

CUSTOMER CASE STUDY

Time Out Revolutionizes its Content Architecture With Xyleme's Multi-Channel Publishing Solution

The Client

Since its founding over 34 years ago, Time Out has expanded to become the world's first truly international information and listings service. Time Out's worldwide entertainment guides are known for their distinctive style, covering the cutting edge of entertainment on topics ranging from Eating & Drinking to Shopping; from Pubs & Bars to Fitness; and from movie critiques to fashion advice.

The Time Out Brand has been recognized as a significant and reliable information resource since 1968. The company's core businesses are located in London, New York and Paris, where Time Out weekly publications and local guides are recognized as the leading source of information for English-speaking residents and visitors.

The Challenge

Time Out as a London weekly magazine has been publishing since 1968. The consistent growth of the company over this period of time has resulted in the creation of more than 80 different titles, with several different structures and formats.

Due to the high value of their content, the company gets numerous requests to share data, both internally between publications and to repurpose for third party syndication. Since the majority of Time Out's content has been locked into proprietary file formats, extracting content in a flexible, yet structured way proved to be a difficult, time-consuming process; more often than not, resulting in cumbersome, one-off solutions.

In addition, the nature and focus of Time Out's content requires that the same listings information be attached to multiple journalistic reviews and used differently across various publications. This had presented ongoing issues due to the duplicate entry of

this listings metadata, required by their existing architecture, each time a new review is created or updated. The difficult process of managing numerous versions of thousands of listings threatened to compromise the integrity of the content.

Time Out had been looking at pure relational database solutions for many years to solve these issues. However, each time the company embarked on any major project, it would be scrapped due to excessive development costs and the inflexibility of the database environment. Simon Chappell, group IT director at Time Out explains: "We would try to put any one product into a traditional relational database. The problem was that the entire database would have to be structured around this one product despite the fact that Time Out has over 80 content products, all structured differently. The real nightmare began when we wanted to redesign listings information, make a change to it, or export information differently to other systems. There were huge amounts of development work involved to make these changes."

The Solution: Multi-Channel Publishing

Time Out had been considering XML for years to help resolve these issues, but weren't able to find a practical way to make it work until they found Xyleme. According to Chappell, "XML provided the perfect way to deconstruct Time Out's content and identify the different data entities, but what was missing was a tool to exploit that further. Xyleme completed that loop; it offered a system that could take multi-structured XML, allow you to build interfaces into it, enable lightning-fast, yet highly granular full text and structured search capabilities, and manipulate and repurpose those results to meet specific needs."



"Xyleme understood what our content represented and the complexity of our issues. More importantly, they were able to demonstrate how we could exploit it further and make it dance."

**Simon Chappell,
Group IT Director, Time Out**

With Xyleme Server, Time Out had a central, searchable repository of channel-independent London Eating and Drinking content in only 3 ½ months. Xyleme's completely schema-independent environment allowed Time Out to apply multiple structures to their content to reflect the diversity of their publications, without requiring any development work or additional technical administration. This also allowed them to adapt on the fly to frequent changes made by the editorial department.

In addition, because Xyleme can break content down to its most granular element, listing information could be input once and shared across multiple reviews and publications, thus eliminating duplicate data entry and ensuring the integrity of Time Out's content.

Xyleme Server provides Time Out with a powerful tool for precision querying their semi-structured information. By taking advantage of the implicit structures of Time Out's content, the Xyleme Server combines highly structured querying with the benefits of today's free-text search, allowing for customized searches that produce exact results. Information requests that used to take hours of manual searching are now completed in a matter of minutes, significantly impacting the productivity of Time Out's journalists, production, and editorial teams who rely on this information. Xyleme Server integrated seamlessly with Time Out's current architecture. Adopting Xyleme did not disrupt or require any changes to the Time Out editorial processes. Journalists can continue to use their chosen suite of best of breed editorial tools to create new content, exactly as they did before.

The Results

Xyleme Server has transformed Time Out's content infrastructure, allowing them to meet and exceed their objectives. According to Steve Proctor, group production director at Time Out: "Xyleme has added

another dimension to our thinking on what we can do with our data. It has helped us realize the true value of our content and has empowered us to fully exploit our own content."

For example, prior to adopting Xyleme, it could take up to five days for Time Out to extract content, prepare it for syndication and deliver it to partners. With Xyleme, relevant documented elements can be extracted on the fly and automatically distributed to partners in whatever format or standard they desire. And because Xyleme can break content down to its most granular level, Time Out can easily customize the information sent to partners, thus increasing its value.

Time Out will also use Xyleme to drive the creation of new products from their vast array of content. In the past, compiling information for a magazine supplement took upwards of a week of editorial research and required careful checking to ensure accuracy. With Xyleme, this process only takes a couple of hours and the retrieval of current information can be managed easily. Even better, the supplement can be distributed through any channel; not just a print magazine. Xyleme allows Time Out to bring customized products and services to customers in a much faster time-to-market and extend their market leadership.

One of the biggest areas of cost savings for Time Out has been in terms of development. According to Chappell: "With Xyleme, all of the issues we'd encountered with conventional database solutions were no longer a problem, this gave us the flexibility to do pretty much anything we wanted to do with our data. To date, our development costs have decreased four-fold by building our solution on Xyleme Server."

As Time Out looks towards the future, they see Xyleme's technology helping them grow beyond a print-centric culture, driven by print deadlines, to one that is content centric, in which they can still meet all of the demands of the press industry, but where content is dynamic and on demand. Continues Chappell: "Xyleme understood what our content represented and the complexity of our issues. More importantly, they were able to demonstrate how we could exploit it further and make it dance. The technology reveals, in all its glory, the true richness and depth of our content without compromising the work processes and efforts of our editorial staff."

For more information
about Xyleme, visit
www.xyleme.com