

CarsTV

CarsTV was conceived in the early 1990's as a way to offer a computer software solution for advertising used cars. The service was available to car dealerships as well as the general public. The CarsTV system held thousands of used cars that were presented over local cable TV channels, public kiosks, and over the Internet. CarsTV operated for several years before being purchased in the late 1990's by Major Auto of Long Island, NY.

Challenge

The solution would first require an administrative module for maintaining the data. This would provide a way to enter information about each car into a database along with digital photos, the seller's contact information, etc. For the kiosks, another module was required that would allow the general public to search the database for cars using various search criteria. These kiosks were to be placed in public places such as shopping malls, so the software had to be sturdy and capable of self-recovery in the event of a crash. Another module was required for the cable television channels. This module would simply rotate through the inventory, presenting the basic information for each car on a pleasantly designed screen. Finally, a separate company was hired to create a web site that would allow users to search through the car inventory online.

Solution

Microsoft's Visual Basic was used to create the administrative, kiosk, and cable television modules. For the kiosk system, a simple and sleek interface was designed to make it easy and pleasant to search for cars. Users could print out their search results using the printer that was built into the kiosk. Inventory could be updated in the kiosks using removable hard drives. Reports could be collected from the kiosk system, revealing information about how the users were using it. A simple non-interactive presentation module was created for cable television. Its inventory could be updated through the Internet. This presentation module simply rotated through the entire inventory of cars, showing a picture of each car, along with the specifications and contact information. Advertisers could also purchase advertising banners that could be displayed in-between cars. Several self-check systems were built into both the kiosk and cable television systems to insure that they would quickly self-recover in the event of any kind of program or operating system failure.



Benefits

The CarsTV system was successful in helping car dealerships and private owners sell their cars. The system presented inventory throughout the mid-Atlantic in dealer showrooms, in shopping malls, and on cable television.