

LANSA drives e-business for QVALE Mangusta



The Qvale Automotive Group, with manufacturing facilities in Modena, Italy and sales offices worldwide, develops, manufactures, distributes and markets the Mangusta, an Italian sports car with an image of quality, good looks and high performance.

Qvale outsourced their total IT solution, including software, data center facilities and operations support, to Strategic Business Systems, a LANSA Solution Partner in New Jersey USA. Dealers in the US and Europe handle orders, warranty and stock inquiries with a LANSA Web Dealer Communication System that extends the core AS/400 Motor Vehicle System. The Italian manufacturing facilities and US sales offices access the same Motor Vehicle System over the Internet with NewLook.

“Strategic's solution is highly reliable,” says **John Wolbertus**, Vice President Qvale Mangusta. “I can't really comment on LANSA, because I don't have an IT background. LANSA is like a silent and invisible engine that powers our business and should be given all the praise.”

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Starting from scratch

Qvale had to setup its own offices and distributor network at the same time as the launch of the new Mangusta sports car. Working with a clean slate is an advantage and a hurdle at the same time.

As John explains, “It leaves you free to select the best possible solution as we don't carry a legacy system, but at the same time it was not always easy to find out how policies and procedures should be in the system. For example, our dealers and service points were initially independent partners, but now our distribution and support network includes company-owned factory shops as well.”

“Since the solution had to be flexible and scalable, we wanted to use the Internet as the backbone of our operations. Our aim is to be one of the forerunners for dealer support and inventory processes and offer the best possible service to our current and future partners.”

A better solution

“We investigated several options, but Strategic, with their established Motor Vehicle Solution and the LANSA Web tools, offered a far superior solution,” continues John.

“The fact that Strategic's solution is AS/400 based made a difference in our decision as it has the reliability and 24 hour availability that we need to support our Business-to-Business (B2B) operations over two continents. Where the server is located is less important, the Internet removes the concept of distance.”

Now all Qvale offices, distributors, service points and warehouses in the US as well as the car factory in Italy, access the Strategic system in New Jersey over the Internet. The dealer communication system uses a LANSA for the Web multi-lingual browser interface. Access to back-office modules to manage internal operations is handled by NewLook emulation interface over TCP/IP.

“Currently the Italian manufacturing facility uses an NT server solution that can't do what we need. Once our Italian operation moves to an AS/400 solution all inventories will be made available on Strategic's system. Dealers will have automatic access to the right warehouse, depending on their location. Currently we have warehouses in Italy, San Francisco, Florida and Beverly Hills”.

The benefits of B2B and ASP

“B2B e-business gives us ease-of-use and ease-of-connection. Communication between our Italian factory, US offices and dealers in two continents is at its best possible level,” continues John.

“Strategic's LANSA solution allows us to consolidate our rapidly growing operations through a controlled environment for order processing, sales analysis and warranty management”.





“With an easy to budget monthly fee, Strategic and LANSA provide a fully supported AS/400 e-business solution. This total outsource approach lowers the barriers to entry into the market.”

“In the long term I also expect efficiency savings in our customer service department, compared with telephone and fax support. Based on current staffing costs and monthly fees, we would probably save about 35 percent. This may well be on the conservative side.”

LANSA is quick and fast

Jeff Parrott, Strategic Project Manager for Qvale, says, “LANSA is to us the most productive and most robust Web development environment. LANSA and the AS/400 are our bread and butter. The LANSA Repository approach is very important to us and so are its multilingual facilities. With LANSA, our Visual Basic and RPG programmers are finally able to talk the same language, which helped us to bridge the gap between PC and AS/400 development.”

Strategic already had a LANSA Web extension for Parts Ordering. New Web interfaces for Vehicle Ordering, Warranty and Invoice Inquiry took only two months to develop. The total project, including customization of core RPG functionality, setting up the infrastructure, implementing NewLook and developing the LANSA Web interfaces took about six months.



“The productivity of developing e-commerce solutions becomes even more dramatic with LANSA Commerce Edition. You don’t have to build B2B and B2C applications from scratch. You can start with a ‘product catalog’ component that will give you most of the solution.”

“With LANSA’s new Framework Wizard you don’t need special graphics skills. The Wizard includes over 300,000 different very professional graphic looks.”

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The future of e-business

John Myers, Managing Director Strategic Business Systems, comments, “The first wave of Internet applications in the Motor Vehicle industry have simply extended the manufacturers’ existing systems across the Internet.”

“These systems have required no or little organizational changes and have yielded immediate payback in improved dealer service, reduced costs of customer service and elimination of dial-up communications charges.”

“The next wave involves significant changes to the manufacturers’ business process. The Internet lets manufacturers learn more about their customers online and build a substantial relationship with them. This will yield significant increases in efficiency and dramatically improve customer retention rates.”

“Many experts speak of direct Business-to-Consumer or B2C vehicle sales in the USA. In the short to intermediate term, we feel this will only exist within the existing dealer network. Both legal obstacles and channel conflicts currently stand in the way. Products will be configured and ordered online, but will continue to be fulfilled through the existing dealer network.”

“Certainly, when manufacturers want to roll out B2C capabilities, our LANSA powered systems will be ready to go!”

Company and System Information

- The San Francisco-based Qvale Automotive Group develops, manufactures, distributes and markets the Mangusta. Qvale has offices in San Francisco and Beverly Hills, California, Ft. Lauderdale, Florida and Detroit, Michigan, and manufacturing facilities in Modena, Italy.
- For more information visit: www.qvaleauto.com
- Strategic Business Systems, a LANSA Business Partner in New Jersey, has been providing information systems solutions to the motor vehicle industry since 1982. Strategic has extended its RPG-based Motor Vehicle System to the Internet with LANSA for the Web.
- Strategic customers include BMW, Ducati, Harley-Davidson, Hino, Hummer, KIA, KTM Sportmotorcycles, Land Rover, Saab, Toyota and many more prestigious names in the automotive, truck and motorcycle industries.
- The Qvale solution runs on one of Strategic’s AS/400 model 170 processors in New Jersey dedicated to Application Service Provider clients.
- For more information visit: www.vehiclesystem.com