

case study

Hyatt Connects With Ignite

By Liz Merfeld

For Hyatt Corp., a hospitality chain with 340 hotels worldwide, communicating with 80,000 employees is no small feat. How to bridge communication among offices thousands of miles apart, from San Francisco to Saudi Arabia, and to bring bandwidth-challenged hotels into the fold was an issue the company attempted to solve by launching a new intranet site in October 2008.

With the new portal, dubbed Hyatt Connect, came the ability to share audio and video content and, as Hyatt executives were pleased to discover, a potentially uber-efficient way to get employee face time—even with staff in remote locales such as Azerbaijan.

Do-it-yourself enterprise video publishing seemed doable, at first. But Hyatt's corporate information technology department was suddenly inundated with requests to share video. It was quickly realized that Hyatt's underlying networks were unprepared for the task.

For one thing, Hyatt Connect could house video, but only videos less than 25MB, the maximum file size of a Gmail attachment. The videos weren't always available to all users either, because there were limits on how many people could watch one video at the same time.

"We had no means of publishing audio or video content to the entire organization, worldwide," explains Sufel Barkat, Hyatt's vice president of corporate information technology. "So we were looking for a solution that would allow us to publish a communiqué to the entire Hyatt family, worldwide, with ease, with simplicity, and with efficiency." So how could Hyatt simultaneously reach all employees, even in bandwidth-challenged locations, with high-quality video? And furthermore, how could it do that while limiting the impact on the network?

"We do have certain areas of the world where the bandwidth and the connectivity to those areas are very slim, and we wanted to ensure the means of getting video and audio content to those."

But purchasing more bandwidth for each hotel was too costly. Installing caching devices in various offices and hotels would have run in the millions and would have taken way too long to deploy.



Hyatt Connect offers employees the option of viewing content on demand, delivering a desktop alert when new content is available.

Enter Ignite

Hyatt needed a rapid-deployment, enterprise-level content delivery platform. By late summer, it found all that, plus a stellar track record, in Ignite Technologies, Inc., whose solution has been deployed to serve hundreds of thousands of users around the globe at companies such as Accenture, Bank of America, Sabre, and MillerCoors.

Ignite won Hyatt over by its ability to work within Hyatt's existing budget to avoid more than \$1 million in caching hardware and unnecessary bandwidth charges. Ignite offered global bandwidth protection through a variety of optional centrally controlled network settings. With Ignite's solution, Hyatt could keep the existing network but lose the limitations. "It was what we call the 'polite publishing model,'" says Barkat, in which video can be published and viewed at hotels that are bandwidth-constrained. "That was the main differentiator with the model that Ignite provided compared to other partners—how they made available the video and audio to different places through a portal." As a bonus, the Ignite solution fit nicely into its environmental goals. Hyatt's global sustainability program, called Hyatt Earth, strives to minimize waste by reducing consumption and by reusing resources to the greatest extent possible. Ignite's approach boosted Hyatt's green goals by freeing executives from travel-heavy itineraries, better leveraging their existing network resources while exceeding their communication goals.

First Use

In just 30 days, Hyatt Connect rolled out Ignite's SaaS (software-as-a-service) technology globally. In August, Hyatt's CEO announced that the company was filing to go public—it was the first time the company was able to use video to reach employees around the globe simultaneously through Hyatt Connect. Since then, Hyatt has published more than a dozen audio and video communications, primarily company announcements and executive messages.

But the beauty of the solution being enterprisewide is that each and every department, not just executive management, can get in on the action. For departments that kick out announcements frequently, such as human resources, video sharing through Ignite makes

