

Customised daily newspaper niu Relies on Quark Dynamic Publishing Technology

Since starting niu, Hendrik Tiedemann and Wanja Oberhof from InterTI GmbH have been giving dozens of interviews. Newspapers, magazines, and TV stations from all continents are reporting on a project that is creating excitement for publishers and media experts. niu, the world's first customised daily newspaper, was launched in Berlin. The technology behind this innovative newspaper production was developed and implemented by Swiss technology service provider and authorised Quark system integrator Previa AG.



Roger Wernli, CEO of the Swiss high-tech company, explains: "With our technology, which offers customisation of information in a new dimension, we will be implementing new projects at home and abroad. Because of this technology, we are now the leading partner in Europe for customised and dynamic publishing."

Publishers and editors have been discussing the concept of customised dailies for a number of years. However, the complexity involved in handling news and print relegated the idea back to a more-or-less theoretical concept. Even as the Internet-exerted pressure on publishers and print media lost entire generations of readers, the time for this idea had still not arrived. As it was, publishers invested millions in the Internet, sold a large portion of their products "for free" via browsers, and at the same time lost advertising revenue to the Web. In addition to this, readers tended to only want to read information that actually interested them. This put a damper on publishers' desire to innovate. Therefore, it is all the more surprising that two young company founders from Germany picked up on this idea of customised information and planned a customised daily for an Internet-savvy readership. The niu project was born and successfully implemented in just two years.

Setting a Trend for Media Companies

"We met the two young entrepreneurs from Berlin early on, were very excited, and joined the project," explains Roger Wernli, CEO of Previa. "We see this as an innovative way that could begin setting a trend for media companies."

What is the secret behind niu? The reader himself becomes the editor-in-chief and tells the Web which news topics and sources should be displayed. To this end, a user initially makes a selection from basic profiles such as sports, business, and lifestyle. Then, content from various other sources is added to the columns. The listing of content suppliers is continuously growing and is already impressive at this stage. Not only local papers, but also national titles such as the German Handelsblatt or the United States' New York Times can also be selected. This is in addition to over 700 news sources on the Internet. It is also possible to select individual pages from different dailies, in addition to other Web content such as blogs and RSS feeds. The customised daily (publication volume: one copy) is printed in digital print on an Océ Jet Stream 2200 and delivered





niu allows readers to decide on the content and layout of their personalised newspaper.

every morning, hot off the press, to the supplier’s mailbox. niu consists of 24 pages and is published in a tabloid format.

Highly Personalised Advertising Options

The possibility of personalised advertising that is tailored to a unique reader means that advertising firms are becoming very interested in this project. Depending on the topic and user profile, it is possible to place personalised and topic-based advertisements because niu addresses readers on an individual level and can serve entire theme-oriented target groups. Advertisers can manage advertisements and campaigns via the Web platform, and assign them to a selected target group. Clever statistics and analyses allow for exact measurement and administration of all campaigns. “That makes advertising managers happy,” says Roger Wernli. “A variety of data is obtained from each registered niu reader. The data can be used to send an advertising message to individual readers without incurring waste,” explains the 40-year-old CEO.

The Engine Behind niu

For the implementation of niu, the Prevision team developed a software solution that aggregates, creates layouts for, and customises a variety of different content that is then combined into a newspaper on a fully automated basis. News is compiled from a variety of different data sources and offered to the system for customisation purposes. Editing systems, XML sources, PDFs, and archive data are available as data sources. Of course, RSS services can also be integrated.

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Widget supply services such as Sudoku, horoscopes, weather, and stock charts can also be a part of the equation. Context-sensitive advertising can be associated with content based on the user profile. Prevision’s programme — a rule-based and intelligent layout manager — then prepares the customised product. The content can be output as a PDF or ePaper, but also as content for a Web site or mobile device. Discussions surrounding distribution on eReaders and iPad are currently ongoing. The system architecture includes over 20 programmes/processes and works with Windows server systems. It is based on .NET by Microsoft and the Drupal open source CMS, and uses the QuarkXPress Server rendering engine as the multi-channel output robot.

Quark Delivers the Engine

As part of conducting its competitive analysis, Prevision quickly determined a decision would be made in favour of using Quark technologies for implementing a dynamic publishing solution. The core technology for the new dynamic publishing solution is QuarkXPress Server. This core technology combines the high-quality typography and graphics support of QuarkXPress with server-based performance for automated processes. QuarkXPress Server provides system integrators, developers, and customers with a flexible software solution that enables them to better utilise the creative potential of QuarkXPress to create automated publishing solutions for the following areas: Web-to-print, variable data publishing, advertising automation, on-demand PDF generation, customisation, and one-to-one marketing.

