IBM

Saab rolls out dealer intranet to improve customer service.

Application	B2B vehicle information intranet for automotive dealer network
Business Benefits	100% ROI within 2 years; 25% increase in dealer productivity; 40% reduction in customer inquiry response time; 80% reduction in calls from dealers to Saab U.S. headquarters; 15 to 20 man-years saved by avoiding legacy re-coding; increased customer satisfaction
Software	IBM DB2® Universal Database™ for AS/400® Lotus® Domino™ Lotus Notes® Java™
Servers	IBM AS/400 IBM S/390®
Services	IBM Global Services
IBM Business Partner	Jacada

From the turbo-charged Saab model 9-5 to the Saab model 9-3 Viggen, Saab has satisfied drivers around the world with high performance machines that impress both those behind the wheel and their passengers.

But Saab Cars USA, with its network of 212 dealerships and 30 service centers, knows its customers demand more than just state-of-the-art cars. Saab drivers look for quality—both on the road and at the dealership. And the automaker has dedicated itself to providing its customers a level of service reflective of the care that goes into each and every car that rolls off the production line.

"DB2 Universal Database has demonstrated incredible scalability and reliability as the data management solution for our IRIS system."
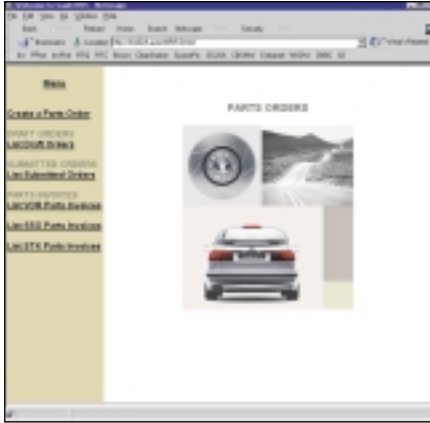
– Jerry Rode, Director of IS, Saab Cars USA

Working with IBM, Saab Cars USA has developed a new tool that enables its dealers to provide better customer service.

e-business

Using IRIS, Saab dealers can respond quickly to customer inquiries, and service technicians can order parts—all online.

For example, to provide fast and accurate responses to customer inquiries, Saab dealers in the United States wanted to have immediate access to complete customer purchase histories as well as back-end vehicle locator, warranty and training applications. Technicians at Saab service centers also needed easier access to service records and the ability to correlate parts records when servicing a customer's car.

However, obtaining such information was difficult, since records about service, ownership, warranties and parts were scattered among three databases located at the Saab U.S. headquarters. Using the back-end applications was also an extremely slow process of navigating through cumbersome green-screen emulator sessions. Dealers were often unable to answer questions posed by customers who expected quick, accurate and informative responses. This system further delayed reporting back to Saab—including sales numbers, defects and warranty repairs—which was preventing Saab from receiving the information it required to become a customer-centered enterprise.

To improve productivity and reduce costs, Saab wanted to facilitate dealer access to corporate information and applications through the Internet using Web browsers. At the same time, the manufacturer hoped this Web-enablement project would not involve the enormous investment of re-coding its legacy applications.

To plan and execute the project successfully, Saab realized that it needed a partner with e-business expertise—and preferably one with specific automotive industry experience. "We reviewed countless proposals to find the right solution provider," says Jerry Rode, director of IS, Saab Cars USA. "None of them could stand up to IBM's recent, successful experiences with other automotive companies."

Within a week of Saab's selection of IBM, a team of experts from IBM Global Services began working on plans for the auto manufacturer's Intranet Retailer Information System (IRIS). IBM Global Services designed the entire architecture and wrote the Java technology-based code for the IRIS system, which is powered by Lotus Domino and

"We reviewed countless proposals to find the right solution provider. None of them could stand up to IBM's recent, successful experiences with other automotive companies."

