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digital commerce solutions

Automotive Giant from Detroit

Detroit™

An Automotive Giant Creates Online Service Portal for Its 2700+ Strong Dealer Network

Summary

A leading automotive giant in the US with a network of more than 2700 dealers across the nation wanted to roll out an online pricing guide of the various service plans they offer. This was planned so that they can slowly phase out their printed catalog and that the dealers have the most up-to-date information online as well as significantly save cost. Typically, they had to print their 8 different pricing guides every half yearly and ship it to their 2700 dealers. They offer about 1200 service plans to customers via their strong dealer network. The pricing of the service plans were a mix & match and varied from dealer to dealer. Most of the dealers only sold subsets of the services plans and only a few dealers sold all the service plans. It was a daunting task to have the pricing guide for the various dealers printed every quarter or whenever there was a price revision due to the complex pricing pattern and manual work involved. In order to address this issue, they came up with the idea of an online portal where dealers can login and check the prices of the various services plans that they were authorized to sell without having to browse through the printed catalogs thereby supplying up-to-date information to their customers.

Customer Requirement Statement

"We need an online portal where our dealers can login and view / print their respective price guides"

Requirements

- Create an online web portal where more than 2700 dealers can view & publish dynamic price guides.
- The implementation was to be completed within 6 months.
- The interface had to be user friendly.
- Automate publishing of the 8 different pricing guides using Adobe InDesign until the printed catalogs are phased out completely.
- The online portal should seamlessly be integrated with the current ERP system and extract price details from there.
- Pricing displayed should be dealer specific and a particular dealer should not be seeing pricing applicable to another dealer.
- Dealers should be allowed to login to the portal using their respective authentication and view/print the price guides of the individual plans of interest.
  The system should also allow the dealers to print the complete price guide for all the plans for which they are eligible if need be.
- Pricing and the Plans to be displayed based on the dealer codes.
- Dashboard in the admin site should allow admin users to check for the Plans and PDFs generated by the each of the dealers in the website.
- Hide/ Show plans based on the dealers category.
- Implement a Natural Language Search Engine to display the result based on the search terms quickly.
- Search to also show the static PDFs that are related to the search terms.
- Print interface, which should allow user to print the required plan details.
- File watcher implementation for Static PDFs and Price import (Automatic import of price feed).
- Vehicle class matrix with export / Import options in the admin site to contain the details of Make / Model and Engine.
- Custom tool with 8 classes of pricing. Admin user should have option to edit the price values.

Methodology

The implementation of the project was split into two phases

1. Proof of Concept (POC)
2. The Actual Project.

The POC included creating a sample database, which contained samples of various service plans. In parallel, a custom tool was developed which would read the price feed from the ERP and update the various service plans in the sample database. The online portal was developed in such a way that the dealer can login and view the price details of the service plans that they are eligible to sell to their customers. The dealers can also generate a PDF on the fly for selected service plans or for all the service plans that they were eligible to sell. Static contents were also inserted when a full catalog was generated using logics provided by the customer and this logic varied from state to state. An admin module was also developed which allowed administrators to add/update static content on the home page.

InDesign templates were also created which were used to generate print catalogs using the sample database. On successful completion of the POC, the stake holders gave a go ahead for the full-blown implementation of the project using real-time feeds & live data. A design document was provided and approved by both the IT & Business Groups.

Conclusion

The outcome was a successful implementation of the online dealer portal for service plans within an agreed period of time. Change requests were managed efficiently with the use of a tracking tool as well as other project management tools to ensure timely delivery.

Based on the successful implementation of the online service guide, the accessories division has now turned on to QUESTUDIO for automation of their print catalogs, which is in the early negotiation stages.