Audi Case Study

Overview

Audi is a brand synonymous with sporty, progressive and sophisticated cars that embody technological perfection. On the back of the company’s year-on-year record growth since 2004, including 30% growth in Australia in 2008, the company needed to position itself – and its national dealer network – to manage its future growth. As part of this growth management, Audi recognized it needed to take its dealer communications to the next level to further support dealers and facilitate the launch of new cars into the market.

Audi Australia selected a portal solution from Intranet DASHBOARD (iD) to provide secure and timely information tailored to the broad range of people working at the dealerships.

The successful rollout of the iD portal means that Audi Australia can now maintain secure business communications with individual dealership owners and managers, while also quickly updating dealership staff with the information they need.

Client Profile

A leading, premium German automotive brand known for its technological excellence and innovation, Audi celebrates its 100 year anniversary in 2009. Audi is the fastest-growing premium brand in Australia, which has recorded year-on-year record growth since 2004. On the back of its record-breaking sales in 2008, Australia is the number 1 growth market for Audi worldwide.

In 2009, Audi is preparing to open a brand new $50 million “Audi Lighthouse” flagship dealership and head office at Victoria Park on South Dowling Street, 10 minutes from both the CBD and airport. It is also launching new cars into the market, including the Audi Q5 compact SUV, the new A6 range, and the Cabriolet version of the popular A5 model, along with new engines for the A4 and TT.

Communications Challenge

Audi has a network of 30 dealerships across Australia. It needed to communicate with a range of people within its dealer network, and ensure that different roles within the dealership were given access to the right information. There was a complex network of stakeholders who required access – the solution needed to cater to 500 users who were broken into 90 different user groups.

Audi had an existing portal solution in place that had proven to be difficult to update and unreliable at times. Audi needed a communication tool which would inspire confidence in its dealer network and help it provide dealership staff with timely and accurate information.
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The key benefits sought were:

- A scalable **communications** portal that would provide up to date and timely information to a range of people in its partner network – from dealership owners and managers through to sales people and repair specialists.

- One **central location** for all stakeholders to access key information, including Audi news, product updates and key documents including eForms, images and other marketing collateral.

- The ability to assign **different permission levels** to groups and subgroups to ensure security of business data between Audi and individual dealerships, and to ensure that each user is presented with a simple to use interface showing only information relevant to their job at their dealership.

- Great **flexibility, accuracy and quality of data** for dealers.

- Ability to **administer and maintain** the Portal in-house, without any third party involvement or expense.

- **Shared publishing rights** and the ability for numerous departments to upload news and content without the need to funnel information through one person.

The Business Case

Audi had an existing portal solution which has been built on an open source solution. Audi's business had outgrown this solution which had become unreliable and required a lot of technical management. With only one in-house IT staff member, Audi needed a solution which could be administered and maintained by non-technical staff, without intervention from a third party supplier.

“Administration of the old site wasn’t easy – to make changes we had to get a programmer to do it. The software might have been free initially but we didn’t have the expertise to support it in-house, and we didn’t want to keep paying someone outside the company to maintain it,” said Audi’s IT Specialist.

Audi was also very conscious of security concerns. “Permission levels and security were quite important for us. The old portal wasn’t 100% reliable – sometimes dealers couldn’t access their own documents, and we didn’t know why that was happening.

We needed to ensure the correct information was reliably available to our dealers, and that dealers felt confident the confidential business data we were sharing with them online was only being shown to them.”
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**Solution design and deployment**

Audi began investigating its portal requirements in March 2008, and through working with its technology service partner, Ethan Group, was introduced to iD. Audi evaluated two products as part of the review, and chose the iD solution because it was able to deliver all the features they required out of the box – including security, self registration of accounts, document management, news, right hand navigation, image and digital asset libraries and flexible design, at a price that was within Audi’s budget. The other solution which Audi evaluated was more expensive and would have required the purchase of additional modules to match what iD could provide out of the box.

The Audi deal portal was launched to dealers in February 2009. The implementation and rollout of the project was delivered seamlessly. Prior to the implementation, iD worked with Audi staff to help the company decide what information needed to appear on the dealer portal, and how the permissions structure would work to ensure easy and secure access for dealers.

As part of the implementation, Audi involved the general managers from across five key departments including sales, corporate communications and finance to find out what information they needed to share with dealers. This ensured that the broader business would be involved in creating and maintaining the dealer portal and had buy-in of the project.

“The preparation process that iD took us through made it easy – they gave us an understanding of how to structure it”

iD trained five people from Audi – one from each of the relevant departments to become administrators of the portal.

“We prefer to have one person from each department taking responsibility for their part of the dealer portal,” said Audi’s IT Specialist. “As an IT person I don't know what dealers need to know. Plus my busy schedule creates a roadblock to getting the information updated quickly.”

