

EYES ON THE ROAD

Q: Pioneer has an impressive history of firsts when it comes to product development. What is the company mission that drives that innovation?

Mizuno: Pioneer was founded 61 years ago by Mr. Matsumoto with the motto "To Present High Quality Sound to The World." Ever since, Pioneer continues its mission to promote the sharing of thrilling experiences of sight and sound with as many people as possible. To achieve these goals, Pioneer has built a solid foundation to promote and pursue research and development, resulting in industry firsts like the first GPS-based navigation system launched in the Japanese market in 1991. In the Mobile Electronics field, our mission consists in the development of human interfaces using computer Technology.

Q: Pioneer is rolling out a new navigation system product in Europe this Summer. How does this particular navigation system reflect that mission?

Mizuno: In developing our new navigation system, we incorporated a great deal about what we know about consumer needs from our own earlier experiences in Japan, where the navigation market is more evolved. As a result, the system offers at least two important industry firsts for Europe. It incorporates sophisticated voice technologies to allow the user to keep his hands on the wheel and his eyes on the road. Of equal importance, it uses the NAVTECH map database as well as Navigation Technologies' new SDAL Format, the first standard to address the need to offer genuine compatibility of navigation map CDs. In both cases, these advances benefit the consumer and are needed by the industry.

Q: What's your vision of the automotive environment in the year 2020?

Mizuno: Today's car incorporates a vast degree of electronic and computer components, and that trend will continue until the car is more computer than anything else. Twenty years from now, nearly all of a car's functions will be computer controlled or enhanced to make driving easier, faster, safer, and more convenient and entertaining. Additionally, even the more budget conscious cars will have integrated the technologies needed to access and exploit a full range of off-board information services.



Tomohito Mizuno
Department Manager
Product Planning Department
Car Electronics Division

In essence, the convergence of technologies, communications, and information services will probably transform the automotive environment more than any other area of deployment.

Q: What are some of the technology advances you are planning that will advance the Pioneer vision?

Mizuno: Interfacing vast amounts of information to the driver and the passengers in a safe and reliable manner will be the biggest challenge for our engineers. Therefore, we are developing advanced displays—such as our Organic EL Displays—that can be viewed from any viewing angle, under harsh sunlight and temperature conditions. At the same time, we are working on natural speech user interfaces, "live sound quality" audio systems and, local optical data storage such as DVD.