

ProConsultant's Louise is TFO 'Brain'

by Eric Minoli,

TORONTO — TFO, the Toronto-based Canadian public television network serving the French-speaking community, offers entertainment, children's programming and current affairs magazines. We also provide educational material for Ontario province's professional teaching community.

When TFO became independent a few years ago, we started with little more than staff, some tapes and programming rights. The prospect of constructing and equipping a new facility was daunting, but the more difficult challenge was how to reorganize our operational infrastructure to support our traditional business and new media platforms without incurring huge costs.



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Before issuing an RFP, we consulted stations that had transitioned to file-based operations and found that we would need a unified workflow solution that would reduce complexity and produce efficiencies.

We ultimately selected ProConsultant Informatique's Louise, an end-to-end workflow and content and metadata management system that's designed for multi-platform distribution.

I describe Louise as the "brain" of our operation, as it possesses knowledge about contracts, rights, schedules, versioning, metadata and other critical information. Other systems amount to the "arms and legs" in carrying out different tasks such as play-out, media movement, transcoding or publishing. Louise provides a unified management layer, integrating with our other broadcast and production subsystems, including Apple Final Cut Pro, Apple Xserve, Sun StorageTek, Front Porch Digital DivArchive, Sienna Virtual VTR and more.

The Louise workflow engine improves collaboration among the 125-person production staff, with automated assignments, notifications and background processes. Our staff uses its task-specific interfaces and built-in tools to speed their work. All content goes through Louise before being placed in the DivA repository, giving us tight controls and an audit trail. When a producer wants to publish an asset, Louise directs DivA media movement, and will block publication, unless the asset is "qualified" based on contract rights and other requirements stored as metadata. If authorization is granted, it directs the release of content and the creation of a proxy, and tracks the entire process.

INHERENT FLEXIBILITY

TFO is a fluid organization, always expanding programs and platforms, and Louise has proven itself robust, flexible and cost-effective in our environment. Its modular design allows ProConsultant to quickly add functionality as needed. We currently support more than 80 Web

sites, as well as mobile services, in addition to our on-air product, in-house production, educational efforts and DVD production. Each platform has unique requirements, and some clips are packaged in 40 different formats. Louise has given us a unified platform, ensuring delivery of the right content, at the right time, in the right format with the right metadata.

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