Ascend

# Mazda Cars (UK) Limited

## User Profile

In the complex world of automobile sales, communication is key. To give its 150 dealers the competitive edge, Mazda Cars (UK) Limited has implemented an intranet-based system to provide new information services and decrease cumbersome paperwork. With its intranet-based Electronic Communications and Help Online (ECHO) system, Mazda is improving business communications and saving the company time and money—with the help of Ascend solutions.

### The Need for Access

For more than ten years, Mazda Cars' UK dealerships had relied on dial-up access to IBM AS/400 business applications. The system, called Dealerlink, was adequate for many transactions, but was beginning to show its age. Compared to modern interfaces like Microsoft Windows, it was lackluster, and the analog dial-up access caused connections to slow to a crawl. Mazda needed a fast, reliable system with an improved interface to give its dealers easier access to richer information.



"Senior management quickly realized that Ascend solutions offered a potential for huge costs savings and a massive improvement in business communications," explains Dealer Systems Manager Andy Collins.

### Getting on the Fast Track

After a major systems review, IT staff decided on a bold upgrade plan involving changes to physical infrastructure, transmission protocol and the user interface. The work began by replacing 2400 baud modem links with ISDN. This required a single managed device that could take incoming ISDN calls and deliver multiple Videotex sessions to Dealerlink's DEC MicroVAX front-end. The solution would need to be scalable and provide support for V.120 connectivity, as well as PPP support for migration to routed LAN-to-LAN connections. After evaluations, a solution was found: the Ascend MAX™ family of WAN access switches. A modular device supporting analog and digital technology, the MAX also offered a low cost per port. The device was installed by networking specialists Baynton Thompson Networks (BTN).

At Mazda Cars Limited headquarters, the LAN is based on a Token Ring backbone, with a small Ethernet segment for the DEC VAX and Ascend MAX. Mazda used TCPware for VMS on the VAX. Incoming V.120 calls do an immediate Telnet to the VAX where Mazda has their own call handling software layered on top of TCPware to invoke the Videotex session.

"You had ISDN coming in and just one network cable coming out—it was a very neat solution. It could also support digital modems and act as a router for PPP sessions. This was an important consideration given our business objectives for an intranet," said Collins.

After a seven-month ISDN service roll-out the benefits of the new system quickly became apparent. Dealers enjoyed

*Despite the name, Mazda Cars (UK) Limited is not part of the Japanese manufacturer. Jointly owned by distribution group Inchcape and the Japanese firm Itochu, the company imports, markets and distributes cars to independent dealerships. Based in Tunbridge Wells, it has a turnover of £400 million and employs a staff of 350. Nearly 26,000 vehicles were imported in 1996.*

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## The Ascend Solution



### MAX Family of Remote Access Concentrators

*Ascend's MAX solutions enable corporations to build remote networks of any size, with virtually any combination of analog and digital carrier services. All MAX products combine the functionality of a router, a terminal server, an ISDN switch and a Frame Relay concentrator in a single box. MAX products represent the industry's most adaptable, secure and interoperable solutions for remote networking.*

instant connections and reduced online charges as they performed parts and vehicle ordering, warranty claims and financial transactions over the revitalized Dealerlink system. Having created a powerful dial-up ISDN infrastructure, attention then turned to applications development.

## Surfing to Success

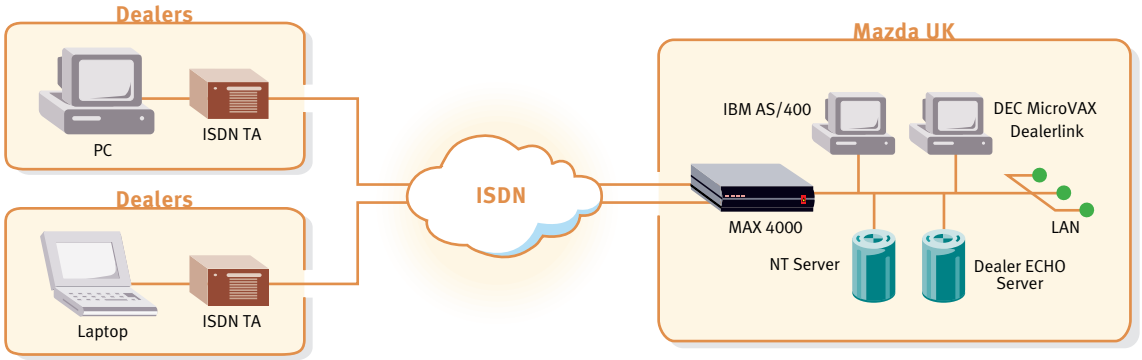
During the ISDN roll-out, Mazda took advice from local communications consultancy, AXL Business Solutions Limited. It was recognized that, in addition to handling Dealerlink applications such as invoicing, intranet technology could add graphics, scanned images, multimedia pages and electronic mail, reducing the huge amount of paperwork sent to dealers every day. The challenge was in developing an intranet that could run in parallel with the existing Dealerlink system.

IT staffers installed an IBM 520 running Windows NT with the Microsoft Back Office suite and Internet Information Server (IIS). With some custom programming, the IBM AS/400 was configured to communicate with Videotex front-end on the DEC MicroVAX or from dealers accessing the intranet on Internet Explorer browsers. Mazda's IT staff have also developed an easy-to-navigate menu system for Web users, providing dealers with seamless access to multimedia HTML pages, data files, Word documents or AS/400 processes.

## Future Plans

Given enthusiastic user demand, Mazda can easily expand its remote access communications infrastructure to offer more connections, as well as corporate LAN access from every desktop.

Mazda is also planning to enhance security by implementing Ascend's RADIUS-based management, featuring the Secure Access™ Firewall application. Improved security opens the door for a number of new applications, including e-mail, mobile working, file transfer and perhaps EDI to dealer financial systems. By offering state-of-the-art information systems support, Mazda will ensure that its dealers stay ahead in a competitive market.




*Mazda uses the MAX 4000 to get the maximum service at the lowest price per port.*

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