7 MEDIA & ENTERTAINMENT ORGANIZATIONS USING GOOGLE WORKSPACE

Creating with confidence & delivering seamless audience experiences
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Introduction

Getting your content to every corner of the globe — and available to all users on demand — requires massive infrastructure and a global network. Leading telecommunications, media & entertainment companies are leveraging Google Cloud’s speed, flexibility, and security to create with confidence, deliver seamless viewing experiences, and gain deeper audience insights.
Google Cloud offers innovative solutions for all segments in the industry including:

**Broadcast**

**Deliver world-class video experiences to a global audience**

Understand what audiences are looking for with leading data analytics and machine learning capabilities and deliver better live and on-demand video experiences to your global audience at scale.

**Telecommunications**

**Embrace innovation and create deeper customer connections**

Shorten time to market for new products and execute faster at scale with full lifecycle API management, Google Workspace collaboration tools, and big data solutions.

**News & publishing**

**Deliver the Future of Data-Driven Publishing — Today**

Gain a deeper understanding of your content and your audience. Use it to drive engagement, optimize ad revenue, predict churn, and uncover untold stories with Google Cloud.

**VFX studios**

**Empower Your Artists and Create World-Class Content**

Enhance artist productivity and collaboration with access to efficiently managed scale on our best-in-class global network while managing your content, securely.

SADA, a Google Cloud Premier Partner, has helped leading media and entertainment companies embrace innovation and engage audiences with Google Cloud’s innovative infrastructure and collaboration solutions. Based in the entertainment capital of the world, SADA ensures your company can leverage the full media & entertainment benefits of Google Cloud. Read on for 7 inspiring examples that showcase how SADA and Google Cloud are helping to transform businesses in the media & entertainment industry.
SADA helps FUN-GI fine-tune GCP & Google App Engine

1. FUN-GI

FUN-GI was founded five years ago on a philosophy of “purpose, fun, and design.” The 12-person company is a game studio, “but not in the traditional sense, as we’re mobile first,” explains CEO Alfred Fung. “FUN-GI designs and publishes fun games for growing brands. We live by certain credos, but ultimately, our mission is to create content that’s brand-forward, truly innovative, and incredibly broad-appealing, not just to traditional gamers but to a variety of audiences.”

FUN-GI saw an opportunity to stand out in a crowded marketplace by targeting an underserved niche: female players in what the industry calls the “midcore” market, referring to gamers who enjoyed playing (or discover they enjoy playing) games, but don’t have much dedicated time to the activity. The company’s flagship title, House Flip, is a role-playing simulation game, something that Fung says is unique. “The typical role-playing game is often associated with male players,” Fung says. “We felt that women weren’t being served very well in this category and recognized a market opportunity where we could define the home renovation game genre while making a midcore experience accessible to female players.”
In addition to being a game developer, FUN-GI is also a game publisher. “We have every intention of growing House Flip,” Fung says. “We’re always updating our live operations with fresh content and new features. We are living in an age where software is no longer a consumer packaged good; it’s a truly living service. We effectively service our audience by anticipating their desires, listening to their feedback, and incorporating it into the game’s design.”

House Flip has been wildly successful in Apple’s App Store and Google Play. In just over a year, it’s accumulated over 11 million downloads and more than 200,000 reviews, with an average rating of over 4.5-stars. “Eleven million is relatively small given that we are on mobile, but it’s pretty rare that a game made by 12-person company gets to eight-figure downloads,” explains Fung.

**Challenges**

FUN-GI initially developed House Flip on an off-the-shelf platform and continued using it thru the game’s soft launch period. However, FUN-GI found that the platform wasn’t the right fit for their needs. “We didn’t have direct access to the database,” Fung recalls. “While the platform provided a lot of things on the front end, like the console, it was still just a layer atop AWS.” FUN-GI also found that it was limited to the data analytics and metrics they could acquire, as it didn’t allow them to access the source code. Additionally, at the time, the platform didn’t support versioning, which presented a challenge when FUN-GI needed to deliver multiple versions of server code for game updates.

With House Flip’s global launch on the horizon, FUN-GI knew it needed a more flexible, scalable platform.

**Solution & results**

FUN-GI chose to migrate to Google Cloud Platform (GCP) and host House Flip on Google App Engine. The team was immediately impressed by GCP’s ease of deployment and scaling. “We went from thousands of players and a lot of issues during soft launch, to a global launch on GCP with 11 million downloads while maintaining excellent data integrity and server performance,” Fung notes. “We don’t have to worry about scaling; GCP auto-scales. It just works.”

Now that FUN-GI can access server code, Fung reports they can gather “almost any data we want” and run customized business intelligence analysis. Production is faster now that developers are freed from backend infrastructure maintenance tasks. “A lot of larger companies have DevOps engineers. We’re still small and don’t have the resources to hire those types of engineers, so it’s great that GCP handles all of that for us.”
FUN-GI’s partnership with SADA began in September 2018. The company had Google’s Gold SLA Plan, and an account executive suggested that FUN-GI partner with SADA for consulting and support. “It was great to know that we could partner with SADA, and maintain the same SLA level, but not have to pay extra,” Fung says.

