

S U C C E S S S T O R Y

Hitachi Storage Solutions at Work

MTV Italy

INDUSTRY Entertainment

SOLUTIONS **Storage Management**
Hardware — Hitachi Adaptable Modular Storage 200



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Director of Broadcast Services
MTV Italia



MTV Italy Goes Digital with Flexible, Scalable Hitachi Adaptable Modular Storage

MTV Italy, a very popular multichannel network, integrates media from TV to the Internet, from satellite to local events, and up to advanced mobile media. To support growth and the advancement of the company's digital library, MTV Italy chose a solution based on Hitachi Adaptable Modular Storage family systems.

Pioneering the Shift Towards Tapeless TV Production

Moving beyond traditional "free of charge" broadcasting, MTV is now present on the Sky platform, on the Web and also on video on demand (VOD), with content that spans from music to fiction and from entertainment to fashion, always from an innovative standpoint. "We've been among the first in Italy and perhaps also at the worldwide level to start abandoning the videotape for TV content, adopting storage of files. Surely this is a more flexible way to manage files, since one can access them anytime and anywhere," explains Director of Broadcast Services, MTV Italia, Giuseppe Rolla. "During 2001 we started putting together our first ideas and the following year we began implementing first applications. In 2003, the first release of our digital library was ready, based upon a custom system developed entirely in house, since at those times, ad hoc solutions were not yet available."

Choosing the Hitachi Data Systems Solution

After these first promising experiences, MTV Italy decided to further develop the digitalisation project in order to store and make available to editing platforms a huge amount of data, or content. The storage infrastructure of MTV was built with much simpler needs in mind, like airing music videos. However, there was now the need to extend the digital world to production, in order to support the secure and efficient management of storage. After a thorough analysis of the features of the solutions available on the market, MTV chose to work with Hitachi Data Systems and selected systems from the Hitachi Adaptable Modular Storage family.

The Adaptable Modular Storage family was ideal in terms of expandability, flexibility and price-performance ratio. "The main feature of Hitachi products, which have the storage controller embedded in the system, was perfect for our needs", says Rolla. "Moreover,

we were looking for a vendor that was able to propose a complete range of services and support before and after the sale. For instance, we have appreciated the remote assistance, which is surely an advantage provided by Hitachi Data Systems."

Answering the Scalability Challenge

Hitachi Data Systems directly handled every aspect of the project, from the sizing of the system to its installation and configuration. The Adaptable Modular Storage 200, implemented in March 2007, takes advantage of iSCSI connectivity and has Fibre Channel and SATA hard disks. The first guarantees high performance for content related to TV production and broadcasting. SATA disks have the best price-performance ratio for needs such as "near online." In September 2007, the need arose for a first expansion of the system — from 6TB to 16TB. In answering this challenge, the Hitachi storage environment affirmed its scaling capabilities and its suitability to support the huge growth rate of MTV data.

Current Storage Management Needs

Looking at the current status of MTV Italy, one can easily realise how important it is to manage storage needs. Today, the network has 14 TV "linear" channels, which are those where the programs are defined, such as MTV itself or "Comedy" and "Nickelodeon." In addition to that, there are the contents for the Web sites of MTV and for other distribution channels, such as VOD.

MTV has various offices in the region, including headquarters, the graphics department and the department in charge of promotional videos in Milan-Corso Europa. The TV studios are located at the offices of Milan-Via Belli. Moreover, other MTV offices all over Europe can access the contents of MTV Italy, visualising them in low definition. Storage is

centralised in Via Belli offices, and now serves all the 28 production and editing platforms of MTV Italy. Two years ago, when digitalisation started, there were only 10 platforms.

“Our main need was to take the TV production world into the tapeless age, changing our workflow based on physical managing of videotapes to digital files. The storage solution we were looking for had to assure us performance, expandability and continuity. Deploying the Adaptable Modular Storage 200 was key in reaching this goal,” underlines

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Rolla. “Moreover, the great flexibility of the Hitachi Data Systems solution permits us to use media of different technologies, according to needed performances. We are very satisfied by this approach, since we can keep costs under control and protect our existing investments, always with maximum security and expandability.”

Flexibility and Cost Savings

The advantages of managing contents in digital files are great. “No longer having to deal with videotapes gives us huge flexibility and also cost savings,” says Rolla. “In addition to writing off the direct costs related to duplication of videotapes, which are needed to share contents, there are huge savings also in indirect costs of device maintenance.” These costs can reach high levels, if one considers that in a medium-sized TV production house there are around 40 to 50 videotape machines, whose maintenance costs per year are within €10,000 per each device.

In addition to that, digital content can now be accessed from anywhere in MTV, with different levels of authorisation, thanks to the digital archive of Milan-Corso Europa offices, based upon Hitachi storage. This archive is backed by another archive on videotape, located in a different room for security reasons. “Actually we are not 100 percent digital,” explains Rolla. “In addition to both the security and historical archives, there are still many editing phases where very short editing times impose the use of videotape, because the transcoding of files can take longer.”

Another advantage comes out of the use of the “Deep Archive,” the remote archive on tape that has lower costs than the one on disk. That archive stores the content that is not “fresh” anymore — in other words, the shows that have ended their reruns. “The average ‘life’ on disks of content is around eight months. After that, it is transferred in the Deep Archive, thus leaving space for other content. Whenever it is needed again, the system automatically performs a restore and puts the content again on the disks,” explains Rolla.

The Future

The more than good results obtained so far are encouraging MTV Italy to push for further developments. “We feel somewhat brave: we have not yet completed the digitalisation but we are thinking on a new digitalisation project encompassing our entire workflow, from production to distribution of contents,” says Rolla. “The idea is to take advantage on

a broader scope of the digital storage platform — to share and exchange more content with other MTVs abroad, or to move outside, in other words to outsource some operations, working more on metadata. For the time being, these are ideas still on a very initial phase, but we are sure that we will develop them alongside Hitachi Data Systems. We have had a very good experience with Hitachi Data Systems on the project and the deploying phases. But, most of all, the support offered by them is the best of all vendors: always on time and with a good reactivity. One can easily realise that they are used to focusing on customers,” concludes Rolla.

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