Other technologies were considered, but QuarkXPress Server was more convincing: “The key factors for the implementation of this project concerned performance and

niiu - an InterTi GmbH product Berlinwww.niiu.de**Prevision AG****Zofingen, Lucerne, Switzerland**www.prevision.ch**CHALLENGES**

- **Cost-effective implementation of personalised and automated publication processes**
- **Development of a new advertisement booking model for specific target groups**
- **Creation of a payment concept with a point system**
- **Enabling an efficient, non-linear print document creation process**
- **Maximisation of performance**
- **Easy integration through standard interfaces**

QUARK SOLUTIONS

- **QuarkXPress Server as the core technology for the Prevision platform**
- **QuarkXPress design power in combination with server-based performance**

RESULT

- **More than 2,000 36-page newspapers per hour**
- **Customised daily as of publication one**
- **Substantial time and cost savings**

programming interfaces. Imagine what it would be like to create customised content in real time for several thousand subscribers. Masses of data converge and are automatically built into print pages in the layout engine, combined with advertising pages, and then issued as high-resolution print PDFs. The entire process is not linear. On the contrary, each generated layout document represents its own unit," says Toni Kaufmann, who as CTO is responsible for monitoring software implementation at Prevision. "The only other technology that also made the short list was InDesign Server," explains Kaufmann. "However, our tests have shown that QuarkXPress Server achieves the best performance when it comes to automated layout processes. With each version of QuarkXPress Server, Quark has not only introduced new intuitive tools, but also increased the throughput rate and options for integration into other systems. These factors, along with its stability, convinced us that choosing QuarkXPress Server would be the right decision."

With Prevision, an innovative company that focuses on consulting, software development, and project implementation in the media environment, niiu company founders found the ideal partner who, following an extensive requirements analysis,

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proceeded to develop a continuously available platform for all required processes based on QuarkXPress Server. Toni Kaufmann explains: "QuarkXPress Server's performance and stability are impressive. Since the development environments are based on industry standards such as Java, JSP, ASP/.NET, PHP, Visual Basic, and protocols such as HTTP and SOAP, it is possible to flexibly integrate QuarkXPress Server with existing IT environments. For this reason, our solution is not a rigid overall system, but rather built around freely configurable components. We assembled the solution with the modules that were required. If requirements change (e.g. load distribution), it is easy to achieve additional performance by simply docking additional rendering engines to the system."

Customised, Diverse, and Printed

According to Roger Wernli, this is just the beginning of a groundbreaking development. niiu had a sensational start as a modern and customised daily. "Based on our technology, the opportunities for distributing individualised information have become immense," explains the Prevision CEO. This does not only apply to newspapers or magazines, but also to almost every area that is involved in distributing information. In particular, companies that need to forward structured information to a special target group are now able to dramatically improve their information management, thanks to Prevision technologies. Whether it is travel agencies, financial companies, or decentralised organisations, each company will be able to forward to its employees all-important information that they need for their daily work. Unnecessary or distracting information is avoided, thus improving work efficiency.

"Prevision has been looking at the area of personalising and customising information for over 14 years. We view the niiu project as a strategic innovative project and a



niuu allows readers to select content from local papers, national titles such as the German Handelsblatt or the U.S. New York Times, as well as from 700 news sources on the Internet.

considerable challenge, which allows us to make use of all of our areas of competence," says Roger Wernli.

About Previa AG

As an authorised Quark system integrator, Previa AG is a leading provider of modern and integrated information management solutions, and offers services in the areas of consulting and development/integration. The company consists of a core team of more than 30 individuals, including advisors, project managers, software developers, designers, and service desk personnel. Previa specialises in the technological requirements of the media and communication industry, and can rely on more than fourteen years of industry expertise.

About Quark

Quark, Inc. (www.quark.com/en) is a leading provider of publishing software for professional designers, small and mid-sized businesses, and large organisations in more than 160 countries. Two decades ago, our flagship product — QuarkXPress® — changed the course of traditional publishing. For more than 25 years, Quark has built on its knowledge and experience in design and publishing to provide software solutions that support collaborative workflows and automated publishing across multiple channels. Today, Quark is revolutionising publishing again by setting new standards in XML-based publishing across print, the Web, and digital media, as well as by helping owners and employees of small and mid-sized businesses promote their products and services easily, professionally, and affordably. Denver-based Quark Inc. is privately held.

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