

## Frequently Asked Questions

After six years working with customers on six continents (none from Antarctica yet), Spark has fielded more questions about integrating advertising and mobility than we can count. Here is a list of common questions that our customers have asked. Feel free to call and discuss any of these questions or try out a new one on us.

You can download a pdf of this entire FAQ document or subscribe to an RSS feed of new and updated items by using the links in the sidebar at the right side of this page.

## Doing business with Spark

### About Spark

Spark has been manufacturing custom mobile advertising truck bodies since 2002. The company is a spinoff from [Admobile](#), the oldest mobile advertising network in America. The Spark team was responsible for producing and supporting all of Admobile's television advertising truck bodies in over 100 locations in the US and abroad.

In 2006, the decision was made to build a new line of mobile advertising products that would appeal to a broad range of business customers. Spark was created to innovate and create products in many sizes, with new technologies, and at a variety of price points.

Today, Spark Equipment LLC offers the widest range of mobile advertising products available anywhere.

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### Where are Spark products sold?

Spark products are available from authorized Spark resellers and directly from Spark Equipment LLC.

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### How can I become a Spark dealer?

Spark offers several different levels of reseller opportunities. Contact us for details.

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### Are exclusive territories available for end-users or dealers.

No.

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## General Questions

### What is the difference between an MUV and a DAV?

Spark invented the MUV, or "marketing utility vehicle", in 2006 as a response to growing inquiries

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from ordinary business owners who wanted to purchase trucks that could be used for general business delivery use, but could also display multi-image advertising. All Spark models are available in standard MUV configurations, with advertising display systems on two or three sides. MUV models offer internal walls that protect the multi-image ad display systems from shifting cargo inside the body.

DAV stands for "dedicated advertising vehicle". Spark has made DAVs for over six years. A DAV is designed to do just one thing -- get attention. The standard configuration of all Spark models is a multi-purpose MUV configuration, but all can be ordered in a DAV configuration, with see-through sides, and advertising systems on all four sides of the body. Since its display systems are exposed to the interior of the truck body, a DAV is not suitable for general delivery use. Shifting cargo could interfere with the operation of the scrolling mechanisms.

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### **What's inside the body?**

It depends.

If you are interested in a dedicated advertising vehicle, the interior is finished with smooth white walls and a carpeted floor. If you don't have any ad posters installed, you'll be able to look all the way through the body, which give you many creative options for showing three-dimensional displays. The ceiling is populated with light fixtures to flood the interior with light for the display area and to backlight the ad posters.

If you're looking for one of our marketing utility vehicles, and need its ability to perform as a working truck, the interior is totally isolated from the advertising displays. Spark is the first and only manufacturer to offer exterior access to the advertising systems, so even if your truck is full of tools and cargo, you can simply walk up to the truck, flip open a door, and change the ads. It's a patent-pending feature that's only available from Spark.

Expo's interior is most similar to a giant sport utility vehicle. It's interior is isolated from the scrolling displays and lighting, and the floor is carpeted. A more industrial non-skid flooring material or a full size slide-out cargo drawer is available.

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### **How much usable space is inside the body?**

DAV models have enough space inside to serve as a remote broadcast booth, or become a rolling storefront window. The MUV models have a cavernous interior cargo capacity that is only diminished by six-inches on each side to accommodate the display units.

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### **How do you get into the back of the truck?**

All Spark truck bodies feature fully opening rear doors. Radius offers standard dual barn doors. Expo's rear door is hinged at the top and opens just like the back hatch of any SUV and is supported by gas springs. Impact features large roll up rear doors.

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### **What are the bodies made of?**

The Radius and Expo bodies are made entirely of aluminum. Impact bodies are made from Galvaneel.

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**What colors are available?**

Spark mobile advertising bodies are available color matched to any original manufacturer chassis paint color. The most popular colors are silver, black, white, and red. If a customer desires a hot pink, lime green, or lemon yellow truck, it's available at no additional cost.

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**Is the interior of the box-body air-conditioned?**

The scrolling poster system used in Spark bodies can withstand temperatures in excess of 150 degrees Fahrenheit. It is not necessary to cool the body to keep the system operating. Air conditioning is not standard, but is a desirable option on Radius or Impact if you plan to operate the vehicle with live mascots, models, or radio personalities aboard.

Impact models are available with insulated bodies and reefer units to transport perishable goods.

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**Is there a video camera in the back of the truck so I can monitor the operation of the display mechanism?**

No.

We have to admit being stumped by this question the first couple of times it was asked. Then we learned that other DAV scrolling systems used a particular brand of zip-tape to join their scrolling posters together. It was common for their zip-lock systems to come undone as temperatures rose in the backs of their truck bodies. Video cameras were installed to notify the driver if the scrolling posters separated.

