



AN INTEGRATED MANAGEMENT PLATFORM FOR DIFFERENT CHANNELS

Challenge

As a leading German public broadcaster, ZDF needed more competitive and flexible broadcast planning and production processes. To achieve this, they needed to streamline their existing mainframe applications, reduce their overall costs and support the business needs of their various channels.

Solution

ZDF replaced their various legacy systems with a centralized platform that provided integrated functions for programming planning and broadcast management. The three-tier architecture combines Pharos and Software AG technologies Adabas, Natural and EntireX, with reusable Web services for an overall solution that can be quickly customized to meet ZDF's future business needs.

Benefits

- Significant budget reductions for IT
- Increased synergies and cost savings enterprise-wide
- Supports various editorial styles used for different broadcast formats
- Enables both centralized and decentralized program planning management
- Modification of business rules within minutes are immediately available for client use
- Promotes reuse of Web services enterprise-wide
- Interfaces with a wide variety of internal and external systems



With close to 3,600 employees and a budget of approx. 1.9 Billion Euros, the German national public service broadcaster Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen (ZDF) is one of Europe's largest broadcasters. The core operation of ZDF is its nationwide television channel which began broadcasting in 1963 and today reaches viewers by cable, satellite or terrestrial antenna, in both analog and digital formats. Based in Mainz, ZDF is also available on the internet, where they are one of the leading content providers for news and current affairs in German.

Get There Faster.™

“With our integrated Pharos platform, we have created a solution that effectively balances flexibility and efficiency.”

Michael Lankes | Information and Systems Technology Project Manager | ZDF

A leader on both sides of the camera

First broadcast in 1963, Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen (ZDF) is one of Germany’s leading broadcasters today, offering viewers a well-balanced mixture of information, culture, entertainment and service. As a leader in the highly-competitive German broadcast television market, economical broadcast planning and production processes play a major role behind the scenes at ZDF.

A single solution for different channels

Facing ever-increasing competition in the marketplace, ZDF needed to reduce their per-channel distribution costs, streamline their program planning and production processes and be able to accommodate the different editorial styles used across their various broadcast formats. In order to meet these goals, ZDF decided to replace the diverse legacy systems that supported their channels with a central platform for program planning and broadcast management.

ZDF chose to implement “Pharos” as the center of their solution. As Michael Lankes, IT Project Manager for Program Planning at ZDF, explains, “We chose Pharos because it can support many different editorial styles.” This enables overall program planning responsibility at ZDF to be managed by a central editorial team, while specialized departments can manage the discrete political magazine, sports, entertainment, shows and series. Pharos also supports the complex programming needs of ZDF’s digital channels, which are operated by small teams and multicast a number of daily and weekly programs.

Increasing IT flexibility streamlines operations

For ZDF’s IT group, the advantages of Pharos are its open architecture that employs three layers of client GUIs, .NET-based Web services and a central server which seamlessly integrates Pharos,

Adabas, Natural and EntireX into the overall architecture. “This solution allows us to use our existing data and applications very flexibly—not only for our Pharos users in the affiliated stations—but across the organization as well,” Lankes said.

This also facilitates reuse, for example existing Web services are also used to make Pharos data search capabilities available to ZDF’s intranet users over their normal interface, as well as to process other in-house application data. “Moreover,” says Lankes, “we can now modify business rules in minutes and easily deploy them, without any installation effort on the workstations themselves.”

One plan manages both technical and business

Pharos covers the spectrum from long-term program planning to meet the broadcast schedules to planning a particular program day—all the way through to the actual broadcast preparation, recording and transmission itself. ZDF’s business functions, such as finance and controlling, rights management, broadcast automation, press banners and rate calculations, are linked with Pharos via application interfaces.

Pharos also supports detailed technical aspects of ZDF’s broadcast management. Today’s broadcast transmission chains have a high-level of complexity, and require a number of independent devices to work in concert. Each of these devices is operated according to its own unique protocol. An automation system controls each device in the chain to meet rigorous timing constraints. This means, for example, that for a single program transition, dozens of independent messages must be processed within a single video frame, requiring accuracy to one-hundredth of a second.

A bright and flexible future

And with Pharos, ZDF’s future outlook is even brighter. “With our integrated Pharos platform,”

Lankes said, “we have created a solution that effectively balances flexibility and efficiency.”

Now, ZDF can plan for and manage the technical broadcast requirements and appropriate program sequences to grow from 40 scheduled programs up to 200 broadcasts per day, including trailers, sponsor announcements and commercial breaks. The scope, according to Lankes, is significant, as a single 24x7 operation broadcasts over 525,000 program minutes per year alone.

KEY COMPONENTS

webMethods EntireX enables ZDF to integrate and encapsulate core mainframe functionality using .NET-based Web services.

Adabas brings overall stability and performance to Pharos.

Natural is the development environment used to realize ZDF’s centralized solution.

Take the next step to get there – faster.

ABOUT SOFTWARE AG

Software AG’s 4,000 global customers use our software to improve business processes and drive an agile IT infrastructure. Our customers’ goals are to reduce costs and increase flexibility and efficiency. We help them do this by optimizing and governing their operations and aligning IT with the business goals.

Our leading Business Infrastructure Software portfolio is used for data and system integration and modernization. It fosters new levels of IT agility through SOA and allows the rapid creation of new business processes with BPM.

Our forty-year history of success ensures our customers have a reliable platform for driving future business results – faster.

Software AG – Get There Faster

© 2009 Software AG. All rights reserved. Software AG and all Software AG products are either trademarks or registered trademarks of Software AG. Other product and company names mentioned herein may be the trademarks of their respective owners.

LEARN MORE ABOUT BUSINESS INFRASTRUCTURE SOFTWARE: WWW.SOFTWAREAG.COM