

CHANNEL 4 TRACKS NEW VIDEO-ON-DEMAND SERVICE WITH BUSINESS OBJECTS

“Business Objects Global Field Services has delivered in-depth analysis of video-on-demand production, enabling Channel 4 to respond quickly to changes in the new 4oD business process.”
 John Telford, Project Manager, Channel 4



Industry Media

Business Challenge
 Channel 4 needs to monitor the new business process it developed to request, select, produce, and deliver video-on-demand content for the new 4oD service.

Why Business Objects?
 Business Objects Global Field Services used Data Integrator to load information into a data mart, undertaking essential data quality improvement and building in scalability to support future expansion.

Business Objects Products and Services
 BusinessObjects XI

BusinessObjects Data Integrator

Business Objects Global Field Services

CHALLENGE

Since transmitting its first program in 1982, London-based Channel 4 has continually explored the boundaries of television production. In November 2006, the channel launched its latest innovation: 4 on Demand (4oD), its first video-on-demand service. 4oD offers customers the chance to catch up on TV shows up to seven days after transmission for free as well as the option to rent or buy archived shows or films.

“In a market where customers have a fast-growing range of entertainment options, 4oD is very important for Channel 4,” explains John Telford, project manager. “At the moment, the focus is on testing the market, ensuring the right mix of programs, and determining the payment and revenue model. In the long term, 4oD has the potential to be a very lucrative revenue stream for Channel 4.”

The organization currently delivers 4oD both direct via PC downloads and through provider partners BT Vision, Tiscali TV, and Virgin Media. Over time, Channel 4 expects the number of provider platforms will increase significantly, as will the volume of program available in the 4oD format.

However, creating 4oD content is a new challenge for Channel 4. Content has to be delivered in a timely fashion to meet both internal and external service level agreements (SLAs). “Monitoring the effectiveness and efficiency of the 4oD production process is critical to ensuring content is delivered on time,” says Telford.



APPROACH

Channel 4 created a new business process to request, select, produce, and deliver 4oD content. To support the analysis of this process, the organization turned to Business Objects, an SAP company. Business Objects Global Field Services used BusinessObjects™ Data Integrator to consolidate data from three different systems – Asset Selection Application, Media Management, and E-work Business Process Management – into a single data mart.

Implementing these applications removes the significant data quality concerns for the Channel 4 organization. “Business Objects Global Field Services used Data Integrator to write excellent data cleansing processes and improve data quality,” Telford says. Data quality issues are identified, logged, and fixed at the time of extraction. In addition, a set of validation rules applied to extracted data provides detailed reporting, enabling Channel 4 to monitor overall data quality.

Telford says, “These validation reports give us detailed insight into data quality, which is also fed back to those developing the operational systems to ensure problems can be addressed early to avoid compromising the business process.”

With Channel 4 constantly looking to improve 4oD production and develop supporting applications, Business Objects Global Field Services developed highly scalable extraction,

transformation, and load (ETL) processes that enable easy addition of new data sources – both to support new providers and an expansion of 4oD content.

RESULTS

Using BusinessObjects Data Integrator, information is loaded overnight into the data mart. Channel 4 creates reports using BusinessObjects XI to analyze and monitor the efficiency of the 4oD content creation process. Channel 4 now has rapid insight into the volume of content created and whether it is being delivered in line with partner specific SLAs. “4oD is a very important service for Channel 4. Business Objects Global Field Services designed strong systems that help the organization understand how well the 4oD service is performing,” says Telford. “The ability to constantly monitor the 4oD content creation process provides confidence in our ability to meet the SLAs. As 4oD attracts new service providers, Channel 4 has the excellent quality data required to support future market expansion.”

Benefits of the data mart and BusinessObjects XI reporting include improved performance management. For example, failure to meet an SLA with external providers would incur a financial penalty, so it's essential to assess the process against internal and external SLAs. With BusinessObjects XI, Channel 4 now has automatic reporting of how many programs were produced in the 4oD format within the SLA.

Channel 4 also uses BusinessObjects XI alerts, which highlight missed SLAs in red. One report provides a content overview, with each program highlighted in red, amber, or green – giving decision-makers a top-line view of the timeliness of content delivery. Additionally, using data collected about Channel 4's performance against SLAs strengthens the company's negotiation with 4oD delivery partners.

Business Objects enables Channel 4 to assess when customers are using content request, select, produce, and delivery resources, including both the personnel and the expensive transcoding machinery required to create 4oD content. Understanding these kinds of details has enabled Channel 4 to improve its resource allocation. For example, analysis enabled by BusinessObjects revealed production work was concentrated towards the end of the week, which put pressure on both equipment and people because content selection decisions were made early in the week. Pushing the entire production process across the week has removed bottlenecks and minimized the risk of missing SLAs. Monthly analysis of resources helps Channel 4 track and anticipate increasing demand for 4oD production.

Content analysis is another benefit of BusinessObjects XI. Using BusinessObjects XI, Channel 4 has developed a set of reports that assess user uptake of program by type, frequency, and whether they are paid for, rented or owned, or free. Such insights help Channel 4 to deliver that programming its customers seek, and to respond quickly to changes in demand. Telford notes, “Business Objects Global Field Services has delivered in-depth analysis of video-on-demand production, enabling Channel 4 to respond quickly to changes in the new 4oD business process.”

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