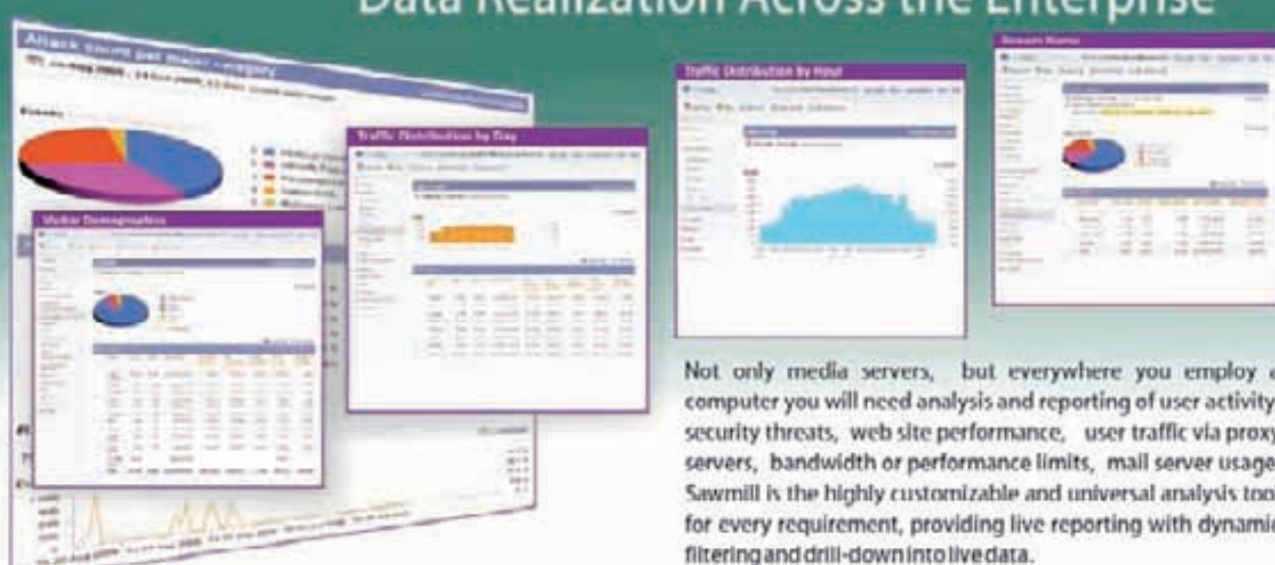
sharing and managing news and information a snap. For example, with Ignite's technology in place, Hyatt Connect was used to announce a new benefits provider and to open and close enrollment, ensuring that appropriate employees were compliant and covered.

Turnkey Global Deployment

Members of Barkat's department were pleased with the solution's ease of deployment. "The overall video solution was not difficult to implement at all," he explains. They simply had to install Ignite's intelligent 7MB client on Hyatt-owned devices via an existing software delivery tool and web-install method.

"The major hurdle we had," he remembers, "was coordinating the rollout of the Ignite client

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to a subset of Hyatt employees across many hotels. And that's just because we had to work through coordinating across different MIS [management information systems] managers at different hotels, ensuring that they understood where the client should go—which desktops and what laptops it should reside on." Ignite's hybrid software CDN would then autodiscover how best to deliver content to users based on their connectivity and capability.

Ease of Use

For content publishers, the process of sharing video is no more complicated than ordering room service. Hyatt streamlined the process so content managers could use their existing portal workflow to upload video in any format as well as other electronic files to a securely hosted server using existing tools and workflow. Ignite receives the source file, transcodes the video in multiple formats for different uses, and associates appropriate metadata. Ignite provides Hyatt publishers one link to embed anywhere on Hyatt Connect. From Hyatt Connect, employees can view at their leisure, and if requested, a desktop delivery alert featuring a link directly to the specific portal page is sent to employees. "That's how simple the process is," says Barkat.

End users have it just as easy. A link in the portal determines whether the Ignite client is installed on users' machines. If so, it plays the video in the Ignite client. Otherwise, a lower-quality video is streamed over the internet. The process is so seamless that people don't realize they are viewing the video through the Ignite client.

No Reservations

Barkat says success is evidenced by Hyatt's new ability to allow corporate departments a mechanism to publish video to their constituents with bandwidth constraints. And hotels that were once unable to view video streams over the internet now can.

The solution has been a flawless one to boot. "The video quality and the viewing capability have worked across the world. We have no

issues with video displaying or issues at specific locations. It's been a success," says Barkat.

Overall, he continues, "it was a very well-managed relationship between Ignite and Hyatt in delivering what we needed. We sometimes required Ignite to react quickly, as video content was made available with short notice. And they turn it around pretty quickly."

Hyatt can also leverage one of the solution's most valuable tools: its strong tracking and reporting capabilities. Analyzing reach and viewership—whether content was received and whether it was opened, accessed, and viewed—helps determine how effective the communication has been, which will help Hyatt improve its corporate messages in the future. In mid-January Hyatt opened up video sharing via Ignite to its 150-plus content managers. Once that's in full swing, the company will begin measuring and analyzing results.

Looking Ahead

To keep up with all the would-be content publishers knocking at the door, Barkat is going to do all he can to let video sharing grow. The initial plan is to assist departments in the adoption of video so they view video as a communication tool that can be viewed on a weekly basis.

Future plans also include integration with Hyatt's collaboration system so that teams can publish content to users defined within communities of collaboration.

In addition, Hyatt plans to make use of Ignite's flexible delivery choices, including live, scheduled, or via download. So far it has made video available on-demand, but, says Barkat, "We are probably going to leverage the real-time [solution] as well, but we haven't had the need yet."

"As you know," Barkat cautions, "introducing anything new to an organization requires change management and adoption." That said, "We expect video usage to grow significantly."

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