



Media firm taps into improved efficiency



Customer overview

AGI Media Europe has been supplying unique packaging solutions to the music, multi-media and entertainment industries for more than 30 years. It brings media packaging expertise from a range of companies under a single umbrella and serves hundreds of customers across the globe.

Business need

Packaging for DVDs, CDs and other entertainment products rely heavily on high quality digital images, which often result in large graphic files. Finding an efficient way for its customers to submit these files was of critical importance for AGI. As Gareth Eynon, EDT Infrastructure Manager for AGI, explains: "There was no set process for sending packaging graphics, and customers were using a variety of means to submit material. This not only had the potential to slow down packaging production but also prevented us from electronically capturing graphics in our workflow system."

To address these issues, AGI initiated Project Gatekeeper. Its goal was to find a way for graphics to be securely submitted electronically and automatically loaded on to AGI's network. This, however, presented the packaging giant with a massive challenge, as it needed to ensure that only authorised users could access the new solution. "By giving external customers access to our extranet, we risked exposing our entire workflow system to the Internet," comments Gareth. "We therefore had to find an effective way to control user access and authentication via our internal IT infrastructure."

Customer agenda

- Continual Improvement/Innovation

Services

- Product Fulfilment Service
- Proof of Concepts
- Workplace Strategy

Technology

Microsoft

“Computacenter played a critical role in making Project Gatekeeper a reality. It helped to prove the solution’s capabilities and provided valuable technical expertise.”

“By enabling secure electronic transfer of graphics, we will be able to improve the efficiency and agility of the business.”

Gareth Eynon
EDT Infrastructure Manager
AGI Media Europe

Solution

A Microsoft Technical Adoption Programme (TAP) provided AGI with the answer. With help from existing IT partner Computacenter, AGI joined a select group of customers chosen to beta test the second release of Windows Server 2003. As a result, AGI was able to help hone the functionality of the operating system’s Active Directory Application Mode (ADAM), which supports directory-enabled applications, to ensure it met the needs of Project Gatekeeper.

How Computacenter helped

AGI joined the Microsoft programme in spring 2005. Before it could embark on testing and development, it needed to ensure it had the necessary technical expertise in-house. “Computacenter assisted with a comprehensive skills transfer and helped us establish the processes needed for participation in the TAP,” adds Gareth.

To ensure it could prove the new solution’s capabilities, Computacenter also helped AGI build a comprehensive test lab using Microsoft Virtual Server 2005. As Matt Ward, a Computacenter Technical Architect, explains: “AGI needed a safe environment where it could simulate its internal network and access by hypothetical external users. As well as ensuring the solution could meet AGI’s authentication requirements, we also needed to prove that it could work across multiple platforms.”

AGI has thousands of customers in Europe, who use a mix of Windows, Mac and Linux operating systems. It is essential that all AGI customers enjoy the same level of performance and security when uploading graphics to the AGI extranet. “Our customers have to be confident that their graphics will be processed securely and accurately,” adds Gareth.

Results

Having successfully proved the potential of the solution, Computacenter will be helping AGI deploy Windows Server 2003 R2 on around 25 64-bit Sun enterprise servers. “Receiving graphics electronically was the missing link in our workflow management system,” comments Gareth. “Thanks to Project Gatekeeper, we can now deliver end-to-end automated graphics management, which will help improve the company’s overall efficiency and agility.”

Project Gatekeeper will be fully operational by summer 2006, with customers using a variety of web browsers to access the solution. “The system is simple and quick to use plus it’s completely platform independent,” comments Gareth. “We can also ensure that graphics are fully encrypted during transfer, with all access being securely managed by existing tools and processes. This is essential for safeguarding commercial sensitivity and data integrity.”

The nine-month test programme also helped AGI identify other benefits of Windows Server 2003 R2, which include improved print management and email functionality for its remote Mac users. “We have 50-plus printers spread across 15 sites. The print management tool will help to simplify support processes and centralise our control of the estate,” comments Gareth. “Computacenter’s knowledge was key in maximising the benefits of the operating system and has enabled us to deploy a cost-effective solution that meets the needs of the business.”

More resources

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