France

Télévisions Publicité

France Télévisions Publicité (FTP), the advertising-production subsidiary of national broadcaster France Télévision, wanted to streamline its production process into one that was more cost-effective and efficient. A good portion of its costs involved creating videotapes of commercial spot segments, making dubs and transporting these dubs via courier to remote broadcast locations throughout the country. FTP wanted to digitally ingest commercial spot content, edit specific commercial break sequences, and deliver content directly from the central location to the transmission servers—allowing for last-minute schedule changes impossible with a tape-based system. They also wanted to develop an extranet for advertisers and agencies to view spots before air. Plus, they wanted to add the capability for advertisers and agencies to view a legal air-check online, up to eight days after broadcast, with a minute-by-minute graphical link to ratings of the program and the commercial from French audience research firm Médiamétrie. Early last year, Christophe Scherer, IT and technical director, took FTP digital.

With three main channels – France 2, France 3 (including local transmission sites) and France 5 – in addition to nine thematic channels, FTP chose SGI as the prime contractor to migrate to this centralcasting model. Scherer began with France 5. The solution designed by SGI is based on a hub-and-spoke model and similar to an edge-server architecture. It employs SGI Media Server for broadcast systems providing MPEG-2 ingest capabilities at the central facility in Paris. From there, video content is distributed as data files to smaller SGI Media Server systems, which provide playout services for the spots at the local transmission facilities. Connection to the SGI Media Server systems is via a private ATM network. As a free service to France Télévisions Publicité's customers, a 200TB Sony Petasite with a capacity of 35,000 30-second spots has housed all spots since the system went online. Because of the open networking capabilities of SGI Media Server for broadcast, FTP was able to utilize an existing network without purchasing hardware to convert physical interfaces.

FTP now uses an all-digital, disk-based architecture for commercial playout. It runs on an SGI Origin 3200 server with two Sony Petasites, Thomson Grass Valley Profile servers (which are being replaced by SGI Media Server for broadcast systems), SGI Origin 2000 servers, an SGI CXFS shared file system, SGI DMF (Data Migration Facility), and other support equipment.

With more than 35,000 commercial spots now in online or nearline storage, the FTP staff has access to the spots as data via a high-speed Ethernet network.

The system works so well that France 2 is currently testing its system and France 3 is scheduled for testing in April 2003.

Design Team

FTP:
- Christophe Scherer, IT and technical director
- Nicolas Delaire, project manager
- Christine Bret, project engineer

SGI:
- Lionel Obry, system architect
- Manuel Ferreira, solution architect
- Frederic Guiot, solution architect
- Yannick Agaesse, project engineering
- Philippe Churlet, project engineering

Equipment List

- SGI Origin 3200 server
- SGI Media Server for broadcast systems
- SGI Origin 2000 servers
- Sony Petasite systems
- Thomson Grass Valley Profile servers
- SGI CXFS shared file system
- SGI Data Migration Facility (DMF) software