



## AVANADE® CASE STUDY

### Avanade Extends Development Team

#### GroupM Reduces Costs and Defects in Code While Improving Collaboration and Data Access

Founded as a parent company within Wire Plastics and Products (WPP), GroupM provides information and services to its media investment and management organizations: MAXUS, MediaCom Worldwide, Mediaedge:cia, and MindShare.

The agencies that comprise GroupM are all independent global operations with leading market positions. The organizations help clients create advertising plans that can include TV, radio, newspapers, magazines, outdoor billboards, the Internet, sporting events, and movie theaters. GroupM employs 16,000 people in 402 offices in 81 countries. In 2006, GroupM and its agencies sold U.S.\$60.51 billion in services.

In 2001, GroupM needed software to manage the information generated by MindShare, MediaCom Worldwide, and Mediaedge. Rather than continue spending more than \$1.5 million in licensing fees, GroupM engaged Avanade to create a comprehensive media management solution. Built using Microsoft® technologies, the system facilitates the development of media campaigns and financial reports, and it includes an extranet portal. The solution has allowed GroupM to unify and present customized client media data that spans all markets across the globe. In addition, GroupM now has a competitive edge to win new work, cut costs, streamline data access, and collaborate closely with clients.



#### OVERVIEW

##### Industry

Media and entertainment / advertising

##### Geography

United States

##### Solution Summary

Avanade helped GroupM develop a media management solution that includes tools to plan, track, and manage global media campaigns, as well as collaborate with clients' software.

##### Technology

- ▶ Active Directory® Service
- ▶ The Microsoft® .NET Framework
- ▶ Microsoft Office SharePoint® Portal Server 2003
- ▶ Microsoft SQL Server™ 2000

##### Benefits

- ▶ Generated new business
- ▶ Cut costs
- ▶ Improved collaboration
- ▶ Accelerated data access

## Customer Background

### GroupM

Headquartered in New York City, GroupM is one of more than 100 companies owned by WPP—one of the world's largest communications services groups. WPP founded GroupM in 2003 to serve as a parent company for media investment and management companies: MindShare, MediaCom Worldwide, Maxus, and Mediaedge:cia. These companies work with global clients to determine how to best market products and services—taking into account factors such as costs, time of year, and media and industry trends. Marketing and media plans can encompass TV, radio, newspapers, magazines, outdoor billboards, the Internet, banners at sporting events, and movie theater trailers.

The 16,000 employees at GroupM maximize the performance of the four media companies, which collectively employ 13,000 people, by providing content creation, digital services, media trading, business science information, and proprietary tool development. In 2006, GroupM and its media companies earned £2,806 million (U.S.\$5.616 billion) in revenue.

## Business Challenge

### Advertising firm seeks software to manage media campaigns

The solution at GroupM actually began in 2001, before the company was founded. One of the companies GroupM currently manages, MindShare, was primarily using two applications from Arbitron—Brandfx and Local RollUp—to manage media campaigns. “The old solution worked but it was really expensive,” says Jennifer Greene, Director of Development at GroupM. “Licensing fees were costly: the contract cost approximately \$1.5 million a year.”

MindShare investigated other products but found that the Arbitron solution was the only one that offered global roll-up. Being able to summarize media planning information from global markets was critical. Without it, employees would waste time manually identifying all the factors required to make a successful media plan. Rather than continuing to invest in licensing fees, the company opted to develop its own media planning application.

To ensure that its IT staff was not overburdened with development tasks, MindShare researched third-party vendors that could help. After analyzing the credentials of Microsoft developers, MindShare selected Avanade.

## The Solution

### Avanade creates MediaFlow and other tools that service global media agencies and clients

In August 2001, Avanade consultants in New York City developed a tool to track and manage media campaigns using the Microsoft® .NET Framework and the Microsoft SQL Server™ 2000 Enterprise Edition database software. The application, known as MediaFlow, would replace Brandfx and Local RollUp.

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MediaCom Worldwide, Maxus, and Mediaedge:cia. New employees at GroupM found themselves struggling to manage the immense flow of information from the media agencies. To help, GroupM engaged Avanade to expand the functionality of MediaFlow and develop three additional applications: Global Master Files, Internal Budgeting System, and an extranet portal based on Microsoft Office SharePoint® Portal Server 2003. The Avanade development team in Mumbai, India, would carry out the new development efforts.

