technicians by iATN Founder and Repair Shop Owner Brent Black. He developed the service to make it possible for technicians to communicate with each other about technical, tool, educational, customer service and other issues that impact the automotive service industry every day.

“As a technician myself,” said Black, “I knew there was a real need in the field to communicate with other technicians about a variety of topics — especially the difficult repair situations today’s technician deals with on a daily basis. The growing popularity of email and the Internet made iATN a natural way to link technicians and repair shop owners to each other, sharing expertise, experience and a real sense of camaraderie.”

iATN started with 50 members. Membership growth has been primarily via word-of-mouth among technicians and within six years, the network has grown to more than 33,000 active members. In addition to the technical and educational benefits iATN provides, the network’s members have also developed some very strong ties that would otherwise be geographically impossible.

“The network is a great way to develop a true sense of community throughout a very fragmented industry,” said Black. “Through iATN, some pretty strong friendships have developed over the years.”

In the beginning, membership merely required an email account, but as Internet access became more universal and members’ needs grew, the iATN staff developed

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a website to expand the network's member benefits. The iATN staff developed new resources for members outside the original email service (TechMail), including live chat areas, searchable email message databases, live conferencing and technical discussion forums.

To fund this expansion, iATN began to offer sponsorship opportunities to automotive manufacturers and suppliers. Members themselves found iATN services so valuable, they started sending donations to keep the network growing. Today, iATN is solely member- and industry-funded, allowing for additional upgrades that members enjoy. Currently, iATN operates several servers on a dedicated LAN specifically for iATN services.

A full-time staff of programmers, administrators and support personnel maintains the site, but it's the members who continue to fuel it.

"Nothing on iATN would exist were it not for the participation of our members," said Black. "The content is truly member-driven and the success iATN enjoys today is a direct reflection of its members."

Each member service, from a fully searchable waveform database of more than 4,200 images to live conferencing capabilities, is specifically and uniquely developed to meet the ever-changing needs of iATN members. As the network grows in size, the hardware, staff and software requirements grow proportionally.

iATN is also the first technicians' network of its kind to expand outside the realm of cyberspace. The first official iATN gathering took place in Las Vegas in 1996.



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Subsequent conventions and meetings have grown in popularity, size and scope at various locations around the United States. The next iATN Annual Convention will be held Oct. 5-7, 2001 in Detroit, MI, and will draw members from throughout the United States and several other countries.

For additional information about iATN, including the latest membership statistics, visit iATN at www.iatn.net.

iATN is supported by the automotive industry's top manufacturers, information providers, suppliers, associations and publications. These industry sponsors, along with sponsoring shop and technician members, make the iATN possible.

The iATN Mission of Excellence: To promote the continued growth, success and image of the professional automotive technician by providing a forum for the exchange of knowledge and the promotion of education, professionalism and integrity.

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