

# MAKING THE NEWS

Dell helps a media company maintain its competitiveness in the evolving news business, reducing the time needed to publish breaking stories by 50 percent



Media General, founded in 1969 as a publicly traded company, originated 150 years ago as a local newspaper business. Today it is a large regional communications company with over four dozen TV stations and newspapers plus an extensive online service. In the past, the company operated separate news organizations for print and broadcast delivery. But the Internet has changed all of that: customers now want fast access to news in the form they most prefer. Media General needed to react quickly to this changing consumer environment or risk its market position. The opportunity to extend its leadership in the news industry is driving the company to make organizational changes as well as adopt new technologies.

## SOLUTIONS

- CONSOLIDATION
- MOBILITY

# Media General

## CUSTOMER PROFILE

**COUNTRY:** United States

**INDUSTRY:** Communications

**FOUNDED:** 1969

**NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES:** 6,600

**WEB ADDRESS:** [www.mediageneral.com](http://www.mediageneral.com)

## CHALLENGE

Media General's reporters and photographers needed a way to send stories immediately to the newsroom. The company wanted to improve its ability to compete with cable TV and Internet-only news sources.

## SOLUTION

Dell Precision™ mobile workstations with built-in mobile broadband enable the field news staff to quickly post news stories, including photography and video—all without having to take the time to go into the office.

## BENEFITS

- Dell Precision mobile workstations can eliminate the need to travel to the office to file stories, so field reporters and photographers can now deliver news content in half the time previously required
- Dell Precision mobile workstations help reduce travel costs for the news staff by 10 percent
- Consolidating news applications onto Dell™ PowerEdge™ servers helps cut IT support costs by 25 percent

The Dell logo, consisting of the word "DELL" in a stylized, bold font, is centered within a circular graphic that has a dark background and a light-colored border.



## HOW IT WORKS

### HARDWARE

- Dell Precision™ M4300 and Dell Precision M6300 mobile workstations with Intel® Core™ 2 Duo processors
- Dell™ PowerEdge™ 2950 servers with dual-core Intel Xeon® processors
- Dell Wireless 5720 built-in mobile broadband (EVDO Rev A) mini-card (M4300 customers have the option of using other broadband cards that are compatible with AT&T, Sprint, Verizon Wireless, and other networks)
- Cisco virtual private network concentrators

### SOFTWARE

- Microsoft® Windows® XP Professional x64 Edition OS

### SERVICES

- Dell Platinum Plus Enterprise Support
- Verizon Wireless BroadbandAccess service

## “WITH THE DELL PRECISION MOBILE WORKSTATIONS IN THE HANDS OF OUR NEWS STAFF, WE CAN HAVE A BREAKING STORY ON TV OR ONLINE PRACTICALLY IN REAL TIME.”

**Mark Holt**, IT services manager, Media General

The company took its first step in this direction four years ago by consolidating news production into a centralized digital operation. Media General TV stations, newspapers, and online publishing operations in 50 locations throughout the southeast United States now share production resources and an award-winning news repository. To feed that central news source with the up-to-the-minute content expected by today's media consumers, field reporters and photographers submit their stories directly into the publishing system.

### IN-FIELD DIGITAL KITS EMPOWER NEWS STAFFS

In 2007, the Media General IT department decided to deploy new digital “field kits”—including a mobile workstation, a digital camera, and wireless communications—to connect the field staff to the central news applications. “Our photographers and reporters used to spend much of their time inputting stories at their desks,” says Mark Holt, Media General IT services manager. “But to

compete in the Internet era, they need to stay in the field pursuing leads and covering events as they unfold. The idea behind the field kits is to enable them to send content back to our newsroom and news Web sites immediately, so consumers can count on our varied news media and Web sites to deliver the most current news.”

### DELL HELPS DEFINE THE DIGITAL FIELD KIT

The Media General IT group had previously standardized on Dell servers and PCs, so when the field kit project came up, there was no question they would turn to Dell for help. “We’ve been very happy with the performance and reliability of Dell products. The company has also provided great service and advice,” says Holt. “When we’re considering new technology, we look to Dell first.”

