

## Streamlines business with Xtent Media

WATT PUBLISHING INVESTED IN AN EDITORIAL WORKFLOW SYSTEM TO STREAMLINE ITS OFFICE STRUCTURE BUT FOUND OTHER BENEFITS



American publishing company Watt started in 1917 with Poultry Tribune and has since grown into a medium-sized business publishing ten magazines across the agriculture, pet food and woodworking industries. It also has three main websites, one for each of these areas, with a number of online directories and newsletters.

Watt's headquarters are in Rockford, Illinois in the American mid-west. In recent years the company has streamlined its operations, closing down offices, leaving staff spread around the States mainly working from their own homes. Several of the titles have an international market, and so there are also two editors based in the UK. Such decentralisation brings its own challenges and Watt found that it needed an editorial workflow that could keep up.

Bruce Plantz, vice president and director of content for Watt, visited the Folio show in Chicago in 2008, specifically looking for just such a system, and came across Israeli developer Prolmage which was launching Xtent Media at the show. Plantz says that Xtent Media ticked all the right boxes for Watt: "There's other ways to do it — you could use a Cisco server and have people working remotely — but there's nothing spe-

cific to what Xtent Media does." Xtent Media is an advanced content management and editorial workflow system that can be run through a simple web browser so that users can access it from anywhere. It can be used to produce both print and web content, and is suitable for various projects including magazines, newsletters, brochures and posters. It's based on the Xtent Publishing Suite, which was developed by the Spanish software house Seinet and sold on an OEM basis to enable specialists like Prolmage to build their own solutions around it.

As such, Xtent Media has all of the power of the Xtent Publishing Suite, which has been built with Java and XML, making it easy to integrate with other solutions. It uses InDesign for page layout, and has a flat plan management system that makes it easy for everyone working in production to see the progress of a publication.

Plantz says that this has helped Watt manage its titles despite having staff spread across different locations: "We have previews of every magazine and we use the online conferencing service GoToMeeting a lot where the art director uses Xtent Media to show the issue to the assembled team."



### Asset management

One of the great strengths of the Xtent Publishing Suite, and of Xtent Media, is that the system is built around a digital asset management database. Every item that appears on a page is stored as a separate element in the database, and because everything is stored in an XML format it's incredibly easy to repurpose materials for print or online publishing.

Plantz says that the database has been a big benefit of the system: "Like everyone else, we were storing everything on the servers and trying to use good naming conventions and to do it as well as we could, but we have a much better asset management system with Xtent Media than we had before. And because we do have multiple magazines we'll use the same story and the same art in several magazines."

Watt now uses Xtent Media to produce all of its printed magazines, and the digital editions. For the websites, Watt has been using the Ektron content management system, but Plantz says: "We are in the final stages of working to where the XML will come straight out of the online content management system, straight into Xtent Media. Then there will be a true web-first XML workflow." He continues: "The idea is to change the content as little as possible before it's printed, but you might need to cut some paragraphs out to make it fit, but it isn't being rewritten for the magazine. Things like news items and product releases should be 100 per cent from one to the other."

### Ad production

Watt has also found that Xtent Media has improved the way that it handles advertising. Previously the company would hold off adding the advertising pages into the rest of the magazine for fear that they would make the InDesign files too big to conveniently move between servers for all

the people in the different locations. Plantz says: "Now we can put the ads into that document at any point during the production process and it doesn't make any difference." He adds: "I see that as a big benefit long term because then you will be seeing the editorial and the ads as you are working on the magazine rather than have the magazine done and then look at it one last time and see if any ads conflict."

Watt has also found that Xtent Media has improved its proofing, which it is outsourced to an agency in India which makes all the corrections through Xtent Media. Plantz says: "Before that we were uploading InDesign documents to an FTP site and they were picking them up and working on them which is a lot of pain and all of that's gone away now."

The Xtent Media system has also helped Watt to tighten its process controls, as Plantz explains: "The other thing is that it forces standardisation. All the art directors have to work the same which is a benefit because before if one art director was sick then it was hard to flip people in and out."

Plantz accepts that some staff still find it hard to adapt but says: "The old days when every page was read by three editors and passed around, they are just gone. We have got to be in a totally digital workflow and Xtent Media puts us into that."

### Conclusion

According to Plantz, the main benefit to Watt in using the Xtent Media system is that it has allowed the company to shut down all of its satellite offices while its staff continue to work together from their various home offices and the company has maintained its international presence. This has led to cost savings and has helped the company adopt a more nimble approach to today's challenges.

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