SADA helped FUN-GI optimize their GCP deployment. “One of the main things that SADA helped us with was streaming assets from storage and delivering them to players. Our Technical Account Manager recommended implementing an internal load balancer. This allows Google to cache the assets faster and distribute them across their load balancer more efficiently,” Fung recalls. “We’ve also gotten advice from SADA on setting up our Google App Engine products, such as whether we should use a flex or standard environment, and they’ve given us guidance on GCP products that we can use to scale our features.”

Gamers are a notoriously demanding and fickle customer base, so it’s not surprising that FUN-GI’s biggest KPIs for their GCP deployment were server uptime and consistency of delivery. “We’ve integrated Stackdriver Monitoring, which sends us email notifications when things go wrong. Luckily, nothing has gone wrong on our end, only on Google’s end, but they’ve been very good about fixing problems.”

The FUN-GI team is very pleased with both GCP and SADA’s services, and Fung plans to incorporate more of GCP’s features as the company expands and releases more games. “In our next update, we plan to use Firebase’s Firestore database, which will be much better for concurrency.” The company also wants to utilize Firebase ML in conjunction with Remote Config to help with A/B testing.
“Our experience with GCP has been so positive that it has built a tremendous amount of trust from our team. There’s a strong relationship element. It’s not just that SADA is there when things break; Google is there on the regular as well. Having great relationships with GCP and SADA emboldens us. We have the relationships in place that enable us to be ambitious and continue pushing the envelope.”

Alfred Fung
CEO, FUN-GI
In this industry, there is no such thing as ‘down for maintenance. There is no ‘off-season.’ There is no window where we can be offline, not ever.”

Douglaus Pearson
Co-founder & CTO, FlowPlay

SADA’s TAM services help FlowPlay get ROI on Google Cloud Platform

2. FlowPlay

The online gaming industry is growing rapidly. According to NewZoo, global gaming spend reached nearly $135 billion in 2018, yet many game developers struggle to turn a profit. Developers in the mobile market must share a significant cut of their earnings with app stores just to get their games in front of potential players. Once consumers engage in a game, keeping them playing requires constant innovation and nothing less than world-class performance.

FlowPlay, which was founded in 2006, stands out for its unique, community-first approach to game development and its avoidance of the crowded mobile game market and its pricey app stores. FlowPlay’s self-published games are primarily played in-browser, and instead of depending on external platforms, such as Facebook, to provide social experiences outside of their games, FlowPlay builds intricate virtual worlds within their game platforms.
The over 75 million gamers worldwide who play FlowPlay titles such as OurWorld and VegasWorld don’t just play the games; they make friends and immerse themselves in communities. These in-game connections are deep, meaningful, and keep gamers coming back for months, even years. Tens of thousands of couples have participated in “virtual marriages” in-game in VegasWorld, and more than a few of these relationships have transcended the internet and resulted in real-life weddings.

**Challenges**

The back-end technology that makes FlowPlay’s virtual worlds possible is robust. So that players have a flawless experience each time they enter the game, FlowPlay must maintain the highest standards for system uptime, latency, and performance -- at a cost that keeps the company profitable. With an international audience base playing 24/7, anything less than 100% uptime is unacceptable.

Game elements must load instantaneously and accurately. People might accept a two-second lag when waiting for a news article to load, but not when playing a game. They also won’t accept transaction errors or other glitches that detract from their in-game experience. “Our games are very detailed, with many small transactions,” Pearson explains. “Every time a player hits a button on a slot machine in VegasWorld, lots of things happen on the back end. It’s almost like running a bank; every coin has to be accounted for.”

Having used servers in a data center for years, FlowPlay had reached a crossroads. The company owned its servers outright, but the equipment was approaching its end of life. Buying new servers didn’t seem prudent in a world that was increasingly cloud-driven, and continuing to rely on physical servers would slow the company’s growth plans. It can take weeks to purchase new servers and get them up and running, while provisioning cloud servers is a 15-minute process.

The company made the decision to migrate to the cloud. They just had to pick the right time to make the switch and ensure that their performance and cost requirements would be met.

**Solution**

After evaluating Microsoft Azure, AWS, and Google Cloud Platform, FlowPlay’s leadership chose GCP for its user friendliness, flexibility, and performance. “We eliminated Azure pretty quickly because it depended on the Microsoft stack, and that didn’t fit anything we were using internally. That left AWS and GCP,” Pearson notes. “Most of the money we were spending prior to migrating to the cloud was on our databases. Our main driver was how many operations could be made on a drive per second. GCP offered higher disk speeds (IOPS) than AWS, meaning that we’d get the same performance from our databases at a lower cost.”
The company also liked that GCP wouldn’t tie them to a specific server configuration. “AWS requires customers to choose a specific server configuration when buying a long-term contract. With GCP, instead of renting a specific server, we buy computing power,” Pearson said. “This allows us to experiment with servers, drives, configurations, and RAM to optimize performance. We couldn’t have done that as easily with AWS.”