Dell consultants began by helping the IT staff assess its requirements. The kits needed to provide continuous two-way communications, and the

mobile workstations had to be powerful enough to run demanding news and graphics applications. “Reporters do much more with their computers than just write the story on them,” Holt explains. “They use them to research topics in online databases. Then they submit their story for editing, receive comments back, and make final changes.” Photographers make even greater demands—editing digital photos and videos using powerful graphics applications. “Our photographers even edit their videos before uploading to our online sites,” Holt says.

To make the news collection process as efficient as possible, everything about the mobile workstation needed to be high performance, from the CPU and memory to the graphics card. “Frankly, we were worried about whether we could get all that processing power and graphics capability in a lightweight, portable package,” Holt says.

# **“BY CONSOLIDATING OUR PRODUCTION IT ENVIRONMENT ONTO DELL SERVERS AT ONE LOCATION, WE’VE LOWERED IT OPERATING COSTS BY AN ESTIMATED US\$250,000 PER YEAR—A 25 PERCENT REDUCTION.”**

**Mark Holt**, IT services manager, Media General

## **DELL MOBILE WORKSTATIONS PUT ROBUST CAPABILITIES AT EMPLOYEES’ FINGERTIPS**

The Dell consultants recommended the Dell Precision M4300 mobile workstation for the demanding news collection process. This high-performance PC combines the power of a workstation with the mobility of a notebook computer. With a dual-core Intel® Core™2 Duo processor running Microsoft® Windows® XP Professional x64 Edition software, the Dell Precision M4300 mobile workstation is designed to provide performance and reliability for high-end and graphics-intensive applications. Starting at less than six pounds, it is also light enough for reporters to easily carry with them wherever they need to go to capture a story.

“The Dell mobile workstations are business versions of the cutting-edge Dell XPS™ gaming notebook,” Holt says. “They’re head and shoulders above typical notebook computers, and that’s exactly what we needed. Dell offers many options, so we could customize our field kits for several purposes. We selected the M4300 mobile workstation with a 15-inch screen for reporters and the M6300 with a 17-inch screen for photographers.”

## **FACTORY-INSTALLED MOBILE BROADBAND CARDS PROVIDE REPORTERS WITH ACCESS ALMOST ANYWHERE**

Dell engineers worked with Verizon Wireless, Media General’s communications provider, to deliver the anytime, anywhere connectivity required by news staffs. “Once reporters write their stories, it is crucial that they file them as quickly as possible. But reporters can’t always count on being near a Wi-Fi hotspot,” Holt says. “So we chose to provide broadband wireless access for the field. Dell installs built-in EVDO Rev A cards into the workstations at the factory so we have everything we need right out of the box. That minimizes the work we need to do. With broadband technology and secure virtual private network access, Dell mobile workstations form the foundation of true ‘field kits’ that help our field teams work as productively as possible.”

## **DELL MOBILE WORKSTATIONS HELP REDUCE THE TIME REQUIRED TO PUBLISH NEW STORIES BY HALF**

About 300 EVDO-equipped notebooks—a mix of Dell Latitude™ and Dell Precision mobile workstations—are now in use at Media General, and they have already helped the company transform to compete in the Internet age. The time required to publish some news items has dropped from days or hours to just minutes. “In the past, when we dispatched a photographer to a breaking news story even just 30 minutes away, the round trip driving from the office and then uploading the images could take two or three hours—all before the editor could see the photo or video,” Holt explains. “Now our editors can see the images in less than 45 minutes. With the Dell Precision mobile workstations in the hands of our news staff, we can have a breaking story on TV or online practically in real time. That enables us to compete with cable and Internet-only news sources, and even beat some of our competitors in traditional media.”

## **TRAVEL COSTS FOR NEWS STAFF DROP BY AN ESTIMATED 10 PERCENT**

The Dell Precision mobile workstations help reporters respond more quickly to developing stories, allowing them to be more productive and reducing travel costs. Holt estimates that reporters and photographers are traveling up to 10 percent less than they were before the kits were introduced, cutting travel costs by an estimated 10 percent. “Ours has always been a very mobile business, so travel costs are a necessary evil,” says Holt. “Now the field personnel no longer need to come back into the office after every story to file their reports or submit photos. In fact, they can leave from home in the morning and go directly to their first field assignment. They can then travel directly to their next assignment without returning to the office. It not only saves reporters’ time; it also helps them respond more quickly to developing events.”

