



CASE STUDY

WHATS'On as key component in the VRT VIA-project

VRT, Belgium

Customer

VRT,
public broadcasting station
of Flanders, Belgium

Project

WHATS'On as main component in
the planning of the multichannel
playout system

Highlights

- new multichannel playout system (Pro Bel Morpheus)
- new process for external communication of the broadcast schedules
- VIA-project

Key dates

Customer since 1998
First production date: 1998
WHATS'On version: 19.7 (2008)

Increasing VRT's efficiency while preparing for the future.

VRT (Flemish Radio and Television) was rightly convinced of the need to be ready for the future. A lot of changes in broadcasting are already noticeable and VRT wanted to be ready for the ones to come as well. WHATS'On was, and still is, an essential part in achieving this.

A few years ago, VRT understood the need of becoming much more future-oriented. Simply replacing obsolete machines by new ones was no longer good enough. To be ready for the media user of tomorrow, VRT developed a long-term multi-phased plan in which not only the tape-based technologies are being replaced by tapeless systems, but also the production processes are being fundamentally changed in order to be able to offer the required cross-medial content in a cost-effective way. WHATS'On is a key component of this total solution. The entire project is called 'VIA', a Dutch acronym of the following three aspects VRT wants to focus on in the next couple of years: enriched content ('Verrijkte inhoud'), interactivity ('Interactiviteit'), and on-demand content ('aanbod op Aanvraag').

Phase 1 – new tapeless multichannel playout centre

The first phase of this project took place in 2006-2007. It was the phase in which VRT implemented a new tapeless multichannel playout centre, for which the playlist is planned using WHATS'On.

A very interesting side effect of this process was the substantial gain in efficiency. Didier Liebaert, Project Manager at VRT: "The hunting season for redundant documents is declared open." Now all broadcast-critical information has to be entered in WHATS'On only once. From then onwards, the information can be re-used over and over again. Didier Liebaert: "A small step for humanity, a huge step for VRT." But not only was there an efficiency gain, there was also a significant improvement of data quality i.e. accuracy, completeness and timeliness.

Of course, the transition did not happen overnight. It demanded much effort from the entire VRT staff and the MediaGeniX project team. While the VRT program planners, trailer and commercials planners, and the editors-in-chief and technicians were still

operational in the old system on a day-to-day basis, they also followed training courses to become familiar with the new systems and procedures, and they were also intensely involved in the testing phase. This way, they contributed significantly to the development of the new system, and this was very important in terms of acceptance and ownership, ensuring a very smooth transition.

Phase 2 - external communication of broadcast schedules

The second phase of the project is focussed on getting VRT ready for new developments concerning external communication of the broadcast schedules, and this not only in the printed press, but also on digitext+, on websites, in electronic programme guides (EPG), for iDTV distribution platforms, etc. Today, the storage of all this information is still quite fragmented and decentralised, so there is still a lot of looking-up and editing before it can be communicated. In the future, WHATS'On will play a leading role in coordinating these data and making them available throughout the entire organisation.

For all these future developments VRT has full confidence in WHATS'On and MediaGeniX. According to VRT, MediaGeniX' strength lies in its strongly developed customer intimacy. Didier Liebaert: "MediaGeniX does more than just supply a technical solution. They think together with us in the search of finding the most optimal solution. That is why I prefer using the term 'partner' instead of just 'supplier'."

Anticipating the future

In the long run, the technology solutions related to the VIA-project will make it possible for VRT to be able to anticipate and respond more quickly to the future needs of the Flemish media user, and to give the public what they want, when they want it.

More information about VRT can be found at www.vrt.be

The following channels of VRT are managed by WHATS'On:



The following VOD channels will be planned by WHATS'On in the next phase of the VIA-project:



"MediaGeniX thinks together with us in the search of finding the most optimal solution. That is why I prefer using the term partner instead of just supplier."

Didier Liebaert
Project Manager at VRT

ABOUT VRT

The Flemish Radio and Television Network is the public broadcasting station of the Flemish Community in Belgium. The task of VRT is "reaching as many viewers and listeners as possible with a diversity of programs that catch viewers' and listeners' attention and fulfil their media needs." The core principle of VRT is to provide the public with a qualitative high media offer concerning information, entertainment, education and culture.

(VRT's assignment and the accompanying criteria are amended by coordinated media decrees which are set by the Flemish government. These enactments describe the rights and duties of VRT and the Flemish Community in relation to one another.)

Next to providing the newest media applications with the best content possible, VRT is also involved in innovation with VRT Medialab, which is the technological research department of VRT. The Medialab carries out research about the creation, management and distribution of media content.

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