– Jerry Rode

IBM DB2 Universal Database running on Saab's existing IBM AS/400 server. To develop the Java technology-based user interface, IBM Global Services chose IBM Business Partner Jacada, based in Atlanta, Georgia. IBM Global Services was also able to leverage Saab's existing Lotus Notes database. "The pilot phase of this solution went so well," Rode notes, "that every dealer wanted to be first in line during rollout."

With IRIS in place, productivity at Saab dealerships and service centers has increased by 25 percent, and customer inquiries are resolved 40 percent faster on average. What's more, since dealers now have more information at their desktops, calls from Saab dealers to Saab U.S. headquarters have been reduced by 80 percent. The company expects to achieve 100 percent ROI on IRIS within two years. This factors in 15 to 20 man-years IBM saved Saab by eliminating the need to re-code the manufacturer's existing applications.

Giving dealers the power to please

Using a standard Web browser, any authorized employee at a Saab dealership or service center in the United States has access to enterprise applications stored on an AS/400 server at the Saab U.S. headquarters. The applications make use of a consolidated repository of vehicle, customer, warranty, sales and service information stored in DB2 Universal Database. Says Rode, "DB2 Universal Database has demonstrated incredible scalability and reliability as the data management solution for our IRIS system."

Lotus Domino, residing in another logical partition on the AS/400 server, acts as the middleware that mediates between the back-end applications and the front-end Web interface. For example, if a customer walks in and asks for a black model 9-3 Saab with a tan leather interior, a sales associate can log in to the IRIS menu, created by Domino, and initiate a search. Domino queries DB2 by location, model and color and puts the results of the query into an HTML form for the dealer. Upon locating the customer's vehicle, that dealer can click to another vehicle distribution application and have the car brought on site.

"Using Domino to mediate between our service technicians and our parts distributor allows our technicians to service the cars and get them back to the customer more quickly than ever."

– Jerry Rode

IBM Business Partner Jacada developed the Java technology-based interface that makes IRIS easy to navigate.

To expedite the delivery of critical information to its dealers, IBM Global Services integrated Saab's existing Lotus Notes database, which resides on a Microsoft® Windows NT® server. Here, dealers have access to technical service bulletins, sales and marketing information and just about any important form or document that dealers need to keep operations running. About five times a day, the Notes database is replicated with DB2, giving dealers, by way of IRIS, instant access to what used to have to be mailed out periodically.

While the dealers now have a powerful tool on the front end, service technicians can log into IRIS to check the service history of any Saab vehicle sold in the United States. They can also interface with Saab's parts supplier and distributor. When a technician wants to order a part, track the status of an existing order or check inventory, the AS/400 server at Saab headquarters acts as a switching point as Domino relays the queries to and retrieves results from the supplier's back-end IBM S/390 Parallel Enterprise Server™. Rode notes, "Using Domino and DB2 Universal Database to mediate between our service centers and our parts distributor allows Saab technicians to service the cars and get them back to the customer more quickly than ever."

Building on a solid foundation
Saab knew that it needed to leverage both its legacy hardware and code to make this a cost-effective e-business initiative. "IRIS wouldn't even exist today if we had to build it from scratch," notes Rode. "To design a completely new Web interface, replicating the business logic and all of the database structure would take—just for one application— at least two or three years. The programming for our IRIS application took about nine months. Using Domino as the middleware to leverage our existing infrastructure was a key to making this system happen."

Wanting to establish even closer ties with its customers, Saab has long-term goals of expanding access to IRIS. "Our future vision," explains Rode, "is to integrate IRIS with our customer-focused Web strategy."

At this time, though, Saab is still riding on the success of the IRIS system. Says Rode, "Saab cars are sold in over 50 countries, with the U.S. accounting for one-third of the total volume. Saab Automobile, the Swedish-based parent company, has selected IRIS as the corporate-standard dealer information system. IBM Global Services was chosen to adapt the original U.S.-developed version for use worldwide. 'International IRIS' has already been launched throughout Europe, and the remainder of Saab's global dealer network will be using IRIS by the end of 2001."

IBM®

G325-4067-01