

UBench helps bring speed, efficiency and responsiveness to the auto leasing market.

Overview

■ **Challenge**

To support its new leasing service, UBench needed a platform powerful enough to meet the demands of global customers yet flexible enough to accommodate its growth.

■ **Why Become an On Demand Business?**

To fulfill its mission of transforming the core processes related to auto leasing, UBench needed the technology building blocks required to support realtime remote sensing and highly automated workflows.

■ **Solution**

UBench created a revolutionary leasing management system that enables realtime collaboration across the auto leasing value chain, while leveraging in-car wireless telemetry to automate key aspects of fleet management.

■ **Key Benefits**

- 35% reduction in leasing companies' administrative costs
- 50% reduction in insurance companies' adjustment costs resulting from streamlined processes and shorter cycles

>> **On Demand Business defined**

"An enterprise whose business processes—integrated end-to-end across the company and with key partners, suppliers and customers—can respond with speed to any customer demand, market opportunity or external threat."



Based in Belgium, UBench International helps automotive leasing companies improve their business processes and serve their customers better. The company provides a collaborative framework that allows leasing companies to engage with everyone within the leasing value chain—partners, suppliers, customers and employees—to create a single virtual enterprise connected in realtime.

To an outside observer, it's hard to put a finger on just why the automobile leasing market is so competitive. A big part of it is the fact that assets at the core of the service—the cars themselves—are commodities. This basic reality has increased the price sensitivity of leasing customers and obliges leasing companies to look at their inner workings for sources of competitive advantage. Broadly speaking, the key to success is, first and foremost, the overall quality of the customer experience, which enables leasing companies to attract and retain leasing customers. But for these

"We had a unique vision of how we could transform the entire auto leasing process from end-to-end to make it more efficient and responsive to customers. Only IBM had the technology and know-how to help us realize that vision, and the flexible services that we needed to grow."

– Peter Verbraeken, Director and Co-founder, UBench International

On Demand Business Benefits

- 35% reduction in leasing companies' administrative costs, contributing to an overall decrease in each vehicle's total cost of ownership
- 50% reduction in insurance companies' adjustment costs resulting from streamlined processes and shorter cycles
- Increased control over leased vehicles in the field, enabling leasing companies to be more proactive in the way they manage their fleets
- Improved experience for end users, resulting in higher customer satisfaction and retention

companies to succeed over the long haul, they must also master the more “behind the scenes” processes that are critical to minimizing the cost of their vehicle fleets. Like most capital assets, automobiles incur costs—both predictable and not—over their life cycles, from tune-ups and servicing to collision repair to their eventual retirement at the close of the leasing contract. With some fleets numbering in the hundreds of thousands or more, even small incremental cost savings at each of these points can add up to enormous cumulative savings and higher profits. But for even the most sophisticated auto leasing companies, achieving these improvements is far easier said than done. Belgium-based UBench International (www.UBench.com) was founded by a group of seasoned industry veterans to help leasing companies meet this goal.

Driving toward lower costs and better practices

UBench approached the leasing market opportunity with a two-part vision. First, it viewed the parties involved in the course of a vehicle's operational life—including service facilities, claims adjusters and the leasing company—as a *community* that needed to interact in a way that achieved the desired result, whether it be getting service or fixing a dent. Second, it saw the need for auto leasing companies to exercise some degree of *control* over what, when and where things are done to the vehicle, in collaboration with the lessee. UBench's innovation was to enable the formation of a virtual community—with leasing companies positioned at the center—that shared standardized processes and was linked by automated workflows. By establishing this integrated community, leasing companies would then have a greater ability to affect the “lives” of their vehicles. Such a community also gave UBench the means to create process benchmarks (hence the name) from the best practices of community members. In doing so, UBench would give drivers what they needed to make the optimal decisions and do so as efficiently as possible.

On the cusp of rapid growth, UBench faced some of the most important resource decisions it will ever make. At the root was the need for a technology infrastructure that could handle not only complex, automated workflows, but also potential surges in growth—right from the start. This reflected the uncompromising demands for reliability and performance of the large leasing companies UBench was targeting. To reach its ambitions, UBench knew it needed world-class technology, but also needed to keep its resources in line with its strategic focus—making auto leasing companies more profitable by improving their processes.

UBench chose IBM Global Services – e-business Hosting™ Services to

run a suite of portal-based services developed and run on IBM hardware and software.

