



Case Study



Icreon

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, 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 (then known as Indicom). 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!

Customer Profile

In September 1997, the world's first National Geographic Channel was launched in Europe and Australia. 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 Requirements

NGC wanted to launch a turnkey project to accomplish its goal of global Web presence. The operation would require a very large & full-time, dedicated team of professionals, not to mention the physical costs such as hardware, OS etc. To prevent these costs, NGC chose partners, who would manage its operations in various countries, with different time zones. Icreon was chosen for India.

Empowering NGC's Online Presence

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

National Geographic Channel was searching for 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 to provide 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, and Hong Kong in addition to the NGC Global Resource Center (Online) – all across different time zones, with different types of events and contents maintained on a daily and continuous basis.

NGC teamed with Icreon in early 2000 with only the India Website development project. Today Icreon manages 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

Managing six Websites is 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, along with research & 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 a global level. It is our responsibility to deliver within specified timelines, in-sync with NGC teams worldwide.

Our Web activities 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.)

- Application development for key processes (Banner Management System, Global Resource Management System, Administration consoles)
- Implementation of interactive features
- Beta testing, debugging and packaging for distribution to NGC teams worldwide
- Web server & Web site maintenance
- Implementation and monitoring 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 proofreading professionals - the entire gamut. In addition, we provide the hardware infrastructure including the Web server for porting the NGC Websites. 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 the Linux platforms. Development of applications was performed using PHP, CGI-PERL under Linux. This setup has switched to the Windows platform, using ASP and PHP/PERL-CGI for Windows.

APPENDIX (20 June 2006) – Further still, all National Geographic websites maintained and managed by Icreon Communications now run on the Microsoft .net Framework.

We utilized MySQL for database management, previously. As of now, SQL Server 2000 serves as the database management backend for all NGC Websites. A key concern while developing applications is that they should seamlessly integrate into the existing system, irrespective of the databases in use.

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

Some of the sub-projects that we have accomplished for NGC include:

- **Mission Everest** – Complete online coverage of this contest conducted in India
- **Mission Mars** – Complete online coverage of this contest
- **NGC – Geo Genius** – 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.

Technologies used in developing this application are:



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.”

Managing operations across Websites catering to a diverse time zone, we enable NGC to meet its requirements of turnkey and high-end Web presence at par with global Web standards.