

Company Background

The company, a FORTUNE 100, underwrites more commercial property-casualty insurance policies than any other insurance carrier in the world. It also leverages its core competencies in financial services with a growing line of personal and corporate financial businesses, an extensive international life and general insurance portfolio, and a significant global asset management practice.

It has offices in 130 countries, over 50,000 employees and thousands of independent agents.

The Opportunities

The overhead associated with a number of global corporate processes is growing. At the same time, company leaders feel that their ability to manage is hampered by their perpetual need to travel. Division management are concerned about increased turn over in high margin lines of business. The personal lines of financial services are struggling to grow in a competitive environment.

- Live events broadcast by executives in headquarters to offices worldwide could improve communications and increase understanding of corporate issues/announcements.
- In house rich media (yet virtual) seminars offered by experts in remote offices can raise awareness (and subsequent use) of internal resources available to agents in branch offices or niche practices.
- Product launches are more frequent, but could benefit from more consistent and timely release in different regions of the world if supplemented by live (webcast) launch events.
- Communications with mass (yet techno-savvy) audiences could boost the company's brand equity with consumers.

The company recently announced that it has entered into an agreement to offer travel insurance and assistance services to airline ticket customers who do business with a leading travel portal. The travel insurance program offers coverage for trip cancellation, emergency medical and evacuation expenses, loss of baggage, property and travel documents and accidental death and dismemberment.

In the first phase of its relationship with a streaming media provider, the company will be hosting and producing a series of live events designed for internal audiences.

Applications noted above will be prime candidates. Once internally proven, B2C communications will follow in 1Q2001. It will begin with regional travel consultants giving virtual presentation and answering questions about their country or area of expertise via live video broadcast events. The events will be punctuated by examples of situations where the travel insurance protected the consumer. The weekly events of this type will be promoted by the travel portal to its site visitors through banners and e-mail broadcasts.

Phase 1 Applications

Quarterly internal broadcast applications have historically been done over business television network built and operated by the corporation. Now two additional events will be broadcast per quarter (1/month). For the executive addresses, the satellite network will continue to be used but will now be supplemented with the simultaneous webcast. A contract with EchoStar is already in place and the company will want to leverage this as much as possible. The streaming media technologies will be used to reach audiences otherwise unable to view, and people who wish to view the same address from their desktop computers. All desktops are connected to the corporate Intranet by switched Ethernet and multicast is supported throughout. Due to time zone differences, the company will address approximately two thirds of its audience (12,000 viewers) live, then wants to store the recorded event and rebroadcast via satellite (6,000) 12 hours after the original production. The same recording will need to be archived for future use.

Due to a number of acquisitions, there are many different sites where video can be captured, to different degrees. The company's communications officers have lists of these assets and will supply them if necessary, however, the key is to make the process of managing subject matter experts for the virtual seminars to the field as easy as possible. The company may elect to outsource the content acquisition from the experts' offices (regional headquarters, for example). The company will handle all event promotion for these internal events.

Phase 2 Applications

For the product launches to people in corporate offices and outside agents, some people will access via the Intranet and others from the Internet. For purposes of measuring the impact of webcast launch events, the company wishes to collect data on who is watching. It will require registration for the events and will ask 4-5 questions in addition to name, address and e-mail. The registration module must be customizable.

In addition, the company will be doing the live event webcasts with the travel portal partner. An automated invitation system is envisioned. Exact size of audience is not known, but will vary from one event to the next, depending on many factors. The total duration of the live event will be 15 minutes. In order to improve the quality of these and match audience interests, the company will want to capture detailed reports of when users start receiving the broadcast, when they leave and how they interact with the on-line polling and questionnaires. The company also seeks information about attendees attending multiple events in a series or similar analyses of the attendance data sets. This will be used to shape the schedule of events, content of events and (especially) the types of 30 second commercials/spots about travel insurance introduced into the event stream. After the third event the company would like to be able to publish access to archives of the documentaries and offer searching based on key words associated with 1-3 minute segments.

The Proposal—Overview

Although the company may elect to keep or develop support for some of these processes internally, it seeks your proposal for:

- Issuing personalized invitations to potential and past attendees
- On-line registration of attendees, including collecting information from members of audience in polls
- all real-time original (studio) content acquisition (from DVD to streaming media format),
- ability to poll the audience in real time,
- ability to insert travel insurance testimonials, based on individual user statistics,
- reliable, consistent distribution and delivery to any audience at any data rate.

