



El Economista transforms newspaper production with e-business solutions

With readers' attention spans shrinking, and fierce competition from television and other media, newspapers nowadays face a tough challenge to sell and remain profitable. Not so long ago, El Economista, a leading financial newspaper in Mexico, found itself in such a situation. On the one hand, advertising was drifting to more lucrative channels, and on the other, production costs were rising. At the same time, readers, mainly business executives and professionals, were demanding more than just news—they were looking for in-depth analysis and market reports.

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—Raul Chong, Project Leader, Editorial Systems, El Economista

The need to improve content and hold down production costs called for close collaboration between the editorial, production, and marketing teams. Since its existing information

systems had neither the bandwidth nor the functionality to enable this, El Economista decided to overhaul its computing infrastructure with the help of IBM Business Partner Dalai Software, specialists in solutions for the publishing industry.

Today, Lotus Notes and Domino form the core of El Economista's network computing framework. Says Diana de La Vega, editor of El Economista's Internet edition, “By automating communications under Lotus Notes we have been able to slash production time to half of what it used to be.” The result is faster time to publication, and a 60 percent reduction in costs due to less use of consumables such as paper, film, and chemicals. This has helped boost the newspaper's profit margins.

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Application	Intranet for newspaper production
Business Benefits	50% reduction in production time; 60% reduction in production costs; major increase in circulation; online advertising growing at 120% annually; enhanced collaboration among work groups
Software	Lotus® Notes® Lotus Domino™
Hardware	IBM® RS/6000™ IBM Thinkpad®

manner, but also present it in a way that readers and advertisers want.” In turn, the deployment of this new Domino-based computing environment has been a critical



A new computing system, based on Lotus Notes and Domino, has helped El Economista sharpen news content and reign in production costs.

factor in increasing the newspaper's total circulation by 34 percent.

El Economista's Web edition, Economista Online and other Internet services such as El Econofast, (fast.economista.com.mx), a push e-mail service that provides a summary of the Mexican financial markets to domestic and international investors, have brought back the readers in droves—especially the younger Internet-savvy generation. Economista Online already draws about 36,000 hits a week. The increase in circulation has spurred ad revenue as well. And, advertisers can now take advantage of El Economista's online services by booking ad space through the Internet. Chong reveals that online advertising is growing at nearly 120 percent annually.

More power to the written word
In the newsroom, reporters, editors, and graphic artists use Dalai's Intranet for Newspapers application products, which are based on Lotus Notes and Domino, to develop and electronically forward articles to other workstations for review and layout. Among these applications is NewsCreator, used for word processing, editing, and publication. Another module, PowerWire, captures and screens live newswire feeds from the Mexican Stock Exchange, Reuters, and Associated Press, allowing editors to search for reports using keywords. Lotus Notes also enables El Economista's reporters, equipped with IBM Thinkpad computers, to transmit reports from the field to the main production centers using the Internet as a secure and inexpensive communication platform. All news reports and feature articles created at El Economista are stored in a Notes database on a Sun Enterprise server.

Powering all this is Lotus Domino. Domino transforms Notes documents into HTML in real time, automating the Web publication process. Previously, this involved significant manual conversion of documents into a Web-ready format. Juan Luaro Aguirre, manager of sales and marketing at Dalai Software, explains, "The Domino server provides an integrated platform for instant electronic publication, which has allowed El Economista to meld its systems with the Internet, and greatly reduce the effort and cost of Web publication."

The Lotus Notes and Domino solution has re-defined the production processes at El Economista. "We can now write, edit, and design layouts simultaneously—rather than sequentially—and see what the finished

product will look like before it goes to print," says de La Vega. As a result, news content is sharper, and late breaking news and changes can be incorporated right up to the last minute. Says Aguirre, "Our applications capitalize on Lotus Notes' collaborative properties, which enable group document development and resource sharing." Currently, the system accommodates 400 concurrent users, and that number is growing rapidly.

Online ad booking—first step toward e-business

In the future, El Economista expects the bulk of its ad bookings to come through its online booking service. Advertising agencies can book ad space by accessing an online order form using a standard Web browser. They can specify the advertising dates, space required, and other client details. At the back end, Dalai's InterAgency application either confirms the ad bookings or suggests alternate spaces available, and related costs. Customers can also trace the status of their orders online at any time, without having to wait for service representatives. Soon, advertisers will be able to make payments online. "Electronic Commerce is the next step for us. We expect advertising to increase substantially with this service," states Chong. El Economista's international clients, including BMW, Compaq, and IBM, are already using this service.

Notes imparts platform flexibility

Aguirre notes that El Economista's computing infrastructure comprises multiple platforms, including RS/6000 servers, which house financial and human resource applications, Sun Enterprise servers, and Windows® 95 and Macintosh clients. It was important to integrate these back office systems with the new content and production systems to conserve resources. "As Lotus Notes clients and Domino servers support a wide range of hardware platforms and operating systems, we can continue using existing infrastructure, integrating them under one system," he explains. Aguirre notes that the RS/6000 was also chosen for its outstanding performance and ease of integration with other environments.

Chong is confident that soon El Economista will see a substantial "jump" in growth, as the Internet becomes an accepted medium for conducting business. "IBM is taking the lead in pushing e-business in Mexico, and has support from the country's banking industry," he says, adding, "We look forward to making the most of these opportunities."

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