

Digital Asset Management-One Reseller's Solutions By Joseph Marion

Things are changing in the Technology Reseller and Secondary Markets. Authorized IBM, Sun and HP business partners as well as used equipment dealers focused primarily on selling hardware, because that was where the profit was. But today, you can find "hardware resellers" everywhere. Prices for hardware have plummeted as the equipment they are selling has become a commodity. In order to differentiate themselves from the pack, many of today's successful Resellers are now specializing on unique applications and areas of expertise.

Recently I met with Phil Bettenburg, President of North American Systems International, of Bloomington, Minnesota, one of the 300 member companies of the ASCDI (www.ascdi.com), to learn about a unique focus of theirs, called Digital Asset Management.

North American Systems has decided to focus its efforts on servicing organizations that are struggling with the storage and retrieval of digital assets such as video, audio, images, animations, and other multimedia. And this is not a bad move. Industry experts estimate that the U.S. market for digital asset management will grow to over \$5 billion in the next 12 months. In order to service this market, North American Systems has acquired Ancept Media Server from Stellent, Inc.

In years past, advertising firms, libraries and other such organizations would take their media and store it offline, "in a can," I might be dating myself, but I remember years ago how my parents took 35 mm home movies and literally stored in a tin can. That is they type of approach advertising firms and other companies using media have used for years. Obviously, this approach presents quite a few problems including the inevitable degradation and deterioration of this content, inefficiency in sharing and retrieving these assets, delay in duplicating the content and delayed time-to-market. (It is hard to get media to market when you can't find it!)

And don't forget the costs. Many times media creators find it faster to just recreate the media rather than try to find it within their own organization. Many times the media they recreate is not consistent with the rest of the corporate media, which obviously leads to branding issues.

More and more firms are finding out that digital asset management software assists them in dealing with these problems. One such firm is the advertising agency, Ogilvy & Mather who recently digitized every commercial they have made since 1948 and centralized it all on a unified database. Now, all of their employees can access these resources either remotely or from their desktops.

What is unique about North American System's Ancept Media Server is the fact that the system eliminates the need for editing bays which are traditionally used in video reel production. Ancept Media Server allows for accurate editing thru a standard web browser which accelerates the production process which in turn improves both the bottom line and client satisfaction.

While perfect for advertising agencies, many educational institutions have begun to utilize digital asset management solutions for a variety of uses. The University of Michigan not only used Ancept Media Server to store and reuse content created by their Art, TV and Radio departments, but they also used it to develop a platform for collaborative research with different schools. And they were able to expand their distance learning programs by making this material available on the Internet.

Recently, I visited the Museum of Broadcasting in New York with my two nine year old sons, (who think they have "discovered" the Beatles.) Using the Museum's digital asset management system, we sat in their library and watched the Beatles do their thing on the Ed Sullivan Show. As a matter of fact, the Museum of Broadcasting claims to have EVERY program ever broadcasted available for viewing.

Digital asset management is also a great way to start delivering new applications, like video-on-demand. Servers such as Ancept, have the ability to automatically transform media into formats which can be distributed via the Internet turning these assets into a nice profit center.

There are other digital asset management solutions such as Artesia, Documentum, Clearstory, and Northplains. What makes Ancept Media Server unique is the fact that it utilizes IBM's DB2 Content Manager to handle the security, workflow, messaging, database, and file system components. Ancept Media Server is a key IBM Strategic Partners and a component of IBM's eBusiness On-Demand solutions.

Digital asset management is a very specialized solution and an example of the shape of things to come for the traditional Reseller community. We are beginning to see more and more Resellers, like North American Systems International who are finding unique markets to service in order to differentiate themselves from other Resellers.

This year, I plan to visit with Resellers around the world to uncover some of the more unique solutions they are embracing. As I do, I will report on them to you.

If you have any questions on digital asset management solutions, please feel free to contact Christian Trygstad (ctrygstad@nasi.com), Manager of Marketing and e-Business Solutions at North American Systems International.