Spark uses a non-proprietary plastic zipper system that has been used in scrolling outdoor advertising applications for twenty years. The posters do not come apart unless they are specifically unzipped. The Spark zippers have an adhesive back, but the adhesive is designed for high temperatures. Spark customers receive a list of approved printing vendors that will print the posters, securely affix the zippers, and deliver the finished posters for a very reasonable cost.

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## **Truck Chassis Questions**

**Can I supply my own chassis?**

Yes. Spark offers body-only or complete truck pricing on all models.

Most customers purchase a complete, turnkey unit with a brand new truck chassis entirely from Spark. The price that Spark typically charges for the truck chassis is usually dealer invoice price, plus the customer keeps all applicable incentives and rebates. If you believe that you can obtain a new chassis for less money, feel free to have your local dealer drop ship the chassis to one of assembly centers.

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**Will Spark mount a new body on a used chassis?**

Yes. You may be able to save a considerable amount of money by purchasing a gently used

chassis. The Spark warranty will not cover your used chassis, and there may be an additional charge if a preowned chassis requires any repairs or prep work prior to the installation of the Spark body.

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### **Which truck chassis is best or most popular?**

For years, the Isuzu NPR series has been the best selling medium-duty chassis in all mobile advertising applications. GMC and Chevrolet also offer an identical model, called the W3500. It is ideal for all Radius bodies, and Impact bodies up to 20' in length. Larger Spark Impact bodies over 22' in length require heavier duty Class 4 or higher truck chassis.

Radius 10 is designed for van cutaway chassis, either Chevrolet Express, GMC Savana, or Dodge Sprinter.

Expo bodies mount on almost any compact or full size pickup truck. Your personal preference will dictate the specific pickup model.

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### **What is the fuel economy of the trucks?**

Fuel economy is similar to any commercial truck carrying an equivalent amount of weight. Chevy or GMC van chassis based models generally achieve 12-16 MPG, Isuzu gas NPR based models achieve 8-10 MPG, Isuzu diesel NPR based models achieve 12-14 MPG, and Dodge Sprinter based models achieve 13-17 MPG.

Pickup chassis models for Spark Expo bodies will generally get about 2 MPG less than ordinary pickup trucks without the Expo body.

Your mileage may vary.

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## **Scrolling System Questions**

### **How many scrolling posters can each Spark system display?**

Spark offers different scrolling mechanisms depending on the Spark body model.

- Expo uses Spark's Autoscroll system, and can hold up to 10 different ads on each side of the truck body.
- Impact also uses Autoscroll scrolling systems, in a larger scale, and can hold up to 6 different posters per display unit.
- Radius features the Scrolltrain poster display engine, which can display up to 15 different posters per side.

The standard printing media is backlit film. It is also possible to print ads on paper or vinyl.

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### **Can you adjust how long each ad is displayed?**

The Autoscroll systems on Expo and Impact feature an adjustable dwell time (the amount time the poster remains stationary before scrolling to the next ad) of 1-99 seconds per poster. Dwell time may be adjusted globally (affects all posters), or for each individual poster.

The Scrolltrain system featured in Spark's Radius models can be set to display each poster any amount of time from 1 second to several hours before advancing to the next poster.

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**How are the posters installed?**

Posters zip together using a non-proprietary heavy-duty plastic zipper system. The first and last poster on a roll are zipped to a special leader strip, which is securely attached to the motor-driven rollers.

Spark's MUV bodies all feature display systems that are accessed from the outside. Ads are installed while standing next to the truck, which offers the benefit of not having to unload any cargo just to change an ad. The DAV configurations of Spark Radius models allow ads to be installed from the outside of the truck, like the MUV models, or from the interior of the truck as well.

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**How are the ads illuminated?**

Spark has continuously advanced the state of the art in mobile advertising lighting systems. The company was the first to offer 12V DC fluorescent lighting, and was the first to use high-output lighting. For 2008, Spark introduced a patent-pending LED backlighting panel, which consumes less power than any other mobile advertising lighting system, yet offers very bright even backlighting.

The brilliance and vivid nighttime appearance causes many viewers to mistake the systems for big-screen plasma TVs.

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**What kind of computer is used to control the scrolling system?**

All Spark scrolling systems incorporate a solid state logic board, but there is no computer needed to program or operate any of the Spark systems.

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**How are the posters affected by extreme heat or cold?**

All of Spark's scrolling display systems are designed for outdoor use and operate in all climate conditions.

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**Will the rear display continue scrolling when the door is open?**

Yes.

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## **Customer Support**

**Tell me about Spark's warranty.**

All Spark mobile advertising products are covered under a one-year limited warranty. The warranty covers parts and labor to repair defects in workmanship and failed components in the Spark body.

