



National Geographic Channel – Power Websites – Case Study



National Geographic Channel – Synchronized Web Presence for UK, Asia, India, Hong Kong, Singapore and NGC Global Resource Center

With a viewership of more than 100 million across 133 countries, National Geographic Channel (NGC) broadcasts span across the globe, in varied time zones. Acknowledging the power of the Internet, NGC discerned the need for its online presence. The aim was to display program schedules online and allow viewers to experience NGC explorations on the Web. The NGC Web site had to be customized across different time zones and countries. To manage operations on such a large scale, NGC partnered with solution providers in various countries and for India, they chose Icreon. The NGC India Web site was launched in 2000. Providing high-quality services on consistent basis, Icreon gained appreciation from the NGC team and subsequently, the responsibility to design, develop, and maintain six NGC Web sites! An enduring relationship with NGC is the result of Icreon's continuous and successful efforts to manage NGC operations, ranging from beta testing and Web site server maintenance to front-end designing and content management.

Customer Profile

In September 1997, the world's first National Geographic Channel was launched in Europe and Australia. Continuing its expansion strategy, National Geographic Channel Asia was launched soon after, in 1998 and has built a loyal and devoted following. The word spread quickly and now the Channel has grown to be available in over 133 countries and is viewed in more than 100 million homes, in 21 languages.

Business Requirement

Reviewing its online presence, National Geographic Channel found new mediums to reach its viewers. The Internet having evolved to what it is today could not be ignored. With growing viewership, NGC required a strong online presence for providing extensive coverage of TV program schedules, along with features to add value to the basic channel subscription. NGC wanted the Websites to provide extensive TV program promotions through online activities like contests, polls, games, and other interactive features. Apart from this, the Websites had to be maintained for India, UK, Asia, Singapore, Hong Kong and NGC Global Resource Center – all lying in different time zones, with different types of events and contents to be maintained on a daily and continuous basis.

Solution

Benefits

- Consistent and high-end Web design matching global standards
- In-sync event & operations management for NGC Web sites
- Comprehensive online coverage & promotions for NGC events
- Website traffic analysis and monitoring for consistent performance
- High-end graphic and Micro-Site designs
- Interactive online games and contests



Technologies Used

- Windows NT (formerly deployed on LINUX servers)
- MySQL, MS SQL, Oracle
- ASP
- Flash (ActionScript, Animations)
- HTML
- Web Trends Site Analysis
- SSI
- JavaScript

Requirement

NGC wanted to launch a turnkey project to accomplish its goal of global Web presence. To maintain global operation of this scale in-house has staggering cost implications and logistics. The operation would require a very large full-time, dedicated team of professionals, not to mention the investment in the hardware infrastructure. To prevent these costs NGC chose partners, who would manage its operations in various countries. Icreon was one the few.

Initially, Icreon was responsible for managing only the India Website for NGC. From here, the NGC project has grown to a massive six Web development, maintenance and hosting project. **Right from Website server maintenance, beta testing of all projects, graphic and Web page designing to content management, banner management and Web site tracking, Icreon required to manage one-third NGC's global activities. Icreon was required to perform an all-inclusive set of tasks such as Web Server Maintenance, Beta Testing for all projects, Graphic & Web Page Design, Content Management, Banner Management, and Web Tracking.**

Empowering NGC's Online Presence, Ceaselessly

We started working with the Channel in early 2000 with only the India Website development project. Today Icreon handles the operations for the following NGC Websites:

United Kingdom - www.nationalgeographic.co.uk

Asia - www.ngcasia.com

Singapore - www.nationalgeographic.com.sg

Hong Kong - www.nationalgeographic.com.hk

India - www.nationalgeographic.co.in

Global Resource Centre - www.ngcglobal.com

NGC's operations are only a part of the entire responsibility. It extends to being the ever-present technical resource for all online activity - **providing solutions to the global network of NGC's teams, research and development in new technologies are all part of the services provided by Icreon to the Channel.**

The biggest challenge in being a part of this operation is working within global timelines. NGC plans its online promotions and activities on global level. It is our responsibility to deliver within specified timelines in-sync with the NGC teams worldwide.

The operations involve:

- Online program database and telecast schedule maintenance
- Content schedule implementation for regional Websites
- Page construction for all content
- Online event implementation (contests, polls, etc.)
- Promotional activities (e-Newsletters, online AV's, etc.)



Design and Development

- Application development for key processes (Banner Management System, Global Resource Management System, Administration consoles)
- Interactive features

Technical and Graphic Support

- Beta testing, debugging and packaging for distribution to the NGC teams worldwide
- Web site server maintenance
- Implementation and maintenance of the WebTrends Live site analysis system
- Offline mirror site maintenance
- Offline Image banking

Icreon has a team of professionals who are dedicated to NGC, from server administrators to proofing professionals, the entire gamut. Previously, we deployed NGC's Websites on a multi-platform and multi-host architecture, for serving Web pages and applications. The Websites were hosted on Linux and Windows NT platforms. Development of applications was done using PHP/PERL-CGI under Linux, and then ported to the Windows NT platform with ASP. This setup has switched to the Windows NT platform, using ASP and PHP/PERL-CGI for Windows, to allow compatibility with other NGC Websites ported on ASP.

RDBMS includes MySQL, Microsoft SQL and Oracle. A key concern while developing applications is that the applications should seamlessly integrate into the existing system, irrespective of the databases in use.

A majority of the front-end uses SSI pages with the extensive use of JavaScript. Interactive features are developed using a combination of JavaScript and ActionScript (Flash).

Some of the most successful projects that we accomplished for NGC include:

- **Mission Everest** – Complete online coverage of this contest conducted in India
- **Mission Mars** – Complete online coverage of this contest
- **GeoGenius** – An interactive online game developed by Icreon
- **Secrets Unveiled & Secret Chambers Revealed** – Complete online coverage of program schedules for these series

The growing faith of the NGC team on Icreon has led to another successful venture that we are currently managing for NGC – The History Channel Website.

Summary

We believe in long-lasting relationships with our clients and NGC is a perfect example! Over the years, we have grown as a company, and for NGC, our services have only improved. As Mr. Jayant Shah, VP Media, for NGC puts it – "The diversity and creativity that the developers at Icreon possess has been an ongoing asset. In closing, our Team would like to entrust Icreon for the expert development and project fulfillment we have experienced thus far, we look forward to many years of ongoing partnership."

It takes more than just hard work and management tactics to endure a project as vast as maintaining the NGC Web presence. It requires lateral thinking, constant value additions to services and a dedicated team matched with use of latest technology and sound infrastructure. Our relationship with NGC has endured high-expectations of rigid timelines, global competition, consistent quality on turnkey basis and constant effort of being the best.



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