



Microsoft Windows Server 2003 Customer Solution Case Study



Overview

Country: United Kingdom

Industry: Automotive

Customer Profile

CarLand is one of the U.K.'s largest used-car supermarket groups offering up to 3,000 cars across six retail locations. It provides a range of finance options and insurance products.

Business Situation

The company had to comply with new Financial Services Authority (FSA) regulations. It wanted a Software-as-a-Service training solution that delivered compliance and enterprise-level service levels.

Solution

CarLand implemented on-demand solution Mentor, provided by Auto Network UK, and hosted by Microsoft® Gold Certified Partner 7global. It received Financial Services Authority (FSA) authorisation and an enterprise-class application.

Benefits

- Beneficial capital costs
- Lower infrastructure operating expenses
- Cost-effective system management
- Pro-active software monitoring
- Enterprise-class service levels

Car Supermarket Builds Business Excellence Cost-Effectively Through Software-as-a-Service

“Software-as-a-Service means training is more cost-effective now and in the future.”

Francis Owu, Learning and Development Manager, CarLand

CarLand, one of the U.K.'s largest used-car supermarket groups, needed a training solution to comply with Financial Services Authority (FSA) regulations. But the company wanted to avoid the cost of scaling up its network to support the application. Instead, it sought a Software-as-a-Service system with enterprise-class availability and security. CarLand turned to Auto Network UK, which uses Microsoft® Gold Certified Partner 7global to provide Managed Hosting for its training application, Mentor. The solution is powered by the Microsoft Windows Server™ 2003 operating system, which is part of the Microsoft Windows Server System, and Active Directory® directory service. CarLand earned FSA authorisation without significant infrastructure investment. It receives an on-demand solution that delivers best-practice levels of service, and can concentrate on its core business of selling cars.



“We were up against a tight deadline to find a training solution, yet we wanted assurances that the levels of service would be no less than if we hosted the solution ourselves.”

Francis Owu, Learning and Development Manager, CarLand

Situation

CarLand is one of the U.K.'s largest used-car supermarket groups, offering 3,000 cars across six retail showrooms and a state-of-the-art Vehicle Refurbishment Centre. It also provides a range of finance options, insurance products, warranty, and breakdown cover services.

In January 2004, the organisation faced new Financial Services Authority (FSA) regulations to raise standards across the sector. If CarLand met the requirements, it gained FSA authorisation and continued selling insurance products. If not, it lost the right to supply these services and a vital source of revenue.

CarLand was left with a tight deadline to gain authorisation. It needed to have a training programme in place and a procedure for documenting the progress of personnel by January 14, 2005. However, to host a training solution required significant resources in hardware and software. It also meant bolstering a small IT team.

The company had the classic dilemma when adding a new application to an infrastructure already operationally efficient: redirect resources from its core business to scale up its network, or find an independent software vendor (ISV) offering a Software-as-a-Service model. This meant paying for the training solution on a subscription basis.

CarLand decided to deploy an on-demand solution after carefully weighing up the benefits of the model against its potential risks. Certainly, while hosting a solution required significant investment, contracting a third-party to manage the system raised possible security and availability issues.

Francis Owu, Learning and Development Manager, CarLand, says: “We were up against a tight deadline to find a training solution, yet we wanted assurances that the

levels of service would be no less than if we hosted the solution ourselves.”

Solution

The company chose the Web-based Mentor training application by ISV Auto Network UK. Many ISVs approached CarLand, but as Owu says: “Mentor is a very cost-efficient, on-demand solution that not only ensures FSA compliance, but delivers enterprise-class service levels.”

Auto Network UK delivers Mentor using Microsoft® Gold Certified Partner 7global, which hosts and manages the application at its data centre located in a former Bank of England building. The partner began hosting the system in December 2003, after the two parties signed an agreement. Auto Network UK was impressed with the 7global service offering, which included:

- Robust connectivity systems.
- State-of-the-art monitoring.
- Industry-standard hardware.
- Advanced disaster recovery support.

