

BACKGROUND A leading business and financial news TV group approached Benchmark for the setting up of their new channel in Malaysia. Benchmark had been the systems integrator responsible for setting up two of the

Group's channels in the Asia region and as such, the Group selected Benchmark for this, their third channel.

OBJECTIVE To set up a 24/7 HD Business and Financial News channel incorporated with state-of-the-art broadcast technology that embraced a complex data and media inflow and ingest; a sophisticated and robust storage and retrieval system; a versatile graphics solution; and a playout system capable of handling multiple input streams for a single output channel.

distinct streams of ingest and media / data handling, processing and usage. Storage could, however, be common with media clips benefiting from the enhanced metadata capabilities and retrieval required for the financial data.

Apart from the usual media inputs and ENG feeds, the channel had to be capable of receiving diverse live data streams – from various bourses such as stock markets, commodities markets, bullion markets, etc., and outputting these in live streams for ticker tapes as well as feeding them to the edit/graphic studios for visual embellishments and treatments. All this, while storing these data streams with complex metadata tags to enable easy and prompt retrieval from loosely phrased search strings for later date historical usage.

Additionally, the Channel was to have a full-fledged studio, with a three-camera set up; a six-camera ENG setup – with smartphone integration; a dedicated graphics studio and two different OS-based editing suites; a newsroom; and the necessary ticker-tape, channel-branding, etc., systems. Additionally, the facility was to be fully redundant to ensure 24/7 fail-safe operation.

In effect, compared to a regular news channel, this required two

Finally, the system design and implementation had to ensure that all the above were seamlessly integrated for smooth, uninterrupted operation while being completely automated. Moreover, it had to be capable of being seamlessly – and uninterruptedly – expanded and upgraded as requirements or technology developments necessitated.

EXECUTION While large areas of the Channel's operation are on similar lines to a regular 24/7 news operation, there are areas of significant difference. These mainly lie in the area of its character of being a business and

financial news channel as against a regular news channel. As mentioned earlier, this entailed the handling of large streams of continuous data inflow, its processing, storage and outputting.

EXECUTION ... cont'd

To this end, in addition to its own integration capabilities, Benchmark worked closely with the providers of the MAM server and storage systems. Not just on the studio and automation aspects but, focussing particularly, on the decoding, interpreting, analysing, processing and manipulation of data from the financial system interface which has its own, unique, structure on the lines of SAPI/BPIPE.

To start with, the metadata fields were increased and the system was configured to handle looser search strings, or phrases. Apart from assisting recovery of financial data records, at future dates for historical usage, the broader and more flexible cataloguing enabled newsroom users to more easily find other relevant stored information, such as media clips. To this end, Benchmark also worked on re-configuring the newsroom clients to take advantage of this enhanced data storage and recovery.

Consequently, all the other video and audio media assets now received extensive metadata fields providing any user in the station, such as

editors, librarians, archivists, news journalists, etc., to generate detailed metadata tags. Stored on the centralized MAM and integrated with the newsroom system, this now enables journalists to search for an asset – not just by name but by any of the multiple descriptions fed in as well.

Next, Benchmark established a seamless workflow of ingested data to the graphics studio and on to the playout. The data inflow comprises real-time market data updates, reference data, and intraday summary data – delivered in active-backup and active-active configurations via point-to-point TCP/IP stream connectivity. Accordingly, the distribution network was fully meshed to the channel and received data was stored on a database server. For historical purposes and usage, the system has the capability to store and retrieve this data for an indeterminate period dependent on storage allocation for the DB.