The applications run on three IBM server computers running Windows Server® 2003 Enterprise Edition, and on two clustered databases supported by SQL Server 2000 Enterprise Edition. The database supporting MediaFlow is approximately 15 gigabytes, and the database supporting the extranet is 70 gigabytes.

### **Extending the functionality of MediaFlow with new modules and Global Master Files**

GroupM had Avanade consultants add three modules to MediaFlow, using ASP.NET, to boost the efficiency of data access:

- ▶ Rate Card allows employees to view the cost of media by type (such as TV or radio), date, or unit.
- ▶ Competitive Data System tracks how much clients spend on media.
- ▶ MediaFlow Reporting provides detailed reports.

With thousands of people accessing MediaFlow, GroupM needed an application that could provide for data security and access management. To meet this requirement, Avanade consultants used the .NET Framework and the Active Directory® service to build Global Master Files. It streamlines the management of security roles within MediaFlow and other applications including the company's extranet. In addition, Global Master Files defines the metadata used by MediaFlow.

### **Creating the Internal Budgeting System**

In April 2003, Avanade consultants began work on the Internal Budgeting System (IBS) application. It provides a central repository for financial information. "We have to justify our expenditures every year to our parent company, WPP," says Greene. "Our budgets are disbursed throughout sites in 120 countries. We use IBS to project yearly expenditures and justify the costs so we can get our budgets approved. We also use the application to make sure that when we spend money, we deduct it from the right line item."

### **Building an extranet portal**

To streamline collaboration between employees, clients, and creative agencies, GroupM engaged Avanade to develop an extranet on Microsoft Office SharePoint Portal Server 2003 and Windows® SharePoint Services. The extranet hosts 145 team sites used by groups around the world.

Avanade developed a customized document library that provides greater security for more sensitive files. Consultants set up access rights so that people can only access the documents associated with the brands and regions they are working on. The portal provides integration points with MediaFlow and Active Directory. In addition, Avanade consultants are expanding the languages supported by the solution from English and Japanese to Thai, Spanish, and Chinese.

### **Providing for quality development**

At the beginning of 2004, GroupM engaged Avanade to provide dedicated ongoing software testing for all development projects. Fifteen test engineers, also located in

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East Region Chief Technology Officer  
Avanade

India, provide services that include the development of functional test objectives, integration and conformance testing, and hotfixes. The engineers use a combination of hands-on testing and automated tools such as Rational Robot.

Engineers provide for quality assurance during development by using an integrated build framework that includes source code analysis and testing tools like CruiseControl.NET, FxCop, Simian, NUnit, NCover, and NAnt. "The processes followed have gradually evolved with contributions from both Avanade and GroupM," says Rashmi Upadhyay, Development Manager at Avanade. "The team is always on the lookout to improve team productivity by creating utilities like dashboards, automated deployments, and wiki converters.

To help senior managers at GroupM monitor development, Avanade consultants used ASP.NET to create several custom dashboards that include trend charts for better analysis of data. "The dashboards allow us to see how our development staff is performing on a project-by-project basis," Greene says. "We can quickly access information like defect counts or schedule variances so we can see how we're adhering to our processes and whether we're improving product quality."

#### **Improving the efficiency of the development process**

Avanade consultants setup a wiki site so that the consultants in India and the 30 IT employees at GroupM can share technical documents, such as functional specifications. "We use the wiki to track production information," notes Greene. "But it is also available to our support staff so that they can research what we're doing in terms of new releases and can take a look at design information if they have to answer deeper questions from users."

To archive product development knowledge, Avanade consultants create videos using Microsoft Producer for Microsoft Office PowerPoint® 2003. "Whenever we make any changes to an application, we capture the screen and then have someone narrate all of the functionality," explains Murli Iyer, Quality Manager at Avanade. "Having this information helps us bring people on board really fast."

#### **Ongoing projects**

GroupM engineers are using the .NET Framework to create an application known as the Global Trading System. Managers will use it to track the money spent on global media owners. "The Global Trading System will allow us to consolidate all of the information about the prices that we negotiate for all of our different advertising purchases," notes Greene.

