

Centaur Media: Driving product development and achieving savings with ADvance

Centaur Media is a publicly quoted print and digital publisher of such iconic B2B brands as Marketing Week, Creative Review and The Lawyer, an award-winning events organisation and, increasingly, a developer of cutting-edge data products.

In 2012 Centaur began looking for a single platform that would support and coordinate all of their various data platforms, support both digital and print fulfilment, and integrate properly with their CMS different platforms.

The company was the first client for Abacus e-Media's new ADvance audience and subscription management solution, with the system going live in January 2013. Pete Martin is Head of Audience Management and Analytics at Centaur Media: **"Not surprisingly there were teething problems associated with being the first customer for a brand new product. But it was clear that there was no other single system on the market that could do everything we needed. By choosing ADvance to replace various existing hybrid systems from different suppliers, we achieved efficiencies and savings of about £250,000 in the first year."**

As a result of this success the company is currently rolling ADvance out across its wider product portfolio.

Consolidating print, digital data and systems

Centaur Media had started consolidating their print and web businesses back in 2007, installing different systems from different suppliers to handle different areas of activity. By 2012 there were seven different systems from five suppliers handling audience data across print and online. It had become clear, however, that a more streamlined and efficient operation could only be achieved with a single platform which could handle both print and digital. The company was already using Abacus e-Media's content management solution, Webvision, and so was interested in their development of an entirely new audience development and subscription management product, ADvance.

- Established 1981
- B2B content publisher and event organiser providing integrated marketing and information solutions to high value professional and commercial markets
- Flagship titles include Marketing Week, The Lawyer, Employee Benefits and Money Marketing

"Our existing platforms were proving very time-consuming and very costly to manage, often requiring bespoke development work whenever we wanted to make changes or introduce a new product."

Head of Audience Management and Analytics

In spring 2012, the decision was taken to adopt ADvance to replace two of Centaur's largest systems – those responsible for managing print circulation audiences (both paid and controlled circulation) and web audiences. Migrating the two systems to ADvance and integrating them with the Webvision CMS proved to be challenging but audience data for print, web and events was cleaned, deduped and consolidated by early January 2013.

“At the same time, we were also implementing a major restructuring of the company. We had entirely separate print and web departments, each handling customer services, subscription matters and so on, which we needed to bring together into one cohesive operation. This not only required changes to the organisation but also the culture of the company.”

Abacus provided extensive training on the use and capabilities of ADvance both on-site and at their office in London together with ongoing support and dedicated project managers to help Centaur staff adapt to an entirely new approach.

ADvance in action

ADvance is now used by about ten people each day to manage all aspects of subscriptions on ten Centaur B2B titles.

It is also being used as part of a major project to put registration barriers (gatekeeping) in place with the aim of improving the quality and quantity of data being collected from the audience for non-subscription titles. Three sites currently use ADvance for metered access registration with more to follow.

“We now have far more precise and up to date information about our audience, which can be analysed and used for marketing and sales activities, both by Centaur and, most importantly, by our advertisers.”

An important new business area for Centaur is the development and sale of high-value specialised, research-based information services. At the present time, Centaur has a portfolio of eight different information services, five of which came into its ownership when it bought the Profile Group (a specialist provider of forward planning and industry contacts information to media and marketing communities); more such services are being developed in-house, with particular focus on the legal marketplace. ADvance will be used to manage and provide the gatekeeping for these corporate subscriptions which will become increasingly more important as the number of brands expands.

“The Profile services are currently running on a separate system but there are clear benefits in using the one ADvance platform to run all our audience management and subscription activities.”

Since moving to ADvance, which the company runs in-house, Centaur has realised significant improvements in the time taken to set up and launch new products. In the past it would typically take

about two months for a new product (such as a paid-for report on TheLawyer.com) to be developed by the individual system supplier's staff; now it is done in-house and takes about a week including testing. The project has been such a success that ADvance has now been rolled out to Ascent – Centaur's specialist consumer publishing division which publishes titles such as Period Living and Real Homes and also organises major exhibitions such as Home Building and Renovating.

ADvance is also used by Centaur to store details of all those who register and/or visit the company's major events, such as Marketing Week Live. Pete Martin can, however, see compelling reasons for also using ADvance to store and manage the audience data from Centaur's numerous smaller events such as conferences and awards ceremonies, to provide a single customer view.

Looking ahead

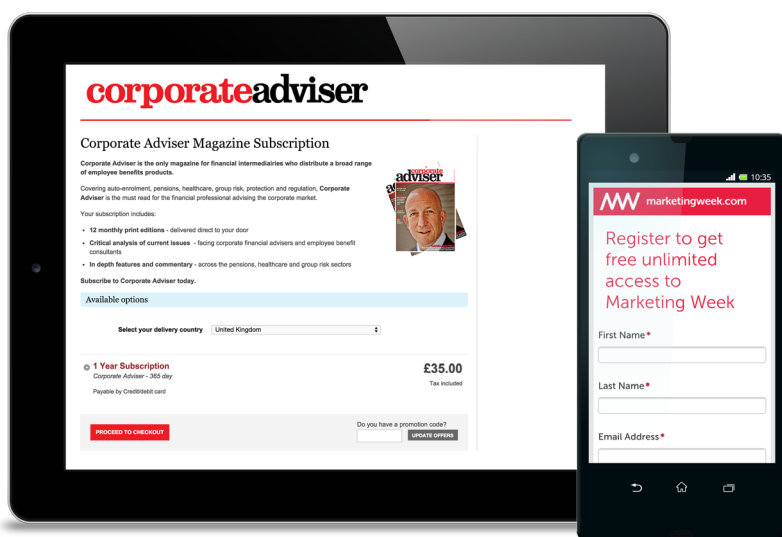
ADvance is now embedded into the day to day operations of Centaur, running "our bread and butter services". Subscription management has been streamlined, the registration barrier is working very effectively and corporate subscriptions are imminent.

One area where ADvance will be used in the future is to support the targeting of display and native advertising, using ADvance audience data to support personalisation based on user demographics.

"This content marketing is a relatively new area in B2B publishing and is clearly attractive to advertisers as there is less wastage."

This new function will launch in mid-2015.

Recently Centaur has introduced the WordPress CMS for some of its titles, and this, in turn, has been integrated with ADvance and is working well.



“Our decision to adopt ADvance for fundamental business activities, when it was a brand new, untried system, could be described as brave. However it was definitely the right decision. Even now it is difficult to see anything else on the market which can cover the breadth of what ADvance does. To replicate its capabilities, we’d have to go back to using hybrid systems and components - which would obviously be a major backward step.”

Head of Audience Management and Analytics

ADvance: Core Modules and Services

Audience management

Understand and manage your audience data – subscribers, members, web-registered users, event delegates

Paywalls & gatekeeping

Flexible access control solutions for content owners, including multiple user IP access management for organisations

E-commerce & m-commerce

Give your customers an effortless and elegant buying experience online

Audience analysis

Analyse your audience and customer data in one place with business intelligence tools

Print fulfillment & subscription management

Manage your print subscriptions, distribution and renewals process in the cloud

Working with