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The body structure, display systems and components are included. Wear items, items added by the owner, and items not properly maintained are not covered.

Spark also offers an optional four-year extended warranty program, called SparkCare. SparkCare adds three additional years of warranty coverage along with 24-hour roadside assistance. A \$100 per incident deductible applies during the second, third, and fourth year of coverage.

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### **How is warranty service obtained?**

Step one is a call to Spark's support staff. Issues that are resolved over the telephone are escalated for local troubleshooting and possible repair. Requests for warranty service are required in writing, preferably by email.

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### **Do I have to return my truck to Spark for service?**

No. Local warranty service is available in all metropolitan areas of greater than 100,000 population (and many others) through authorized service providers.

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### **Are spare parts available?**

Yes.

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### **Is training provided?**

Each Spark MUV or DAV comes with a comprehensive users guide. On site training is not provided or included in the purchase price. The systems are designed to be easily understood, long lasting, and reliable.

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## **Financing**

### **Does Spark offer financing?**

Spark works with a number of financing and leasing providers. Typical rates are approximately 2% higher than you might expect to pay at your local bank. However, traditional local banks may require substantial additional documentation to become comfortable loaning you money to purchase a specialty vehicle.

Spark financing partners do not require unusual loan documentation or business plans as they already understand the unique nature of the Spark vehicles and are eager to do business with you.

The Spark credit application is available [here](#).

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### **What is required to qualify for financing?**

Generally, you must have a credit score in excess of 680 and you must be able to verify your

income. If you have an existing business that has been established for more than two years, you may qualify for a lower interest rate.

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#### **What types of financial programs are offered?**

Spark's preferred lenders are leasing companies, and offer a choice of programs with terms that range from 24 months to 84 months. Some programs have a guaranteed lease-end-value, while others offer a guaranteed \$1 purchase option at the end of the term. The \$1 purchase option, while offered through a leasing company, is considered purchase financing for tax purposes, and the vehicle can be capitalized and depreciated.

Check with your CPA or accountant to determine which option is best for you.

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## **Spark truck body production**

#### **Where are the Spark bodies manufactured?**

All Spark mobile advertising products are designed and prototyped at Spark facilities in Alabama and Georgia. After new designs pass prototyping and are approved for production, they are assembled at multiple facilities located throughout the United States.

All Spark bodies are manufactured and assembled entirely in the United States of America.

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#### **How long does it take from order to delivery?**

Historically, waiting time has averaged 58 days from order to completion. Certain models are available for delivery in less than 30 days, while other models experience a 90 day wait. Call to discuss current availability.

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#### **Why are different Spark models built differently?**

Spark offers three unique truck body models in sixteen different sizes, and a line of scrolling accessories. Each product addresses a different set of customer needs.

The Impact series is built to serve as daily working cargo trucks or moving vans. Oversized rounded front corner extrusions and radius roof rails protect them from bumps and scratches. Impact models that are 18' or longer, feature dual widescreen displays to their much longer and taller bodies. Impact models also have roll up rear doors and can include hydraulic lifts at the rear.

The Radius family of bodies offer the widest range of options in the Spark line. Radius bodies are 100% aluminum, including the floor system.

Spark designed the Expo series as the everyman's mobile advertising truck. The features are more accessible and the finish is more in line with what a business owner might expect from a SUV or van. Many Expo buyers use the small MUV as an affordable springboard into a new advertising business, and expect to upgrade to a Spark Radius if their business thrives. Other Expo buyers simply need a business vehicle and desire Expo's ability to deliver advertising alongside their usual business fare.

We build them differently because your business needs are different from anyone else's. **One size does not fit all.**

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### **Is delivery available?**

Yes. Nationwide — or international — delivery is available from independent carriers. It is not included in the purchase price. Alternately, you may send a representative to pick up your new Spark truck.

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## **Printing & designing ads**

### **How are the ads printed?**

The scrolling posters are printed on paper, vinyl, or film. None of the Spark systems require proprietary media, and you are never required to purchase your printing or supplies from Spark.

If you become a Spark customer, you'll receive an introduction to a number of vendors that are familiar with the Spark specifications and can produce your posters for you at affordable rates. They'll print the graphics, trim the posters to size, sew on the zippers, and deliver them to your door in about one week's time.

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### **What is the cost to produce an ad?**

If you use a Spark approved supplier, it will cost between \$3 - \$5 per square foot, delivered. Approximately \$135 per ad on a Spark Expo, \$200 per ad on Radius, and \$250 per poster on the largest 6' x 12' Impact display size.

The price never includes the cost of professional creative design, which is available separately. If you do not have a relationship with a local graphic designer, Spark can introduce you to talented artists who will design your ads on a freelance basis. Typical cost is around \$150 - \$200 per ad for the creative design work.

