

MTV's advertising sales streamlined to the max with software from IBM and Technical Software Services

Overview

■ **The Challenge**

MTV needed an automated system to keep track of its advertising sales from proposals through to scheduling and invoicing. It also wanted to reduce the time-consuming and error-prone processes of manually entering and reconciling advertising schedules.

■ **The Solution**

MTV implemented MAX-Television from IBM partner Technical Software Services. The package covered the entire advertising process and was integrated with MTV's internal and business partner systems, providing a seamless workflow for sales and scheduling staff.

■ **The Benefits**

With IBM's UniVerse™ database technology at its heart, MAX-Television provides a powerful, reliable and fast method for MTV to manage its advertisement inventory. Integration with business partners' systems gives MTV accurate and timely information about when its advertisements are scheduled and broadcast. This allows MTV to provide better information to customers, while freeing staff from manual data entry to focus on selling advertisements.



About MTV

MTV: Music Television is the world's most widely distributed television network with nearly 419 million subscribers in 164 countries and territories. With 80 distinct music programming services in Canada, Asia, Europe, Australia, Latin America, the Caribbean and Africa, MTV tailors its channels to local cultural tastes with a mixture of national, regional and international artists, along with locally produced and globally shared programming. In Australia, MTV broadcasts the MTV and VH1 channels on the Foxtel cable network.

About Technical Software Services

Technical Software Services is a privately owned company founded in 1987. It has rapidly grown to become one of the most prominent international developers of agency and television media software. TSS's media software includes television buying, planning and scheduling systems, press sales and management systems, outdoor sales and management solutions, and cinema sales and traffic systems.



An integrated booking and invoicing system

MTV Australia broadcasts the MTV and VH1 cable TV music channels. Since November 2004, MTV has run an internal advertising sales team, which had previously been outsourced.

MTV was already using MAX-Media from Technical Software Services to automate its sales proposals process. The sales proposal tool produced proposals which were then manually input into MTV's ad traffic system, scheduling when advertisements went to air. As with any manual process, there were errors.

“We wanted to integrate a full sales function from proposal to booking and invoicing,” said Mark Glazier, Director of Finance at MTV Australia.

MTV looked at a number of applications that were used in other MTV offices around the world. However, the local office required a level of sophistication in manipulating data and interfacing with other systems that these packages couldn't provide.

“We needed a package that could integrate across the sales proposal and traffic system, and also with our advertising reporting and general ledger systems which are located in Singapore, and with Foxtel's transmission scheduling and reporting systems,” said Glazier. “As a result, we wanted to work with a local supplier that could tailor the system for us.”

After evaluating a range of options, MTV chose MAX-Television from Technical Software Services.

MTV enters the high-performance database UniVerse

MAX-Television is an innovative television management system designed to provide television businesses an edge for competitive performance. Incorporating state-of-the-art technology, MAX-Television covers all facets of the broadcasting business from initial program acquisition, ad sales, scheduling, final transmission and revenue analysis to banking. The operational functions are complemented with a wide range of management information to track the performance of the business. MAX-Television is based on IBM's UniVerse database.

IBM UniVerse is a multivalued database designed for embedding in vertical applications. IBM's multivalued databases, UniData® and UniVerse (known collectively as U2), offer high-performance, scalable information management environments for embedding in vertical applications. Their multivalued model supports nested tables, allowing for rapid business data modelling, while helping eliminate redundant data and excessive resource usage. UniVerse delivers data access, storage and management capabilities across Microsoft® Windows®, Linux™ and Unix® platforms and features a native, high-performance, record-oriented programming paradigm.

“When we were building MAX-Television, we looked at a number of database management systems and UniVerse was the only one we looked at that allowed data at a three-dimensional level,” said Philip Amore, General Manager of Television Systems at Technical Software Services. “We use that third dimension significantly throughout the system and that gives us greater speed and efficiency, particularly when you're dealing with large amounts of data.”

Less manual work and better information

Technical Software Services created a range of interfaces between MAX-Television and software at MTV's business partners. It connects to MTV's data warehouse and general ledger systems in the Singapore regional office and to the transmission systems at Foxtel. This automates the process of scheduling advertisements for broadcast. After the ads go to air, Foxtel sends back an 'as-run' log that tells MTV the exact times the advertisements were screened.

This data is automatically fed back in the MAX-Television system, streamlining the process of generating invoices for customers. Although the difference between the scheduled broadcast time and the actual time is usually slight, it can make a significant difference.

“A lot of advertisers want to use that data to measure the number of phone calls or website hits they receive after the ad is broadcast, which tells them about the effectiveness of the advertising. A couple of minutes’ difference will make a huge difference to that, so it needs to be as accurate as possible,” said Glazier.

Automating these scheduling and reporting processes has reduced the number of errors from manual data entry and improved the way MTV handles its inventory of ads. Staff who used to spend a great deal of time managing inventory and manually reconciling invoices can now focus on selling more ads and other high-value activities. It has also opened up new business opportunities for MTV.

“These days, media buying agencies can be very demanding in the information they require from broadcasters. If you can’t give them the detailed information they want, you don’t get the work,” said Glazier.

“Using MAX-Television gave us in-house control of our inventory management and that allowed us be more responsive and provide fuller information to our clients.

“Working with TSS has been good, they were very responsive. It was very important to have someone local so we didn’t have to wait time zones to speak to the developer on the other side of the world. It took just under six weeks from loading the software onto our systems to going live, but we didn’t lose any advertising and we were on air the whole time. That’s a big measure of success.”

Future plans

As MTV continues to use MAX-Television over the coming months, Amore expects the broadcaster will build up a valuable store of data from which it can derive business intelligence to improve its selling process. Another feature allows the broadcaster to keep track when clients commit to buying a certain amount of advertising time for a discount.

“As they get more confidence in using the system, I have no doubt they will use more and more of the features,” Amore said.

For more information

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