



MAKING THE NEWS

Dell Precision™ mobile workstations and Dell™ PowerEdge™ servers help a media company maintain its competitiveness in the evolving news business, reducing the time needed to publish breaking stories by 50 percent.

CHALLENGE

Media General's reporters and photographers needed a way to send stories immediately to the newsroom, while the company wanted to improve its ability to compete with cable TV and Internet-only news sources.

SOLUTION

Dell Precision mobile workstations with built-in mobile broadband enable the field news staff to quickly post news stories, including photography and video, without having to go into the office.

BENEFITS

- Dell Precision mobile workstations can eliminate the need to travel to the office to file stories, so field reporters and photographers can now deliver content in half the previous time.
- Dell Precision mobile workstations help reduce travel costs for the news staff by 10 percent.
- Consolidating news applications onto Dell PowerEdge servers helps cut IT support costs by 25 percent.

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Case study, Dell PowerEdge servers,
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Media General, founded in 1969 as a publicly traded company, originated 150 years ago as a local newspaper business. Today it is a regional communications company with over four dozen TV stations and newspapers plus an extensive online service. In the past, the company operated separate news organizations for print and broadcast delivery. But with the Internet, customers now want fast access to news in the form they most prefer. Media General needed to react quickly to this changing consumer environment or risk its market position.

ASSESSING FIELD REQUIREMENTS

To feed its news source with up-to-the-minute content, field reporters and photographers submit their stories directly into a centralized publishing system. In 2007, the Media General IT department decided to deploy new digital “field kits”—including a mobile workstation, a digital camera, and wireless communications—to connect the field staff to the central news applications. “Our photographers and reporters used to spend much of their time inputting stories at their desks,” says Mark Holt, IT services manager at Media General. “The idea behind the field kits is to enable them to send content back to our newsroom and news Web sites immediately, so consumers can count on our varied news media and Web sites to deliver the most current news.”

The Media General IT group had previously standardized on Dell servers and PCs, so there was no question they would turn to Dell for help. “We’ve been very happy with the performance and reliability of Dell products. The company has also provided great service and advice,” says Holt. “When we’re considering new technology, we look to Dell first.”

Dell consultants began by helping the IT staff assess its requirements. The kits needed to provide continuous two-way communications, and the mobile workstations had to be powerful enough to run demanding news and graphics applications. “Reporters do much more with their computers than just write the story on them,” Holt explains. “They use them to research topics in online databases. Then they submit their story for editing, receive comments back, and make final changes.” Photographers

make even greater demands—editing digital photos and videos using powerful graphics applications.

HELPING REPORTERS AND PHOTOGRAPHERS RESPOND QUICKLY

To make the news collection process as efficient as possible, everything about the mobile workstation needed to be high performance. The Dell consultants recommended the Dell Precision M4300 mobile workstation: with a dual-core Intel® Core™2 Duo processor running Microsoft® Windows® XP Professional x64 Edition software, this workstation can provide performance and reliability for high-end and graphics-intensive applications. Starting at less than six pounds, it is also light enough for reporters to easily carry. Media General selected the Dell Precision M4300 with a 15-inch screen for reporters and the Dell Precision M6300 with a 17-inch screen for photographers.

Dell engineers worked with Verizon Wireless, Media General's communications provider, to deliver the anytime, anywhere connectivity required by news staffs. About 300 Evolution-Data Only (EV-DO)-equipped laptops—a mix of Dell Latitude™ and Dell Precision mobile workstations—are now in use at Media General. These laptops have already helped the company transform to compete in the Internet age, reducing the time it took for editors to see photos or videos from a nearby breaking story from 2–3 hours to less than 45 minutes. “With the Dell Precision mobile workstations in the hands of our news staff, we can have a breaking story on TV or online practically in real time,” says Holt.

He estimates that reporters and photographers are traveling up to 10 percent less than they were before the kits were introduced, helping them respond quickly to developing stories and cutting travel costs by an estimated 10 percent. They also enable reporters to write more thorough

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February 2008

and compelling stories, accompanied by more photos and video, which helps attract and retain readers and drives improved ad sales. “Our online division is reporting 25 percent growth in page views and ad dollars since this initiative began,” says Holt. “Combined with other online advertising partnerships, we are seeing regional online-classified ads grow by 40 percent or more on a quarterly basis.” The ad sales team is also beginning to use Dell mobile workstations with built-in mobile broadband for instant access to rate quotes, schedules, and proofs right from a customer's office, helping boost ad revenue.

REDUCING ONGOING DATA CENTER COSTS

In addition to deploying the Dell mobile workstations, Media General also uses back-end Dell servers, including Dell PowerEdge 2950 servers with dual-core Intel Xeon® processors, to host the centralized production applications at the company's Richmond, Virginia, data center. “By consolidating our production IT environment onto Dell servers at one location, we've lowered IT operating costs by an estimated US\$250,000 per year—a 25 percent reduction,” Holt says. “Our users also benefit because we now provide higher availability from that central site.”

The Media General IT team chose Dell Platinum four-hour hardware response on each server, partly to lessen the number of redundant systems needed and gain the benefits of a Dell Platinum account manager to track and escalate calls. “By freeing our

administrators to manage their systems instead of their repair orders, we have less overall downtime and higher productivity,” Holt says. The IT team, meanwhile, likes the configuration flexibility of Dell products and Dell's ability to respond rapidly to their needs—including, in one case, getting all of their customized Dell server systems for several newly acquired TV stations racked, delivered, and installed in less than two weeks.

TRANSFORMING MEDIA GENERAL'S NEWS OPERATION

With Dell servers and mobile workstations in place, Media General employees are working faster and better. “Dell helped us simplify and mobilize our IT infrastructure so that we could revolutionize the news collection process at our company,” says Holt. “Dell's custom factory integration people configure our systems the way we want them during the initial build, so we don't have to go through extra steps. Thanks to them, we were able to get our new process up and running quickly, helping us to maintain and enhance our competitive edge.”

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