

Toyota to set up social networking service

May 23 2011, By YURI KAGEYAMA , AP Business Writer

Toyota is setting up a social networking service with the help of a U.S. Internet company and Microsoft so drivers can interact with their cars in ways similar to Twitter and Facebook.

Japanese automaker [Toyota Motor](#) Corp. and Salesforce.com, based in San Francisco, announced their alliance Monday to launch "Toyota Friend," a private social network for Toyota owners that works similar to tweets on [Twitter](#).

In a demonstration at a Tokyo showroom, an owner of a plug-in Prius hybrid found out through a cellphone message from his [Prius](#) called "Pre-boy" that he should remember to recharge his car overnight.

When the owner plugged in his car to recharge it, the car replied, "The charge will be completed by 2:15 a.m. Is that OK? See you tomorrow."

The exchanges can be kept private, or be shared with other "Toyota Friend" users, as well as made public on [Facebook](#), Twitter and other services, the company said.

The companies did not give details of how the technology, such as the content of the talking car's dialogues, will be managed. A launch where such details will be offered is set for Tuesday.

Toyota is investing 442 million yen (\$5.5 million), [Microsoft](#) Corp. is investing 335 million yen (\$4.1 million) and Salesforce.com 223 million yen (\$2.8 million) in the project.

Many cars are already equipped with navigation and other network-linking capabilities, and can function as a mobile device just like an [iPhone](#) or a Blackberry.

Toyota's service, built on open-source cloud platforms that are the specialty of Salesforce.com, as well as on Microsoft's platform, will start in Japan in 2012, and will be offered later worldwide, according to Toyota.

Toyota President Akio Toyoda, a racing fan, said he always "talks" with his car when he is zipping around on the circuit.

With the popularity of [social networking](#), cars and their makers should become part of that online interaction, he said.

"I hope cars can become friends with their users, and customers will see Toyota as a friend," he said.

Salesforce.com chief executive Marc Benioff said social networks can add value to products and companies. It can also help Toyota gain massive information not only about their buyers but about how the car is working or not working, he said.

"I want a relationship with my car in the same way we have a relationship with our friends on social networks," he said.

Toyoda, who has always been interested in telematics, or the use of Internet technology in autos, has been aggressive in forging alliances with new kinds of companies, including one with U.S. luxury electric carmaker Tesla Motors that he announced last year.

Partnerships with dot.com types have been a bright spot in Toyoda's bumpy career as president. He has faced growing doubts about reliability

and transparency because of the massive global recalls that began two years ago, shortly after he took office, and which now affect more than 14 million vehicles.

Toyota is also battling parts shortages after the March 11 earthquake and tsunami in Japan destroyed key suppliers, hampering production.

©2011 The Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed.

Citation: Toyota to set up social networking service (2011, May 23) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2011-05-toyota-social-networking.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.