CASE STUDY:
Cable News Network (CNN)

LOCATION: Washington D.C.

GOAL: Create a New-Media Newsroom in HD/SD with a global presence.

SOLUTION: Primestream’s FORK™ Production Suite provides a cutting edge, metadata driven, modular approach for broadcast media operations, production and playout.
The Evolution of CNN

Founded in 1980 as the first 24-hour, all-news channel, CNN is now a highly successful leader in the news and information world. With cable channels including CNN (Cable News Network), CNN International and Headline News, along with the CNN.com online component, CNN offers programming in more than 212 countries and territories worldwide and is seen in over 100 million U.S. households. CNN recently completed a multi-year transition from tape-based, analog operations to 100% digital, non-linear and high-definition production, which included an installation of Primestream’s FORK Production Suite.

As media operations manager for CNN’s Washington D.C. News Bureau, Warren Arenstein played a key role in the design and implementation of a server-based, tapeless FORK solution. Arenstein has a career spanning more than 25 years in the broadcasting industry. As an editor/producer he’s held several high-level positions including chief editor for CBS Moscow and senior editor and producer for National Geographic. Arenstein recently went from working at CNN to working at Primestream as VP of Business Development. As an editor/producer he’s held several high-level positions including chief editor for CBS Moscow and senior editor and producer for National Geographic.

“When I first arrived at CNN Washington in 2004, they were almost a completely tape-based production center,” Arenstein recalls. “The mandate was to convert all the daily production news edit rooms to non-linear systems with shared storage. We were introduced to Primestream’s FORK and it turned out it could do what we were looking for.”
Arenstein observed that a lot of different providers also wanted to offer a solution to CNN, but the challenge was finding one willing to adapt their product to the company’s stringent specifications and critical timetables. “Early on in the relationship, CNN realized Primestream was capable of developing and implementing a lot of functionality specifically for CNN, which made the decision much easier,” says Arenstein. “As an example, CNN’s interaction with the team at Primestream led to the creation of FORK’s Live Assist module for newsroom playout automation. Another appealing aspect of FORK was that it’s QuickTime-based, which meant a scalable, open architecture allowing for additional development and functionality as production needs evolved.”
SYSTEM OVERVIEW

• 60 FORK Production Clients
• 18 edit stations sharing content on a 60 Terabyte SAN shared storage network
• 8 media coordinator ingest stations in the media operations (Responsible for scheduling all ingests and playout content to other bureaus and affiliates.)
• 18 XDCAM HD ingest streams
• 16 playout streams
As asked about a typical day of work at the D.C. bureau with FORK, Arenstein offers the following description. “It starts with the network morning news shows set to automatically record as recurring events using FORK Scheduled Clip Ingest,” he says. “As the day goes on, the Media Coordinators add events to be ingested as the news situation warrants; they also log content and add keyframe markers. As the editors start getting busy around noon, they find all the content they need ready in the shared storage. They browse and search with FORK Content Navigator and send footage from FORK to FCP for craft editing. Completed edits are then sent back to FORK for playout through Live Assist to the monitor wall in The “Situation Room” as well as right out to air.”
CNN’s delivery requirements also included the need to interface with existing footage archives. “Primestream integrated the D.C. FORK system with the Atlanta archive via an XML scripting mechanism,” says Arenstein. “That integration allowed operators to deliver content to the archive and also to request content back from the archive digitally. Over the course of working with Primestream, CNN really appreciated their ability to scale, develop, and modify FORK to meet ongoing requirements as the workflows evolved.”
PRIMESTREAM’S TIGHT FOCUS ON A SCALABLE SOLUTION FOR THE SPECIFICS OF NEWSROOM OPERATIONS AND CENTRAL MEDIA STORAGE WAS CRITICAL TO ITS SUCCESS WITH CNN.

“It was better for CNN to find companies that can provide solutions for installations that have specific requirements as opposed to always going for a network-wide solution from the beginning”, he says. “Some providers tried to promise an all-encompassing solution for CNN and later realized that the R&D and investment necessary to deliver on the timeline that the network requires is something they can’t accomplish.”

“With Primestream, CNN discovered many advantages. Beginning with the cost savings and later by realizing how much more storage, editing capabilities and functionality were possible using FORK.”

FORK Software Suite:
PRIMESTREAM SOFTWARE SOLUTIONS ENABLE BROADCASTERS AND MEDIA ORGANIZATIONS TO CREATE, MANAGE, AND DISTRIBUTE CONTENT OVER THE AIR, VIA SATELLITE, AND TO “SECOND” SCREENS SUCH AS MOBILE PHONES AND TABLETS.

The Primestream FORK line of products combine multiple modules in a single, integrated software suite. This feature-set includes industry-leading media asset management, advanced metadata and scripting that empowers media organizations to implement automated workflows – freeing humans to do what they do best – create.

Based on an open and hardware-agnostic architecture, FORK integrates with a wide range of hardware and software solutions from multiple manufactures. This high level integration provides complete control for end-to-end management of the production process, with significantly improved efficiencies that maximize the use and value of our client’s media assets.

Primestream delivers its solutions through a dedicated professional network of partners and systems integrators – a team that adheres to the industry’s best practices and ensures the highest possible engineering standards. Deployed in more than 300 broadcast operations across 40 countries, Primestream’s proven solutions are implemented by some of the world’s leading broadcasters, news and sports organizations, uplink services providers, online digital media operations, production and post-production facilities.

More information about Primestream’s FORK solutions:

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