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### **Can I print the ads myself?**

Yes. Printing equipment for Expo-sized ads is available for less than \$5000. The larger 6-foot tall sizes on Impact require printing equipment that starts around \$30,000. Spark recommends you outsource your poster printing to professionals.

If you already have the required equipment to print your own ads, Spark can provide you with the zipper system to join the posters together.

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### **Can I design the ads myself?**

Of course. Ads are usually created with common graphics software applications such as Adobe Photoshop and Adobe Illustrator. The [design specifications](#) for all Spark ad sizes are available at the Spark web site.

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## **Business & operations issues**

### **What is the best way to use the trucks?**

Most Spark customers purchase the trucks to use as general purpose business vehicles. They use the multi-image advertising space to promote their own business or services. Many owners rent at least half the ad space to their best clients or sell advertising to other local businesses.

There are many strategies that can help Spark truck owners turn their trucks into profit centers for their business. Refer to the Spark blog section of this web site for helpful information.

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### **I want to start a mobile advertising company. Which business model should I follow?**

If you intend to start a mobile advertising business, you'll find there are at least four different business models that are effective and can generate sizable revenue. The exact same four models can also lead to crushing financial loss. The Spark blog offers reviews and commentary on this topic.

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### **What are the typical operational costs for the trucks?**

Assuming a business owner already requires a truck or van in the daily operation of their business, the operational cost of replacing that truck with a new Spark MUV is minimal. For example, a Spark Expo's acquisition cost is comparable to a typical Chevrolet Suburban, large SUV or well equipped van. There are no unusual extra costs of operation.

If you choose a Spark Impact to replace to an ordinary box truck of similar size, you'll find that the Impact's lease payment will be approximately \$250 - \$300 higher per month than the box truck. The difference in cost is the "marketing" part of "marketing utility vehicle". It would be difficult to purchase advertising for your business that is as effective as the 12 backlit scrolling ads on a Spark Impact for only \$300 per month.

Radius DAV models are used solely for advertising and promotional purposes. Operational costs range from \$1800 per month for low mileage business models or occasional promotional use, to over \$6000 per month when operated 12 hours per day, every day.

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### **Does Spark offer training, consulting, or seminars?**

Yes. Call for details.

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### **Do the trucks come with GPS systems?**

GPS (global positioning satellite) systems are not standard, but are available.

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### **Why would I want a GPS system?**

If you do not intend to sell any of the ad space on your Spark truck, you do not need a GPS

If ad sales are a major component of your plan, you should consider adding a GPS to guarantee proof of performance for your advertising clients. The GPS is a black box, hidden somewhere in the truck that tracks all of the vehicle's activity. Most GPS units can log the vehicle's location and speed every few minutes and present that information visually through a web-based interface. The GPS is not an on-board navigation system and does not have a screen.

It's important to note that GPS systems typically use a cellular telephone network to report their data to you. Spark has no knowledge of which cellular network offers the best coverage in your city, and if you purchase your GPS unit as a Spark-installed option, you may discover that it does not work well in your city, or may have a software interface that you are not comfortable working with.

A better option is for you to research which GPS system has the combination of features, coverage, and pricing that best matches your needs. The GPS service providers often offer free installation at your location.

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#### **Do any Spark models require a commercial driver's license?**

A commercial driver's license, or "CDL", is required only for trucks with a gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) in excess of 26,000 pounds. Only the largest Spark Impact bodies (24', 26', and 30') are mounted on chassis that large.

Spark Expo, Impact, and Radius can be driven by anyone with a standard operator's license.

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## **Advertising sales concerns**

#### **What do other truck owners charge for their ad space?**

The advertising rates vary widely.

Some owners charge over \$1000 per week for each individual ad (on just one side). Others give the space away as an incentive for their best clients in another business. The overall range of prices is from \$50 per week for a single ad to over \$1000 for the same space. It is highly dependent on the specific program that you offer the advertiser, the exposure that you can deliver and the sales ability of the person selling the advertising. Operating in a small city does not necessarily assure lower rates than larger markets.

Many of our owners report that they charge between \$400 - \$600 per week for a single ad face (on only one side). This is typically for owners that do not display more than three ads per side at any given time.

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#### **Will Spark help me sell the ad space?**

No. If you are not eager to sell the advertising space yourself, look into building a relationship with agencies that specialize in brokering advertising on fleet vehicles. Media buying services and local

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advertising agencies may not be as helpful as you would hope. You will have a very limited amount of advertising space to sell, which may not make it worthwhile for agencies to recommend your ad space to their best clients.

As a rule, if you seek to build a mobile advertising business, you must be capable of selling the ad space yourself.

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