



Digital Advertising Delivery...the Easy Way

The Mullis Morgan Group has established itself as one of the UK's leading providers of pre-media production services. With over 30 years' experience, it has developed from a traditional repro-house into a group of companies that service every element of the industry. One of the companies within the group, News Stream is responsible for managing all of the advertisements which appear in the News International titles, including: The Times, Sunday Times, News of the World and The Sun, ensuring the copy meets the required print and mechanical specifications before being issued to the relevant paper or supplement. When industry developments resulted in News Stream having to change its business model to an Internet-based proposition, they called Exponential-e, the next generation networks provider, for a solution.

The Challenge

In April 2004 News International announced that it would now only accept advertisements from suppliers using QuickCut, an advertising delivery company whose software enables a faster and more efficient supply of copy by validating the specifications, such as colour, size and timing, prior to transmission. The software is Internet-based, presenting News Stream with a dilemma. Traditionally the company had received the majority of advertisements from its customers via ISDN or on disk, with only a small number of files being sent over the Internet. However, with QuickCut now being a pre-requisite of anyone sending advertisements to News International, News Stream had to review its network infrastructure and implement a solution which would enable it to meet these new requirements.

The company needed both its customers and employees to be able to reliably access QuickCut's servers, located in E14, London. Maintaining its high level of customer service was also a priority for News Stream. Furthermore,



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with 4,500 colour, mono and spot adverts being received, checked and sent out in a single month, the solution had to provide complete resilience to minimise the impact of any potential failure.

A direct connection between News Stream's office within News International's premises at Pennington Street (E1) and QuickCut's servers, along with the need for additional dedicated Internet Access, was identified. However, with a traditional 2Mb point-to-point connection (using ATM or Frame Relay technology) costing anywhere up to £12,000, News Stream were looking for a more cost-effective solution, but one which retained a high level of quality.

The Solution

Exponential-e designed and delivered a flexible, high-speed, cost-effective solution to News Stream. A 100Mb primary access circuit was installed into the office, with a 10Mb VLAN (virtual circuit) connecting directly into QuickCut's servers and a 2Mb VLAN dedicated for Internet access. A secondary, 10Mb, circuit was also installed as a back-up should anything go down.

The solution was simple for Exponential-e to install. Since its network is based on Ethernet technology, which is incredibly versatile, it was easy to manipulate the capacity to meet News Stream's individual requirements. In addition, this versatility also gives News Stream the ability to use the additional 88Mb of spare capacity (on the access circuit) however and whenever they desire in the future. A call to Exponential-e, a few simple key strokes later, and the Internet connection can be increased or additional VLANs can be created to other points on the network.

"Since Exponential-e's MAN uses Ethernet technology, the same as the LAN, our connection is effectively just an extension of our internal network and so it delivers high-speed LAN-like performance, even though it is a WAN", commented Keith Johnson, Director, Mullis Morgan Group.

An additional benefit was that the total solution was significantly cheaper than competitor offerings, since News Stream only had to purchase 2 circuits, which were then split, rather than paying for four individual connections.



The Outcome

Exponential-e's team finished on time and within budget, as well as ensuring seamless integration with existing technology. News Stream's users have seen an immediate improvement in the speed with which files are checked and

approved, while News Stream itself is benefiting from greater control since they now only have to manage information from one source, rather than monitoring multiple inbound sources. As a result of the solution, News Stream has already been able to reduce its reliance on ISDN and WamNet and in the near future will move over to 100% internet based traffic.

The ability to scale bandwidth up or down in a matter of minutes, coupled with the fact that payment is only made for the extra bandwidth as and when it is used, are valuable management tools. It means, for example, that when one of News International's papers is running a supplement News Stream can plan and budget for the expected increase in traffic.

"We have managed to increase the speed and efficiency of the way we work, while creating a platform to support our growth. Working with Exponential-e has allowed us to take a longer term view as we know that capacity will not be an issue in the future".