In addition, Avanade consultants will migrate the extranet to Office SharePoint Server 2007 later this year. Other plans involve MediaFlow: Over the next several years, Avanade and GroupM will migrate the product to the .NET Framework version 3.0, modify the user interface, and add an import/export module that facilitates the exchange of information between MediaFlow and Microsoft Office Excel® 2007 spreadsheet software.

## **Avanade Value**

#### **Avanade delivered the expertise and resources required**

The ongoing partnership between GroupM and Avanade points to success. "I've worked with some very professional, very bright people at Avanade," explains Greene. "Our consultants have been extremely accommodating in working with us

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Director of Development  
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the way that we want to. We use a different development model than most places. We have a lot of in-house expertise in design, software development processes, and tools—so we like to collaborate with our consultants more than what might be comfortable for other organizations. But Avanade has been really cool about our process. We've been able to share responsibilities. Our consultants have allowed us to have the level of input that we need, and they have come up with answers that we might not have thought of ourselves."

"Our partnership with GroupM has truly evolved into a high-performance virtual development organization working across time zones," adds Grant Carpenter, the East Region Chief Technology Officer at Avanade. "Avanade's offshore team is directly integrated with GroupM's onshore team to form a combined team from both Mumbai and New York. It's truly an impressive display of global teaming and orchestration, and it really speaks to the combined capabilities of both of our organizations."

"We've had our troubles over the past six years, but despite the setbacks, we've learned a lot from one another and have built a really solid process for working together," adds Greene. "That's something that, as a group, we can take pride in."

## Results

### Generated new business

When it was founded in 2003, GroupM had to take charge of the software development operations at multiple companies. Avanade consultants have helped GroupM do just that. "Our products have benefited greatly from the process changes that we've made," says Greene. "The defects found in production have gone down by 50 percent in the past two years, which says a lot about the vigilance of our Avanade consultants and the way we've been able to work together. When we deliver more solid applications, we help our companies generate more revenue."

Julian Trotman, Global Applications Director at GroupM adds, "The improved quality and features delivered in both MediaFlow and the extranets have allowed our agencies to share our insights on media expenditure with our customers in a highly collaborative and timely manner, improving our competitiveness, as evidenced by a 41 percent increase in revenues over the past two years."

### Cut costs

As a result of reduced defect counts, GroupM spends less money. "We spend far less time reacting to and fixing defects," notes Greene. "We've been able to reduce the time and money spent on support calls and the time previously spent ruling out and addressing major defects."

GroupM has also eliminated paying \$1.5 million in yearly licensing fees by developing its own applications. "The fact that we built MediaFlow means we don't have to pay for licensing fees like a lot of other agencies do," Greene notes. "I estimate that by developing our own solutions, we've spent about 75 percent of what we would pay to license a solution."

### Improved collaboration

Rather than relying on e-mail to exchange media plans, employees can now use the extranet to easily collaborate with each other or with partners and clients.

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Employees avoid time spent tracking changes and ensuring that everyone is working on the correct version of a document. To share a media plan, project video, or other file, employees simply export it to the extranet. To view project-related documents, people with appropriate access privileges simply go to a team site or visit the document library.

#### **Accelerated data access**

MediaFlow, Global Master Files, and the Extranet give employees rapid and secure access to the information required to build effective media plans. In addition, the Internal Budgeting System automatically compiles global data from GroupM and its companies, accelerating productivity and facilitating efficiency. “Our solution allows the folks in upper management to get to the higher-level data much more easily than they could before,” says Greene. “Just being able to give people the information they want, when they need it, has helped us better support our customers.”

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#### **Julian Trotman**

Global Applications Director  
GroupM

### **About Avanade**

Avanade is a global IT consultancy dedicated to using the Microsoft platform to help enterprises achieve profitable growth. Through proven solutions that extend Microsoft technologies, Avanade helps enterprises increase revenue, reduce costs and reinvest in innovation to gain competitive advantage. Avanade consultants deliver value according to each customer’s requirements, timeline, and budget by combining insight, innovation, and the talent of our global work force. Founded in 2000 by Accenture and Microsoft, Avanade has more than 6,500 professionals serving customers in 22 countries worldwide. Additional information can be found at [www.avanade.com](http://www.avanade.com).