Audi completed two workshops with iD to finesse the structure of the portal. The company knew it was important to ensure the permission-based structure mapped closely to the information that different roles within the dealerships needed to access, in as quick and simple a way as possible.

“Now when someone from a dealership logs in, they'll see the latest news relevant to them, and it will only take one mouse click for them to find what they're looking for. It was important to give them the easiest possible route to the information they need.”
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The iD Desktop Assistant tool made administration of the site easy. It provides administrators with instant access to news items requiring approval before publishing on the site. It also gives them the ability to upload multiple files at the same time. For Audi this meant that each administrator only needs to access one folder relevant to their section of the business. “The ‘after sales’ administrator only sees the parts of the portal that he needs to administer,” explained Audi’s IT Specialist.

Another important component of the project was that the dealer portal had to meet Audi’s scrupulous design standards to match Audi’s distinctive branding. Unique design elements included ensuring that all the site navigation appeared on the right hand side of the portal rather than the left. The result was a dealer portal which had been finely tuned to suit the needs of the many different stakeholders from Audi’s dealer network, presented in the distinctive and familiar Audi design.

“Audi is a world leader in the automotive industry, and we were pleased to be able to work closely with them to deliver a dealer portal to support their continued growth in Australia,” said Connie Pandos, co-founder and director of Intranet DASHBOARD. “Audi is known for its commitment to quality and technical excellence, and we were pleased to help them deliver a sophisticated communication portal which is easy to access and update”.

Results to date

Audi’s dealer portal was launched on 1 February 2009, and enjoyed rapid uptake by its dealer users. The number of users increased by 450% in the second month of use. As users discovered the new portal was easy to use and offered relevant information, they began to access more information via the portal. Audi reported a 300% increase in the number of pages visited in only the second month of operation.

“The feedback from dealers has been very positive. The previous Audi dealer portal required extensive support – we got a lot of support calls and questions. People had trouble doing very basic things like logging in. Since we launched the iD portal, those calls have stopped.”

One feature which dealers have really appreciated is the ability to use online forms. “Not everyone working in the dealership has access to Microsoft Office.” Now using a streamlined, online process, dealers can fill out and lodge forms online. “This is something we use quite frequently, for things like support forms. They can even attach screenshots or photos.”

Audi can use iD’s inbuilt analytic tools to track how many forms are being lodged per month. While it’s early days, the transition to the use of the portal and eForms, to replace email and printed forms has helped Audi reduce email traffic and save time and money.

Additionally, dealer principals and general managers can now view the financial results of their dealership, while being confident that their confidential data is secure. “They have no doubt any more that they are the only people able to view their dealership data,” said Audi’s IT Specialist.
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The key benefits realized as a result of iD include:

**Communications portal:** The News tool has significantly improved Audi’s communication with its dealer network, right from the early stages of the implementation. “The News tool has been extremely important as it allows the business to update all dealerships throughout Australia with real time information. It’s very easy for dealers as they only see information relevant to their part of the business.”

**Accessible, centralized documents and resources:** The unreliable and complicated update process of the older portal has been replaced with a new iD portal solution which provides Audi with a reliable and secure portal location, where information can be quickly updated and securely shared.

**Shared publishing right:** Administrators now have the ability to add, amend and remove content relevant to their part of the business which has alleviated the need for timely and costly change requests and removed potential bottlenecks in the flow of information.

**Reporting and monitoring activity:** Audi is now able to monitor and report on portal activity, and keep the business up to date on the activity of its dealers.

**Future plans**

Although the dealer portal is quite new, Audi is using the analysis tools included in the iD platform to monitor usage. “We can easily monitor how many pages users visited, and what the top 10 and bottom 10 pages are within the portal.” Audi will use this information to fine tune the portal and provide guidance as to what information dealers find valuable.

With responsibility for managing the portal handed to the broader business, Audi’s IT Specialist is planning to begin using some of the more sophisticated features which come as standard in the iD portal. The next step for the Audi dealer portal will be the migration of user surveys from paper to online. Audi surveys its dealer base on a monthly and quarterly basis. Traditionally those results were submitted by fax. iD’s Survey Manager tool creates a central database for the storage, completion and submission of forms online. Migrating forms online will remove the need to manually enter results into the computer. “You only have to define your survey and what you want to ask.”

As a leading brand in automotive design, Audi’s commitment to quality extends to the quality of its communication with its dealership network.

“Our relationship with our dealers is important. We are asking them to use the portal as the platform to communicate with us, so we had to ensure it was easy to use and offered a first rate experience.”

“The iD solution delivered all the tools we needed to support our dealer communications, in a cost effective and easy to use package. We’re very happy with it, and even more importantly, our dealers are happy with it.”

For more information on Intranet DASHBOARD please contact a consultant on sales@intranetdashboard.com