Time frame: A proposal should quote a fee for a pilot phase to last 30 days December 1-31, 2000. Upon successful completion of the trial, the company will seek a one-year contract, starting on January 1, 2001 for Internet-based live events in conjunction with the travel portal partner. A quote for this one-year service agreement is also solicited.

Fees: The quote must reflect all fees and terms (payment plans, penalties, etc.) in US currency.

Options and concerns: In addition to the application described above, growth is anticipated so the company seeks assurances that the service provider has a scalable strategy. Also, during the first phase of its relationship with a Streaming Media Service provider, the company will be recording all live virtual events and expects the service provider to have the ability to make these archives searchable, retrievable and generally “navigable” by corporate content/asset management as well as (eventually) content syndicators. Therefore, the company needs to obtain the service provider’s rates and capabilities for all these different options.

Service Level Agreements: We would like to see SLAs included with your proposal. We would also like to understand the agreements that the service provider has in place with OTHER service providers critical to the delivery of the full solution.

Due Date: No more than 5 business days from the day the RFP is issued to the service provider.

Criteria for Selection

The company will choose the service provider based on technical merits (architecture of network, security, redundancy, capacity) and business considerations (application development, costs, ability to do business).

The assessment of these will be made based on the written proposal and remote (video) interview with the company’s representative (PEREY Research & Consulting).

Technical Capabilities

Technical capabilities include network specifications and performance metrics.

Network specifications

Please explain the network architecture you offer (overlay? centralized or distributed?), giving details about the following:

- advantage(s) the network architecture and technology provide versus a centralized or distributed network
- Location of servers, data centers
- Any proprietary software – e.g. intelligent mapping –integral to the network architecture for
 - ensuring lossless streams
 - avoiding single point of failure (replicate streams? If so, how?)
- provisions made for redundancy and scalability in the network (partnerships or peering agreements?)
- Capacity of network (miles? how do you measure the capacity of your network? Does it include the partnerships)
- Data rates the network sustains (100k, 300k, 1 meg)
- Support for multiple simultaneous users
 - Maximum capacity for standard live broadcast
 - Maximum capacity for live interactive broadcast

Performance and Availability

Please describe performance (in terms of delay, for example) and network availability. Does any software need to be loaded at customer sites to ensure proper monitoring?

Can Quality of Service levels be specified? If so what are the suggested min-max levels, given the application requirements?

Please submit a sample Service Level Agreement with the above details, if it is available. Include clauses for timely reporting (see below) and data recovery in the SLA.

Describe how and how often network performance and SLA compliance are measured. Ensure that there is a problem resolution guarantee time in the SLA, and state the customer's requirements (expected customer involvement) to resolve any issue.

Describe penalties/customer recourse for SLA breaches. Please detail fail over/disaster recovery procedures as well as problem escalation processes.

Application Services

Please confirm that service provider has all capabilities to support the application requirements provided above. Explain system offered by vendor or vendor's partner(s) to provision application services. Include details about:

- Signal acquisition,
- Video/on-site webcast production and encoding services,
- Content development
- Script writing
- Content templates, customization capabilities (how is branding "Look and Feel" done?)
- Audio/Video/Presentation synchronization, supported formats (e.g. Microsoft Powerpoint, HTML, Flash)
- Agenda creation tools
- Registration

Content Management and Manipulation Services

- Archival capabilities
- search/index

Security

Describe the security measures in place to protect information sent from audience as well as that streamed over the network.

Describe authentication and access control services offered. Are there multiple levels or types of security? If so, describe each in detail.

Reporting

Please list information reported in the proposed solution (network delivery, application and user/attendance data).

Please describe real-time and historical reporting tools.

- the availability of on-line reporting (Real-time? 1 hr? daily?)
- level of detail: is reporting per access basis, per account basis, per user basis, per application, per geographic region?
- How is the reporting integrated with customer business objectives?
- Does the report tell where surfer/viewer came from?
- Can company's network administrator download summary of data and raw data logs (Comma delimited files, standard HTML formats) and put them into the enterprise's own databases?

Describe how the company can customize reports/detail tracking (for example, the QoS level on different network segments, for security, for real-time chat).

Customer References

Please provide contact information for 3 customers who can be contacted to describe relationship and service performance/track-record of service provider.