Euro Launch Needed
Special Web Attention

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The Euro currency changeover on January 1, 2002 directly affects the citizens of 13 countries speaking 11 official languages. In order to explain the conversion, the website www.euro.ecb.int was created. Creating it involved meeting some significant software challenges.

Imagine the challenge of conveying life-changing information to the citizens of thirteen countries (and ultimately the entire world). That's exactly what the European Central Bank (ECB) needed to do as part of the January 1, 2002 conversion to the new Euro currency. The ECB had to inform all individuals in the European Union (EU) about the appearance of the new currency, when the changeover was happening, what the new currency would be worth, and what to do with their old currency; at the stroke of Midnight on December 31st, 2001 all ATM machines and banks throughout the 13 countries would stop dispensing local currencies and dispense only Euros.

The Challenge

The ECB decided to create a website that would be a focal point of an aggressive and ongoing promotional program for the Euro currency. The site needed to engage young and old alike and address a wide range of concerns — some generic, and some specifically local. In addition to the member countries, the site had a potentially vast audience outside the EU including business partners, travelers, relatives living in countries outside the member countries, etc. The site would also be used to bring together the Partner Community supporting the launch with a robust designed specifically for their needs.

First and foremost, the ECB needed something that was easy for authors to use. It needed to be so simple, in fact, that non-technical authors in remote locations could be trained in less than half a day. Authors needed to be able to enter plain text and import Word and Excel files. The ECB also needed a system that supported HTML, XML, JavaScript, Flash, Java Applets, Visual Basic Images, and streaming audio and video.

It was critical that the product support multilingual data delivery, including languages like Greek and Finish published on the same pages as Latin-based character sets such as English, French and German.

Parallel workflows were critical to allow for proper translations and check points before publishing. This would help ensure that the final data — regardless of language — was correct. "It's essential that all translations are both accurate and consistent," explained Patrice Liauzu, press officer for the ECB. "As the European institution with the clear responsibility for the changeover to the Euro, we cannot be seen as disseminating incorrect information. For this reason, our translators check every new piece of information carefully before it is live."

The ability to use information for other media such as wireless and print, and support a contributor population across five countries, were also key factors for the site. With so many countries and people involved, the ECB anticipated that numerous design changes and customizations would be required for specific regions.

And the solution had to be able to handle ever-building traffic loads with extreme peaks as publicity began to build about the currency changeover and about the website.

After sending out a list of requirements and narrowing down the contenders, Communiqué by Day, a leading provider of Enterprise Content Management Solutions, was chosen to meet the robust specifications.

The Software

Day's Communiqué is designed for global companies. It is built around an open, scalable platform that can manage all Website initiatives. It is the only product that manages all three functional levels: business systems integration, content authoring/workflow, and content presentation.

The software was created to manage content both globally and regionally, with central management of style and design. This level of control and resulting global site consistency is unparalleled in any other content management system. These features are what differentiate simple content organization from true content management.

The ContentBus enables it to index complete Web pages, individual pieces of content, and also entire content repositories for superior efficiency and flexibility. This capability is the key to true digital asset management.

Communiqu's browser-based multilingual authoring environment is completely integrated with the product, fundamentally enforcing design, layout and styles on all Web pages and all data presentation. The result is consistent global branding and reliable corporate identity protection.

Functional Templates

Highly functional templates were developed based strictly on the ECB's design standards and the system was commissioned running on Solaris and Windows NT. Communiqu's graphics rendering engine was used extensively to allow the storage of approved graphics that are then published with different looks based on template specifications. Pictures can be colorized, cropped, rotated, embossed, etc. and published with no alterations to the original art — it all happens in the template.

Workflows were incorporated to allow all content to be reviewed appropriately before final publishing. Security was built into the site and link checking — both external and internal was implemented to enable validation of all links prior to publishing.

Some portions of the information were localized for specific regions, but otherwise the ECB uses the same data for all sites. In addition, the ECB created an extranet for participating organizations to share information and to have access to promotional literature, special materials and programs.

Non-technical authors from member organizations and different business areas within the ECB use a simple browser-based interface to regularly update the site adding artwork, news and documents. In addition to general information, the site provides educational information, including a section of downloadable games for children.

Globalization's requirements for successful business strategies are becoming a focal point — and none too soon. Analysts agree that the international presence on the Web is growing rapidly with Giga Information Group recently predicting that by 2005 more than half of the Internet's users will be non-English speakers. The challenges that the ECB faced are similar to those that all

businesses face as they address international requirements and Day's Communiqué is designed to meet those global needs. Day and Communiqué are registered trademarks of Day Management AG.

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CURRENT ISSUE | INDEX | CALENDAR of EVENTS | MEDIA KIT | MARKETPLACE | SUBSCRIBE to U.S. TECH