Glenn Maule, Operations Manager, Auto Network UK says: “If Mentor was to succeed as an on-demand solution, it was important to us that a commitment to excellence extended beyond the application’s development to its hosting and management. We signed a deal with 7global because its commitment to best practice was as great as ours.”

7global hosts and manages the complete Microsoft technology stack running Mentor, which includes:

- Microsoft Windows Server™ 2003, part of Microsoft Windows Server System, as the core operating system.
- Active Directory® directory service, as the central management tool for access rights.
- Microsoft SQL Server™ 2000 as the Web-compatible database solution driving the system.

“CarLand does not spend thousands of pounds for a dedicated number of licences. Delivery is simply scaled up and down according to our needs, making it more cost efficient.”

Francis Owu, Learning and Development Manager, CarLand

7global also has Microsoft Service Provider Licensing Agreements (SPLAs), which mean Auto Network UK customers can receive Microsoft applications on a monthly subscription basis. Importantly for clients, the agreements include software assurance which is a competitive pricing structure that encourages service providers to deploy the latest versions of Microsoft products.

Mentor went live in November 2004 on budget and two months before the FSA regulations came into force. Immediately, employees received an online system that guided them to compliance and continued operational excellence.

Benefits

Beneficial Capital Costs

CarLand implemented a training solution that provided FSA authorisation, yet avoided major infrastructure investment. Through Mentor, the company secured an on-demand solution with enterprise-class service levels. Owu says: “It overcame any concerns we had over third-party hosting. The best-practice methodology used by Auto Network and 7global gave us complete peace of mind.”

Lower Operating Costs

CarLand also found a genuinely cost-effective software solution. The application is paid for annually with payments based on monthly usage per employee. Owu says: “CarLand does not spend thousands of pounds for a dedicated number of licences. Delivery is simply scaled up and down according to our needs, making it more cost efficient.”

Low-Cost Software Evolution

Furthermore, CarLand can better control staff training. Owu says: “Software-as-a-Service means training is more cost-effective now and in the future.” In essence, the company can keep up-to-date with the latest training applications without undue cost, and ensure

its staff deliver best business practices at all times.

Cost-Effective Management

For CarLand, the AutoNetwork UK application delivered as on-demand software provided greater cost-effectiveness than if the used-car supermarket hosted and managed the solution itself. The company understood that to ensure the enterprise level of service that AutoNetwork UK offered by using 7global, needed significant investment in hardware, software, and IT personnel. Now, as a result of the Software-as-a-Service solution, CarLand can concentrate resourcing on its core business instead of its IT infrastructure while receiving guarantees over best-practice levels of service.

24-Hour Monitoring

CarLand receives round-the-clock proactive monitoring of all the hardware and software delivering Mentor. 7global personnel constantly check the infrastructure’s log files to ensure everything is running smoothly. Owu says: “I am truly confident in the application’s management. I know the methodology is pro-active so issues are addressed before they become problems.”

Maximum Reliability Over Delivery

For the business, Mentor has been available 100 per cent of the time. Owu says: “This level of availability means staff training does not suffer interruptions and their progress towards service excellence is not hampered.”

Furthermore, CarLand can expect the present standards of reliability to continue. Through 7global’s SPLA’s with Microsoft, the company is assured latest-versions of the Microsoft infrastructure software that power the technology stack behind the application, guaranteeing industry-standard performance.

Complete Customer Satisfaction

For More Information

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For more information about Auto Network products and services, call or visit the Web site at: www.autonetworkuk.com

For more information about 7global products and services, call or visit the Web site at: www.7global.com

For more information about CarLand products and services, call or visit the Web site at: www.carland.com

Auto Network UK knows the success of Mentor can continue. By the partnership with 7global, the application developer can supply the solution as on-demand software without any worries over quality of service.

Windows Server 2003

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Software and Services

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