

Sekani grows at a fast clip with IBM content and e-commerce solution.

Overview

■ Challenge

Provide a fast, efficient way for motion picture producers to locate, view and purchase stock footage

■ Solution

E-commerce application for management, sales and delivery of digital motion picture media

■ Why IBM

Complete development and implementation solution; performance and scalability of DB2® software from IBM; rich functionality of IBM Content Manager; seamless integration of WebSphere® Commerce for Digital Media and content management solutions

■ Key Business Benefits

30% projected annual revenue growth rate and 30% ROI within 12 months; sales cycle shortened from several days to a few hours; savings of 5-11 months' development time



Sekani's online digital asset management solution has revolutionized the stock footage selection process for motion picture producers.

When TV and motion picture producers need to set a scene around an exotic location or historic event, they often use existing archived images—"stock footage"—to save the huge production cost of shooting these backgrounds from scratch. But locating precisely the right stock footage can be a lengthy, needle-in-a-haystack process—and can eat up potential savings from not going on location.

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—Oscar Lugay, Director of Technology, Sekani

Key Components

Software

- IBM WebSphere Application Server
- IBM WebSphere Commerce for Digital Media
- IBM Content Manager
- IBM DB2 Universal Database™ for Windows NT®, Version 7.2

Servers

- IBM Netfinity® 7100
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Cutting-edge e-commerce applications running over broadband Internet connections promise to revolutionize the entertainment industry. By researching, locating and purchasing digital stock footage online, production companies could truly realize the benefits of using existing multimedia content. However, many digital media companies have resisted this business opportunity because of the technological challenges of managing, showcasing, selling and delivering massive quantities of digital assets over the Internet.

“We changed all of that just a few months ago,” says Oscar Lugay, director of technology for Sekani, a New York-based media broker that provides moving imagery and rights licensing to advertising agencies, the media, entertainment industries and business customers. “We had come to an impasse. We could not grow our business as long as we were tied to the manual media management and sales model that had not changed much since silent movie days. We were determined to be the first in our industry to utilize the Internet to connect our motion picture media assets with the customers who need them.”

To accomplish this, Sekani needed to combine robust e-commerce functionality with powerful digital asset management, in a highly scalable solution that could support considerable growth. “We needed a vendor that could provide a total solution, including development and implementation services,” says Lugay, “and that’s what IBM gave us.”

Sekani was already well acquainted with IBM and its software products and had noted the proven e-commerce track record of IBM WebSphere Commerce and the powerful, scalable data management capabilities of IBM DB2 Universal Database. In particular, Lugay and his colleagues were impressed with the comprehensive digital asset management functionality of IBM Content Manager. So, the company was delighted to find an IBM offering that combines these products seamlessly—IBM WebSphere Commerce for Digital Media.

“IBM Content Manager has dramatically shifted our content selection paradigm and streamlined our sales process. The sales and distribution process has been reduced from several days to just a few hours or minutes.”

—Oscar Lugay

Proven track record

Working closely with IBM, the company used WebSphere Commerce for Digital Media to develop a Web site, Sekani.com, that showcases and offers for sale more than 70,000 clips, including digitized film, video and computer-generated imagery.

For Lugay, the new application is no less than a revolution: "As a key component of our digital asset management solution, Content Manager has dramatically shifted our content selection paradigm and streamlined our sales process," he notes. "Traditionally, clients would phone in a description of the footage they wanted, and wait a couple of days while our staff searched for the right clips. They would then receive a preview tape, review it, place an order and wait for delivery. Today, our clients can use Content Manager to immediately track down the media they need online, order royalty-free media on the spot and then pay by credit card. The sales and distribution process has been reduced from several days to just a few hours or minutes. This has boosted our productivity and revenue considerably by enabling us to process many more requests in a given time frame."

Developed and deployed in less than seven months, the application is having a far-reaching impact on sales. Just 1 month after it went live, the site was logging about 4,000 unique sessions per week—at an impressive average duration of 23 minutes per session—and is growing by 300 new, unique users every month. The new Sekani site, Lugay estimates, will attain 30 percent ROI within 12 months of implementation, and annual revenue growth is expected to reach 30 percent.

Total support for the digital media business

"The beauty of WebSphere Commerce for Digital Media", says Lugay, "is that it supports all three central pillars of our business: e-commerce, rights management and—most critically—digital content management. Creating a comparable application from scratch would have taken 12 to 18 months of development time."

"Since Content Manager is Siebel-certified, it should integrate seamlessly into our Siebel CRM system. This will enable us to keep closer track of our customers' needs and provide us with promising new marketing opportunities. The IBM solution was a perfect fit for our business."

—Oscar Lugay



Producers of nature documentaries often use vivid stock shots like this one to save the cost and complexity of shooting on location.

At the heart of Sekani's Web site is the Content Manager component of WebSphere Commerce for Digital Media. Content Manager acts as a library server, presenting the collections of all its media suppliers as a single, seamless, searchable library. The content index is stored in DB2 Universal Database for Windows NT, Version 7.2, running on an IBM Netfinity 7100 server.

Content Manager lets users perform parametric or Boolean queries, or search by keyword, full text or image content. Sekani's future plans include a federated search capability—functionality already available in Content Manager—which will enable users to search from within Sekani.com across media collections hosted by other content owners. They will then be able to purchase media from other content owners directly from the Sekani Web site.

The e-commerce component of WebSphere Commerce for Digital Media enables users to collect clips in temporary storage areas called ClipBins for review or to place titles directly in the shopping cart. WebSphere Commerce for Digital Media also collects shopper and order information—which is stored in another DB2 table—and handles payment by credit card or purchase order. IBM WebSphere Application Server drives the Java™ technology-based commerce transaction logic. After orders are completed and confirmed the media can be downloaded directly from the site.

The next step for Sekani is to expand into the realm of traditional royalty-based media. To do so, the company plans to integrate the powerful digital asset management infrastructure of Content Manager with the digital rights management capabilities of the Electronic Media Management System (EMMS) from IBM, a component of WebSphere Commerce for Digital Media. EMMS will help ensure that content owners receive royalties on purchases made through Sekani.

Win-win situation

From Sekani's standpoint, all of this is just the beginning. Media analysts foresee a spectacular growth curve for the digital media industry,¹ and Sekani's new implementation has readied the company for this evolution by globalizing its client base and opening the door to even more dramatic growth.

As its market expands, Sekani will capitalize even further upon the scalability and broad integration capability of its IBM solution. "Since Content Manager is Siebel-certified, it should integrate seamlessly into our Siebel CRM system," Lugal says. "And because its infrastructure is built on open, industry-accepted standards like XML and Java technology, we expect WebSphere Commerce for Digital Media to mesh smoothly with our billing and other backend systems. This will enable us to keep closer track of our customers' needs and provide us with promising new marketing opportunities. The IBM solution was a perfect fit for our business."

For more information

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¹ "The paid digital content market will grow to \$5.7 billion by 2005." — Jupiter Media Metrix, Inc., Jupiter Content Revenue Model, February 2001.

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