## **HIGHER-IMPACT STORIES HELP INCREASE READERSHIP AND ATTRACT ADVERTISERS**

The Dell mobile workstations enable reporters to write more thorough and compelling stories, accompanied by more photos and video—all of which helps attract and retain readers. “Using the Dell mobile workstations with mobile broadband, our reporters and photographers now form a team that can cover big stories from multiple perspectives and with more images,” says Holt. “The increased impact of these stories gives our audiences a stronger sense of being on location, which has drawn people to our broadcasts and online sites.”

Increased readership also drives improved ad sales, which is the primary source of revenue for Media General. “Larger, more engaged audiences make our products more attractive to advertisers,” says Holt. “Our online division is reporting 25 percent growth in page views and ad dollars since this initiative began. Combined with other online advertising partnerships, we are seeing regional online-classified ads grow by 40 percent or more on a quarterly basis.”

The ad sales teams are beginning to use the Dell mobile workstations with built-in mobile broadband to boost ad revenue. “Providing instant access to rate quotes, schedules, and proofs right from a customer’s office should help increase ad revenue and customer satisfaction,” Holt says. “The kind of growth we are seeing in online advertising can’t be managed through brick-and-mortar offices alone. We have to use mobile workforce technology like Dell mobile workstations to keep up with our fast-moving customers and their increasingly savvy use of the Internet.”

## **DELL POWEREDGE SERVERS HELP CUT IT OPERATING COSTS BY 25 PERCENT**

The field is not the only place where Dell products are helping to boost the competitiveness of the news organization. Back-end Dell servers, including Dell PowerEdge 2950 servers with dual-core Intel Xeon® processors, host the centralized production

applications at the company's Richmond, Virginia, data center. "By consolidating our production IT environment onto Dell servers at one location, we've lowered IT operating costs by an estimated US\$250,000 per year—a 25 percent reduction," Holt says. "Savings have been realized across the board, from redeployment of labor and reductions in equipment to lower maintenance, energy, and real estate costs. Our users also benefit because we now provide higher availability from that central site. And while Dell equipment is very reliable, we have a Dell Platinum service contract to keep service costs low."

The Media General IT team opted to include Dell Platinum four-hour hardware response on each server, in part to lessen the number of redundant systems needed. "We also get unprecedented access to Dell's best technical help," Holt says. "But the most effective benefit comes from our Dell Platinum account manager, who tracks and escalates all our calls internally so we don't have to. By freeing our administrators to manage their systems instead of their repair orders, we have less overall downtime and higher productivity."

The IT team likes the configuration flexibility of Dell products. "While other vendors want to sell us what they have in stock, Dell builds our servers and PCs the way we want, even if we're only ordering a small quantity. That flexibility means we get the most from our server investment—we do not have to overbuy simply because we have demanding applications." Holt also appreciates Dell's ability to respond rapidly to the IT team's needs. "In the past year we had to move quickly to integrate several newly acquired TV stations into our company network," he says. "We were able to get all our customized Dell server systems racked, delivered,

and installed in less than two weeks. This is something no other vendor we deal with has been able to do for us."

### **DELL PLATFORMS CONTRIBUTE TO TRANSFORMING THE COMPANY'S NEWS OPERATION**

Holt credits the success of Dell Precision mobile workstations with helping transform Media General into a highly effective media company. "We're putting advanced Dell mobile technology and the right applications in the hands of our employees no matter where they are," says Holt. "Employees have responded by using that technology in innovative ways to exceed our expectations and those of our customers."

With Dell servers and mobile workstations in place, Media General employees are working faster and better. "Dell helped us simplify and mobilize our IT infrastructure so that we could revolutionize the news collection process at our company," says Holt. "Dell's custom factory integration people configure our systems the way we want them during the initial build, so we don't have to go through extra steps. Thanks to them, we were able to get our new process up and running quickly, helping us to maintain and enhance our competitive edge."

**For more information on this case study or to read additional case studies, go to [DELL.COM/CaseStudies](http://DELL.COM/CaseStudies).**

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