

Inpho's 'downtime blues' over, thanks to MediaCore

Overview

Business Challenge

- Huge volume of large images
- Complex workflow process
- Urgency to deliver images to clients
- Unreliable client-server system
- Client frustration

Solution

- Web-based Digital Asset Management System

Benefits

- Improved reliability
 - Improved workflow
 - Better customer service
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MediaCore solves downtime errors and client frustration at Ireland's largest sports photo agency.

The biggest problem for busy photography agencies nowadays is not poor lighting or editing software. It is the need to manage the delivery of large images to demanding clients in a controlled manner - instantly.

Norman McCloskey from Dublin-based Inpho Photography explains:

"Inpho is proud of the photos we take, but our key differentiator is the ability to deliver the right image to the right client speedily and reliably, especially at peak times. We had an existing client-server system which was ageing, unreliable, inflexible and growing more and more expensive to run and maintain. Each time it went down we lost work, time and customer goodwill. So we implemented a completely web-based back-end system which is now far more reliable. I no longer expect our website to go down at crucial moments. It can easily be administered by other members of staff, thus lightening the load on me."

Inpho have been running since 1988. Founded by the "world's best rugby photographer" Billy Stickland, it has grown to become the largest sports agency in Ireland with clients including the IRFU, Leinster and Munster rugby club, RTE, The Irish Times, Examiner Group and The Daily Mirror. "Last year we were the official photographers for the British and Irish Lions tour to South Africa, breaking the stranglehold that the likes of Getty Images has had on this type of international business."

Like many companies, it all began when the founder spotted a gap in the market. "Billy Stickland began photographing sports events in 1981 whilst working as a freelance photographer. This mainly grew out of his passion for rugby. There was a vibrant photography market, but there was no specialist sports photography agency."

By the time Inpho had grown from just a few staff to housing a dedicated picture desk, admin and commercial departments, and close to 1 million images, the need to invest in a new DAM system was critical. With the rise of broadband, clients expected to access photos within seconds instead of minutes.



Norman McCloskey, Inpho Photography

“Without even knowing it’s there, MediaCore has been a huge hit with our customers because of the near total lack of downtime that our website has now.”

Norman McCloskey, Inpho Photography



Finding a system that delivered speedily to clients and was reliable at peak traffic times was essential to retaining current customers and recruiting new ones for Inpho.

“We had grown very frustrated with our old system, but we were being forced to reinvest a huge amount of money to update the software - otherwise, they would no longer support us. For me this was unacceptable given the tens of thousand of euro we had invested. It was time to cut our losses and start afresh. When I decided that it was time to change from our problematic existing system I began looking around for another company that could provide us with a solution. I think it may have been a press article in the British Journal of Photography that alerted me to MediaCore from Aetopia.”

Aetopia is a Belfast-based company that builds digital asset management (DAM) products targeted specially at the photography and wider media industry. It has been hailed as the next evolution of DAM software.

“As the person who would get the phone call at 9pm on a Friday night when our website goes down, I’d have to say that the proven reliability and robustness of the system is fantastic.

Also for those on a budget, this system is highly portable and there is no need to outlay on huge servers or expensive equipment. We currently have a fully functional backup system running on an off-the-shelf MacMini server, which I could pop in my bag and set up anywhere if needs be”.

“Without knowing it’s even there, our customers think MediaCore is a big hit because of the near total lack of downtime. So when a picture desk customer goes to our site for an image at 6am or 11pm, they can be sure our site is up and running and reliable. We are rolling out the client website functionality to PR and Commission clients, which gives them access to their own images on a dedicated secure site. So far this has proven very popular.”

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