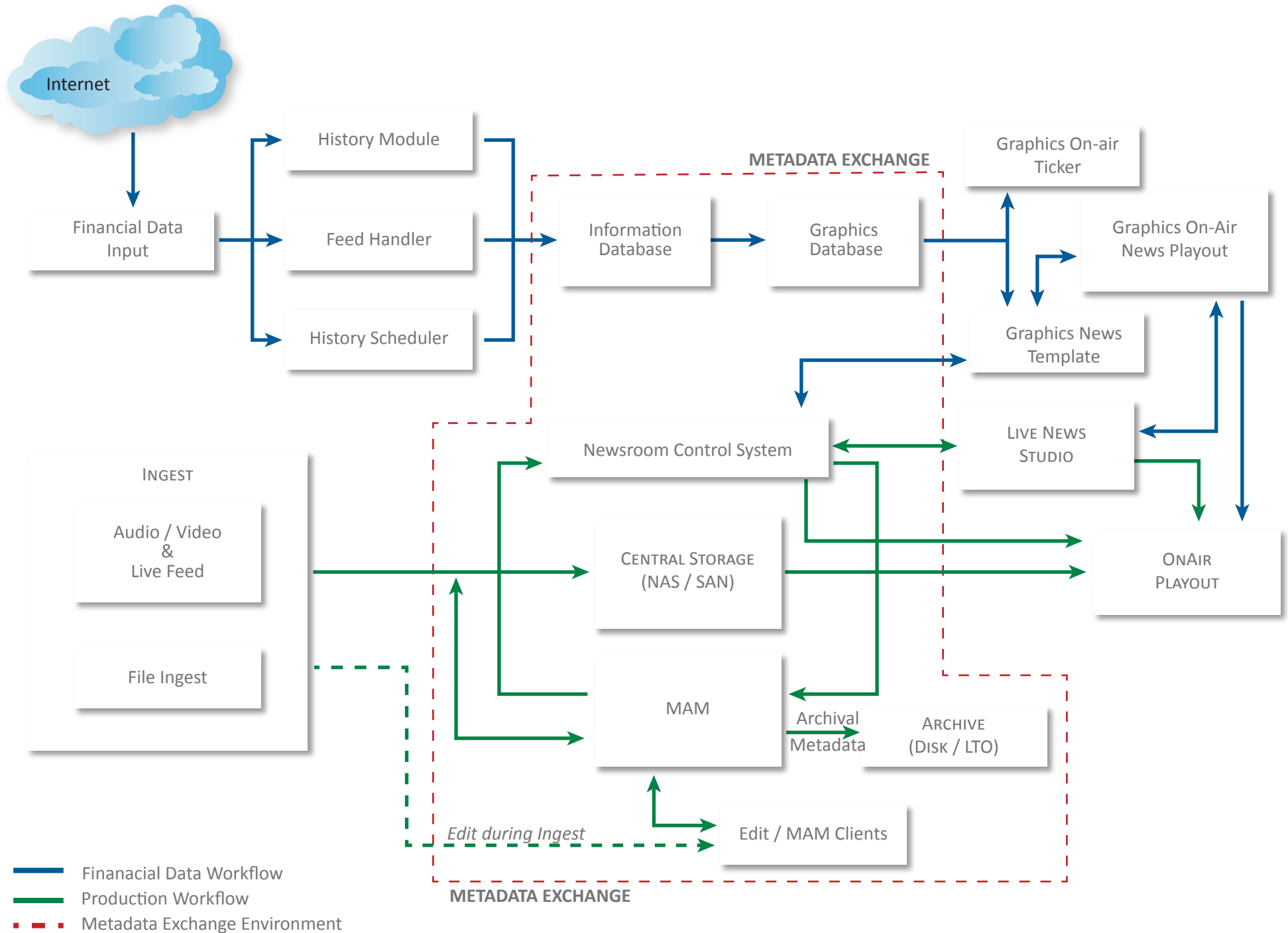
SUMMARY

This was a unique challenge for Benchmark Broadcast Systems – for two basic reasons. First, apart from the normal inflow/ingest of media clips and streaming news feeds of a regular news channel, Benchmark had to contend with vast volumes of streaming data that needed to be not just played out directly on-air in live or recycled time, but stored, catalogued and made available for subsequent retrieval and re-purpos-

ing. Secondly, this streaming data had to be made available to newscasters – via the graphics studio for visual enhancement – while it was in real-time.

The end result is a workflow that provides a data-centric approach – one that is quite different from that of a regular news channel.

Data-centric Business News Channel Workflow



ABOUT BENCHMARK

Benchmark Broadcast Systems, is a consultant and technology partner for media and broadcast companies in Asia. Headquartered in Singapore, the Company has offices in Bangkok, Chennai, Delhi, Dhaka, Kuala Lumpur and Manila. Its on-site engineering, software programming, software & systems integration, testing and support services are highly specialised. It operates in network mode with senior managers functioning out of Singapore, Chennai, Delhi and Manila.

Benchmark focuses on providing complete solutions for broadcast and post production applications. The spectrum starts from simple mod-

ules to complete turnkey systems integration services for setting up a totally new TV station or upgrading/modernising existing ones. The Company also provides a complete range of services from pre-sale consultancy, through to systems design and integration, installation, user training, support and even to managed services. Benchmark Broadcast's capabilities extend to configuration of comprehensive enterprise-wide solutions, application support, systems installation and customer training and, importantly, to development of customised solutions.

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When you absolutely, positively have to be on-air 24/7

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