

BUYER CASE STUDY

Managing the Flow: Vodacom Leverages Vignette to Provision Content for the Advanced Mobile Market

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IDC OPINION

The market for mobile content has arrived. With the explosion of high-speed 2.5G and 3G networks and the wide-scale deployment of smart mobile devices, telecommunications and information service providers need to be able to "fill their pipes." Service providers must be able to provision mobile content — and make it available for sale and delivery to subscribers. IDC believes that service providers should build upon the capabilities of a comprehensive content infrastructure. Service providers need to create and capture content once, manage it in a systematic fashion, deploy it as needed to Web sites, and provision it upon demand to mobile subscribers. Findings based on IDC's look at how Vodacom South Africa approached the task of provisioning content to the 3G mobile market are summarized below:

- ☒ The experiences of Vodacom, a major telecommunications and information services operator, illustrate the business benefits of a comprehensive content infrastructure based on a decoupled architecture. Specifically, Vodacom has implemented separate systems (and platforms) for the various phases of the content life cycle.
- ☒ Vignette provides the content management environment — the ability to capture, organize, and store content — while separate rendering and provisioning platforms deliver content to Web sites and 3G subscribers.
- ☒ Most important, mobile content — such as games, ringtones, wallpapers, and sports scores — is just an additional content type. With this extensible content infrastructure in place, provisioning content for the advanced mobile market is simply a matter of adding content tags to the Vignette content management platform.

IN THIS BUYER CASE STUDY

This IDC Buyer Case Study examines how Vodacom, a major operator in South Africa's fast-growing market for mobile telecommunications and information services, has adopted a decoupled architecture for provisioning content to the advanced mobile market. Vodacom leverages the capabilities of a content infrastructure and relies on Vignette's content management system to capture, tag, store, and distribute content to multiple touch points. Vodacom's content infrastructure enables it to manage many different content types in a systematic manner, utilizing predefined XML tag sets. Vodacom can easily provision this content to its subscribers — whether via Web sites

or via download and delivery to smart mobile devices — in a flexible and cost-effective manner.

SITUATION OVERVIEW

Organization Overview

Building the Mobile Marketplace in South Africa

Vodacom South Africa, a joint venture between Vodafone Group Plc and Telkom SA Ltd., is one of the major operators in South Africa's fast-growing market for mobile telecommunications and information services. Founded in 1993, Vodacom connects 25 million subscribers — a 57% share of the South African mobile market — through its extensive GSM network.

Vodafone, the world's largest mobile phone operator by sales and a 50% owner in the venture, contributes industry-leading technologies, applications, and solutions. Telkom SA, the incumbent fixed-line carrier, owns the other 50% and provides the marketing, sales, and distribution channels across the country, as well as network connections to 6,400 mobile base stations.

Making the Advanced Network a Commercial Success

Consistently a technology leader in South Africa, Vodacom launched its advanced (2.5G and 3G) network in December 2004, offering initial capabilities for the delivery of interactive content to smart mobile devices. In March 2006, the company upgraded its network, moving to 3G High-Speed Downlink Packet Access (HSDPA). Vodacom can now deliver downlink speeds of up to 3.8Mbps and provide each of its customers with 30GB of data per month.

Building out its network was only the first step toward commercial success. Vodacom also needed to be able to provision mobile content, tuned to the tastes of its South African subscribers, and manage and distribute that content over its advanced network. Fortunately, Vodacom has been able to leverage its investments in its overall content infrastructure.

Challenges and Solution

Inconsistent Content Across Multiple Customer Touch Points

Vodacom first realized that it had a content management problem when it could no longer keep up with the pace of change in the mobile phone market. Early in the new millennium, the company began to use the Web for customer communications — publishing information about mobile rate plans, device features, and coverage areas. Initially, Vodacom's Web site (www.vodacom.co.za) just supplemented the company's existing marketing efforts. But as use of its Web site took off, issues quickly cropped up. The information that customers obtained over the Web was sometimes different from what they received when contacting the call center. Customers noticed (and complained) when the same services were described or priced differently across different touch points.

Vodacom had an operational problem: There was no single source of authoritative content across its multiple customer touch points. When the company wanted to respond to changing market conditions and launch new initiatives (such as an innovative bundled offering), it had to coordinate the updates between its Web sites and call centers. This was a time-consuming and costly process.

Getting Started with Content Management

In 2003, Vodacom proceeded to investigate its alternatives and develop a strategy for communicating with customers. Vodafone had faced a similar set of challenges some years earlier and was able to offer good technical advice.

"We engaged with our partners to create an overall solution, based on best-of-breed products," observed Yunus Scheepers, Web channel manager at Vodacom. "We needed to ensure that business people could quickly update Web content on their own, through an easy-to-use interface. We also needed a 'decoupled architecture' whereby the Web sites could continue to function even when the content management system is offline."

Vignette and a Decoupled Architecture

Vodacom adopted the decoupled architecture that Vodafone had initially developed. This included a content management system, a relational database, and a Web application server for producing content for multiple Web sites. Based on Vodafone's recommendation and prior experience, Vodacom selected Vignette as the content management system for managing unstructured content (such as product descriptions, product photos, and other kinds of marketing collateral). Vodacom then integrated Vignette with IBM DB2 as the relational database for managing structured information (such as product names and pricing) and IBM WebSphere Application Server as the application server for deploying content to Web sites.