Reaching out through wireless telemetry

The most revolutionary aspect of the solution is the use of wireless telemetry technology to keep leased auto fleets in constant, realtime contact with all the key players in the leasing value chain. Combined with workflow automation technology, wireless connectivity gives leasing companies the ability to respond rapidly and efficiently to the needs of leasing customers. UBTech, the newest and best example of this capability, uses an on-board sensing device to look for various signals that could indicate the need for vehicle service, including mileage readings, brake performance and engine temperature trends. If such a trigger is sensed, a GPS-enabled wireless transponder responds by automatically contacting a designated service facility within the leasing company's defined community of service providers. That service facility then contacts the driver to arrange for servicing, generally at lower rates negotiated by the leasing company. This simplifies life for leasing customers, while giving leasing companies more control over the maintenance of their vehicle fleets. Moreover, by promoting proactive vehicle maintenance, UBTech helps leasing companies minimize repair costs while maximizing the retained value of the vehicle.

Cross-community collaboration—facilitated by automated workflows—represents another big strength of the platform. In the event of an accident, for example, UBench's UBClaims application automatically selects and schedules an appointment with the optimal service facility. Insurance adjusters can use the platform to first assess vehicle damage (remotely via digital photos) and then coordinate with repair providers. To keep the owner posted on the status of the repair, the shop can logon to the system to post a timetable and continuous progress reports that can be viewed by the leasing customers with a PDA and various other wireless devices.

From a deployment standpoint, integration and workflow issues represented the biggest challenges facing the IBM team. The key integration challenge was in maintaining realtime connectivity between the platform and automobiles on the road. To achieve this, a team from IBM Wireless EBO used IBM WebSphere MQ Telemetry Transport (a feature of WebSphere Message Broker that employs a lightweight Publish/Subscribe protocol) to automatically gather remote telemetry data from the field and incorporate it into the UBench platform. To establish the automated workflows between companies in the UBench communities, the IBM team used IBM WebSphere MQ Workflow. The core UBClaims and UBTech applications run on IBM WebSphere Application Server - Advanced Edition. To handle the solution's underlying database requirements, the team chose IBM DB2 Universal Database Enterprise - Extended Edition for its ability to handle the large growth in database transaction volume it expects as adoption grows. Information stored in the DB2 database includes data relating to current claim processing and

Key Components

Software

- IBM DB2® Universal Database™ Enterprise – Extended Edition
- IBM WebSphere® Message Broker
- IBM WebSphere MQ Workflow
- IBM WebSphere Application Server – Advanced Edition

Servers

- IBM eServer™ xSeries®

Services

- IBM Global Services e-business Hosting
- IBM Wireless Sensors and Actuators EBO

Timeframe

- Initial rollout: 4 months
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“IBM provides comprehensive collaborative workflow solutions for e-business that no other vendor can match.”

– Peter Verbraeken

billing status as well as image files depicting vehicle damage and scanned images of business correspondence.

Built for speed, ready for growth

As it transitions from startup mode, UBench needs an infrastructure strategy that is well aligned with its growth-oriented business model. That means having access to the world-class reliability and performance its customers demand without tying up precious capital in large upfront IT investments. By running its business on IBM Global Services e-business Hosting equipment, UBench was able to pour more of its resources into constantly improving the business processes around automobile leasing, and delivering better value to its customers. The fact that UBench's business runs on IBM technology lays the groundwork for customer satisfaction because it sends a message about UBench's commitment to delivering reliability. It also saves the company thousands of dollars in upfront costs.

IBM technology, most notably the innovative coupling of wireless telemetry and workflow automation, is contributing to strong business benefits among UBench's customers. The most important of these benefits—and the central value proposition of its service—is a reduction in leasing companies' total cost of ownership for its vehicles. Toward this end, the UBench service is expected to cut leasing companies' administrative costs by as much as 35 percent, while insurance companies cut their costs by up to 50 percent by streamlining their adjustment processes. Peter Verbraeken, Director and Co-founder of UBench, sees his company's selection of IBM having a far-reaching effect on its success. "We had a unique vision of how we could transform the entire auto leasing process from end-to-end to make it more efficient and responsive to customers," explains Verbraeken. "Only IBM had the technology and know-how to help us realize that vision, and the flexible services that we needed to grow."

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