

Isuzu Australia takes the road to collaboration success with IBM® WebSphere and Lotus technologies

Overview

■ Problem

Isuzu Australia Limited (IAL) has a large national dealer network which is the driving force behind the business. The company needed a solution to improve the speed and accuracy of communications between head office and the dealerships as well as facilitate increased collaboration with business partners.

■ Solution

IAL chose to implement IBM WebSphere® Portal linked to other collaboration tools including Lotus® Sametime®, Lotus Quickr™, Portal Document Manager (PDM) and Web Content Management.

■ Benefits

Communications both internally and externally with dealers and partners have been radically improved. Information is now hosted centrally on a web-based portal, allowing all parties to access real time, up to date information at any time.



About Isuzu Australia Limited

Isuzu Australia Limited is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Isuzu Motors Limited (Japan), and is responsible for the marketing, distribution and support of Isuzu Trucks in Australia. With just 65 employees in Australia, IAL depends largely on its national dealer network of over 1000 dealership staff to drive its business and maintain its market leading position.

Looking towards the latest technology

The Isuzu Truck national dealer network is the retail end of the distribution channel for Isuzu Trucks sold in Australia, hence the requirement for access to the latest materials and information from IAL head office. In 2005 the company (IAL) was distributing all information to dealers manually in printed format via surface mail. Not only was this system

expensive and time-consuming, it was also vulnerable to errors. Dealers were responsible for the internal distribution of the various materials, resulting in frequent failure to reach the appropriate dealer recipients. In addition to this any errors or update to materials meant a repeat of the above process, and again there was no immediate confirmation of receipt and use by dealers of the up to date information.

It was evident to IAL that both internal and external communications could be improved through utilisation of new technologies. Aninka Morhall, Staff Operations Manager at Isuzu Australia's Head Office, in Port Melbourne, was tasked with sourcing an online portal and content management solution to supercede the existing manual processes.

Selection of a portal

Morhall evaluated solutions from a number of leading vendors, but settled on IBM WebSphere Portal along with Workplace Web Content Management (WCM). Commenting on IAL's reasons for selecting IBM technology Morhall said, "We chose WebSphere Portal and WCM because this solution was more capable of meeting our needs than the other offerings in the market, in particular in terms of its scalability. We were also interested in all of the extra collaborative components. As a long time Lotus Notes® user we knew these systems would integrate seamlessly with our existing technology platforms."

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IAL also elected to expand its collaboration capabilities by adding Lotus Sametime instant messaging, Lotus Quickr for team based project management and Portal Document Manager (PDM) to create a central repository for documents. "These additional systems were implemented to enable teams to collaborate around specific projects and documents and to cut down on sharing of documents as email attachments" Morhall commented.

The portal and collaboration tools were rolled out to staff and 1000+ dealership staff, with access controlled by a complex security structure allowing the right people to see the right content at the right time. The systems were quickly adopted by the majority of users and today are used companywide.

Collaboration pays off

The implementation of the WebSphere Portal enhanced by Lotus collaboration tools has totally transformed the communication processes between Isuzu and its dealer network. Today all materials are hosted on the portal and dealers simply have to log on to instantly access the latest information. The result has meant vastly improved, more accurate and timely communications with IAL's dealer network enhancing most areas of their business operations, and even increasing their ability to sell more effectively. The dealers can also log onto Sametime instant messaging through a web interface, enabling them to communicate with head office contacts in real time and quickly trouble-shoot any current queries.

Internal communication within IAL has also improved. Staff can now publish information themselves, expediting access to important information. Instant messaging has also meant employees rely less on email and more business decisions can be made in real time. The discipline of using a central document repository hosted online means fewer documents are shared as attachments and users can be more confident they are accessing the most recent version.

Morhall explained, "Now our company announcements are no longer sent by email – people know they have to log into the portal if they want to be kept up to date. Anyone can publish information, it's simply reviewed for appropriateness, and then it is posted immediately. All our business policies and procedures are hosted on the portal as well."

Since the portal went live in 2006 Isuzu has realised substantial business benefits. The company has enjoyed cost reductions since it no longer has to print materials for the dealer network and distribute them through the mail. Cost aside, Isuzu now distributes information to its dealers instantaneously, confident in the knowledge that dealers are always just a click away from the latest information. This has reduced errors across the entire dealer network.

Armed with the latest technology tools, collaboration and knowledge sharing has increased – for example teams can discuss a particular document over a web meeting, or individuals can access the real-time status of a project, task or milestone simply by logging into the portal.

Continuing the journey

The implementation of WebSphere Portal and Lotus collaboration tools has given IAL a taste for more technology and the productivity gains it can deliver. Morhall is currently rolling out the use of wiki technology which is available in Quickr, "We are going to start using wiki technology in Lotus Quickr to further improve information sharing – that's our latest exciting project here." Morhall is also looking at incorporating IBM's Workplace learning management system into the portal to further extend knowledge sharing and collaboration based e-learning throughout the organisation.

Leading Communication for the Truck Market leader

As Australian truck market leader for 19 consecutive years (20 by the end of 2008), Isuzu Australia recognises that maintaining this enviable record is dependent on providing leading products and services. IAL is also committed to demonstrating leadership in all areas of its operations, and by selecting IBM WebSphere Portal and Lotus Software technologies to provide leading communications between IAL and its dealer network its market leadership is more easily maintained.

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AUSTRALIA

For more information

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