Vodacom relied on Vignette to manage all of the content. Vignette also managed the content categories that mapped the snippets of text, photos, video clips, and other items to the page display templates that were used to publish content on the Web sites.

Moreover, content management was decoupled from content rendering. The Web sites would continue to function even if the rest of the content infrastructure needed to be taken offline.

Provisioning Content for the Mobile Web

This decoupled architecture provided another benefit: It gave Vodacom the infrastructure it needed to deliver content to 3G mobile devices. Vodacom was able to leverage and extend its investment in Vignette to provision content for "Vodafone live!" (www.vodafonelive.co.za), Vodacom's 3G network and information service.

With assistance from Vodafone and a global systems integrator, Vodacom deployed an advanced download platform; mobile subscribers link to this platform to browse, purchase, and download compelling content, including ringtones, music, welcome-tones, games, wall papers, news reports, and sports scores. Vodacom also needed to

put in place the business processes and content technologies necessary to provision these assets and make them available for download. Vignette fulfilled this role.

Vignette made it easy to store and manage all types of content — including mobile content — and deploy it at predetermined intervals to the download platform. All that was needed was a simple (yet consistent) method for identifying content types and tagging the mobile content.

Vodacom decided to use Partner Markup Language (PML), an XML-based tag set initially developed by Vodafone, to tag mobile content by content type. Vodacom worked with its systems integrator to develop a set of forms for tagging and managing the content. Nontechnical staffers could then use Vignette to select the correct content types from a pull-down list. Staffers could quickly capture and store new content. For example, ringtones and games are different content types, with their own names and additional descriptors. Vignette can capture the XML tags for these different content types. The deployment platform then accesses the content (together with the associated XML tags) stored within Vignette and creates deployable content that is ready to be transmitted to smart mobile devices.

Results

For Vodacom, the end result is a scalable environment that supports its rapidly growing business for advanced information services. The decoupled architecture, together with Vignette as the underlying content management system, provides an extensible infrastructure, and ensures that Vodacom can rapidly adapt to new business opportunities. Vodacom has been able to use a unified content infrastructure to publish dynamic content on its multiple Web sites and provision content for download to smart mobile device subscribers.

This content infrastructure gives Vodacom greater business agility. For example, following a short, five-month development project, Vodacom was able to make the transition from publishing static Web pages to producing dynamic Web content. Vodacom is able to focus on the customer's experience and provide an intuitive, easy-to-navigate user interface. A staff of 10 marketers updates content on Vodacom's multiple Web sites with little assistance from the IT staff.

Similarly, provisioning mobile content and making it available through the download platform to smart mobile device subscribers was a two- to three-month initiative. Now, Vodacom relies on two to three staffers to capture, upload, and store all of the content for Vodafone live! Vignette ensures that the items remain well managed and organized. That's key to Vodacom's success as its digital content grows. For example, what started initially as a collection of 360 game binaries available for download (defined by game title and device) has mushroomed into a game library of more than 9,000 items.

Finally, in the near future (toward the end of 2007), Vodacom expects to provide capabilities for game publishers and other mobile content providers to upload content on their own, without the involvement of Vodacom staffers. Vodacom plans to deploy a self-service environment for content publishers. Remote publishers will have Web connections to Vignette, linking in over the public Internet. Publishers will be able to

select the appropriate tags and categories for their content, fill in the forms on their own, and then add their items to the Vignette content management system. Vodacom expects this publisher self-service environment to further reduce the costs of managing and provisioning mobile content.

ESSENTIAL GUIDANCE

The investment in a content infrastructure pays off handsomely, over time. This case study illustrates how Vodacom approached its content management issues from a comprehensive, holistic perspective. Rather than seeking a quick fix and implementing a point solution for Web content management, Vodacom planned for the future.

Specifically, Vodacom did the following:

- ☒ Focused first on its business requirements
- ☒ Identified an overall information strategy for a decoupled architecture
- ☒ Prepared for long-term growth in the mobile communications and information services market

Thus, Vodacom adopted a modular approach. It decoupled content management from content deployment to Web sites, and content provisioning to mobile device subscribers. It relied on Vignette to capture, organize, and distribute content both over the Web and to mobile subscribers. Moreover, Vodacom exploited Vignette's capabilities to tag and manage different content types through predefined tag sets. Vignette has enabled Vodacom to manage its mobile content simply by adding new XML-based tag sets (PML) to its content infrastructure, and leverage its content investments to roll out a platform that supports its new business initiatives.

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- ☒ *Worldwide Content Management Software 2006 Vendor Shares: Shakeout at the Top Sets the Stage for Market Evolution* (IDC #207518, July 2007)
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- ☒ *Worldwide Digital Asset Management Software 2007–2011 Forecast: Rich Media Drives Growth* (IDC #207068, May 2007)
- ☒ *Salesforce.com Expands Its Footprint Yet Again: Content for Everyone!* (IDC #206448, April 2007)
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- ☒ *Worldwide Content Management Software 2006–2010 Forecast: Continued Steady Growth* (IDC #201781, May 2006)
- ☒ *The Future for Content Applications: A Survey of Market Readiness and Technology Trends* (IDC #34831, February 2006)

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