



CBS Television City Streamlines Business Operations And Increases Revenue With Xytech Software

Overview

Country: United States

Industry: Production & Post-Production

Customer Profile:

CBS Television City, in Los Angeles, California is a \$100 million a year production facility. Over the past 50 years it has hosted the production of many of television's most famous shows, including the longest running, "The Price Is Right."



CASE STUDY

"We are seeing this solution benefit virtually every aspect of our operations."

--David Strouse, Director of Finance, CBS Television City

Business

The facility needed to replace nine outdated administrative systems that were contributing to higher costs and inhibiting increased customer service.

Solution

Xytech Enterprise modules

- Workflow Management
- Job Management
- Scheduling
- MetaVault Library
- Divisions
- Rental
- Timecard
- Bidding
- Purchase Order

Benefits

- Scheduling productivity and production management increased
- Better decision making based on real-time data
- Streamlined billing process resulting in invoicing being paid faster
- Improved customer service

Situation

Much of the history of television was produced at CBS Television City in Los Angeles. Over the past 50 years, the fabled television production facility—a part of New York City-based Viacom Inc.—has hosted numerous legendary shows. Its eight soundstages range in size up to 15,000 square feet. More than 600 operations employees in over 60 departments provide virtually every service a television producer could want.

Several of the legacy budgeting, scheduling and billing systems used by the departments at CBS Television City were paper-based and almost as old as the facility itself. The west coast billing system was hosted on a mainframe; other applications ran on proprietary systems or on a variety of PCs. Some of the applications were no longer supported. And few if any of the systems were integrated.

As a result, it was difficult or impossible to give the facility's customers, the producers of the entertainment programs, timely information on spending while their shows were in production. But it is during show production when producers most need this information, as it allows them to determine whether they are on budget or need to make changes.

When invoices were produced for completed projects, they often lacked the detail that producers wanted to see for productions costing

U.S. \$1 million or more. Producers would request backup detail from CBS Television City, driving up costs while the facility manually researched and delivered the details, and delaying payment by as much as six months. Meanwhile, the double data entry required to produce consolidated invoices also meant that invoices were subject to inaccuracies.

Solution

After a thorough industry search and contemplation of an array of different solutions, CBS Television City chose the Xytech Enterprise software running on Microsoft® Windows Server™ 2003 and Microsoft SQL Server™ 2000 relational database.

The expanded access to information provided by a system specifically designed by and for the high velocity media production industry provides a contrast to the siloed information in separate systems that led to errors and omissions in everything from cost management to crew assignments.

Modular Solution

The central module of the Xytech solution is the Workflow Management Core module which creates and tracks all jobs and work orders, including support for an unlimited number of facilities and client-specific rate cards.



This application can track all activities and invoices through project billing codes. Sales reporting tools in the core module allow managers to track efficiency and profitability. The module also supports extensive job costing and budgeting.

Because the single, central solution replaces the variety of systems that CBS Television City formerly used, security was a key requirement so that users only have access to the portions of the solution to which they're authorized. The Xytech solution provides such security through the creation of user-defined security groups with read, write, and view privileges.

CBS Television City augmented the Xytech Core module with the Scheduling module, which manages the scheduling of people, equipment, stages, edit bays, and other resources.

In 2007 CBS Television expanded its use of the Xytech software by adding the Xytech Rental and MetaVault library modules to maximize inventory tracking and create a central metadata repository for all media assets.

The Rental module is being utilized by the Technical Equipment center, which rents out audio/video equipment for all in-house productions. This sophisticated inventory and tracking functionality, in conjunction with the other modules, supports billing for weekly or monthly billing while tracking sales and allocated resources against the original work order, increasing CBS Television City's efficiency and revenue.

The powerful MetaVault Library module has been used by CBS Television City to upgrade and convert their tapes work library, with 350,000 titles converted to date. MetaVault Library's comprehensive and flexible database structure makes it easy to manage large libraries such as exists at CBS Television City and unlike other systems can manage both physical and digital assets.

Benefits

The Xytech solution has dramatically increased the productivity of CBS Television City's production, scheduling, and billing operations, according to David Strouse,

Director of Finance, CBS Television City. "We're able to handle our scheduling and billing functions faster, more effectively, and more accurately than ever before, thanks to this solution," says Strouse. "And we're able to do so at lower cost."

The increased productivity in scheduling operations is only one example of efficiencies that CBS Television City has gained from the Xytech solution. The new solution has eliminated the trail of paper that the facility formerly used for scheduling and which was distributed to all the departments, used for recording of time and resources expended, and then sent to accounting for invoicing.

A studio manager can now create bid/budget templates for show productions with the Xytech Workflow Core module. Schedulers produce schedules directly from those templates, with the information online and available to all authorized users. The schedule information feeds into CBS Television City's telephone dial-in system, so studio personnel who are offsite can check schedules by phone, without having to come into the facility to check a posted notice.

Information about actual personnel and resources used can be now entered while the production is underway, and is always available for online review by studio managers. At the end of a production, this information is used by accounting for invoice generation. Because the initial purchase is linked to the invoicing process, the solution eliminates the problem of line items missing from the invoice.

The solution also enables CBS Television City to provide better customer service and receive faster financial settlement. "Just as we can see detailed production information while a show is being produced, we can share that information with our customers," says Strouse. "That enables them to make timely decisions to help contain their costs while their productions are underway. This is an extremely important service to provide. We can now provide better customer service and increase customer satisfaction and competitiveness, as a result."