After selecting GCP as cloud platform of choice, partnering with SADA and taking advantage of their Technical Account Management (TAM) services was, in Pearson’s words, a “no-brainer.”

“Once we chose to move forward with GCP, we partnered with SADA for technical support at no extra cost to us,” Pearson says. “That’s a very strong offering.” FlowPlay liked the idea of getting an immediate point of contact who could respond to their questions and help them work through issues. FlowPlay was looking for help addressing key questions about GCP and their environment that they couldn’t address on their own. SADA’s TAM team was there to help.

Results & benefits

FlowPlay took advantage of SADA’s TAM services early on when individual servers were spontaneously restarting; SADA helped FlowPlay’s staff address the error codes and get them back on track.

SADA’s TAM services also proved invaluable in fixing a very serious problem with FlowPlay’s master and replica databases. The two databases must be kept perfectly in sync so that in the event of a catastrophic crash, no player data is lost. FlowPlay noticed that the replicas weren’t keeping up with the masters; even if they were only a bit behind, user data could be lost in a crash. SADA’s TAM representatives quickly evaluated the situation, then escalated the issue to the Google engineering teams who were able to provide detailed assistance on the low level file I/O issues.

Pearson is also very happy with GCP as their cloud platform. He noted that FlowPlay has seen both quantitative and qualitative benefits to moving away from the data center. Between May 2018 and May 2019, the company saw a 50% increase in traffic -- and load. Yet their system response speed had literally doubled, improving performance. “That’s a huge boost in performance, especially since we have significantly more players. When I looked at the numbers, they seemed too good to be true, so I rechecked them! The performance boost means our end users will be delighted with faster performance, and we are, too.”

One area where FlowPlay has seen a very visible cost savings is cybersecurity. When they were using a data center, they were exposed to DDoS attacks and had to spend a significant amount of money on DDoS protection. Since switching to GCP, they haven’t had any need to purchase this service. “Google Cloud takes care of that for us. They take security very seriously,” says Pearson.
“GCP has worked for us the way it is meant to work, and we’re very happy with it,” Pearson says. Now that they’re not bogged down with maintenance tasks, FlowPlay’s internal staff is able to devote more time to internal projects such as new features and new games. Since migrating to the cloud, FlowPlay has launched an additional game and are working on multiple products for future launch. “Working with SADA’s Technical Account Managers, we’re looking forward to using more of GCP’s features to extend our abilities and offerings.”

“FlowPlay doesn’t just create captivating games, we create virtual worlds where millions of global players reside on a daily basis,” says Derrick Morton, CEO of FlowPlay.
“When we migrated to GCP, SADA’s TAM services allowed FlowPlay to focus on creating more immersive gaming experiences, while SADA focused on the important factors that keep our gameplay smooth and uninterrupted from downtime or data loss, while providing success metrics to ensure FlowPlay’s ROI.”

Derrick Morton
CEO, FlowPlay
Digital First Media migrates over 6,000 users to Google Workspace

3. Digital First Media

Digital First Media (DFM) has a leading local news audience share in each of its primary markets and its content monetization platforms serve clients on both a national and local scale.

Challenges

A company which has grown through acquisition, DFM has also acquired many systems along the way, including multiple email platforms. The reality of this splintered IT environment became clear when a new CEO joined the company and was unable to easily send an email to all employees. Dealing with multiple communications tools was making it tough to integrate new employees and companies into the DFM family. It was also a significant burden on IT to manage multiple platforms.
Solution

The DFM IT team evaluated three different platforms for the new corporate email system, ultimately selecting Google’s Google Workspace platform, which includes Gmail, Docs, Drive, Calendars and Hangouts. Factors which went into the decision included Google’s ease of use and collaboration benefits.

“We had all these business units and properties that didn’t work together across the country,” says Bob Kinney, VP of Information Technology for DFM’s Western region. “People couldn’t share calendars or contacts and we knew that for sales and revenue departments, this was extremely important.”

Google Docs would also be beneficial for collaboration amongst all employees. During employee feedback sessions, the company surmised that roughly 50% of its people were already using Google for personal communications. The decision to go Google was further supplemented by an excellent reference from the State of Colorado, which had recently transitioned to Google Docs.

Working with SADA

SADA, a Google Cloud Premier Partner and an expert implementation partner for Google Cloud solutions, came on board to help DFM migrate to Google Workspace. The SADA team provided a comprehensive Transformation Lab to provide guidance on reengineering and improving business processes with Google Cloud. The DFM implementation team headed by Eric Monsma, Director of IT Operations for DFM Incorporated SADA’s change management framework.

This involves identifying employees to serve as Google Guides, subject matter expert resources for employees during the transition. Monsma, in concert with SADA’s change management team, led demos and trainings at all of the company’s offices around the country.

“Identifying our Google Guides was critical to the success of our rollout,” says Monsma. “These guides received a more in-depth training with DFM IT and SADA. It gave them the necessary tools and ideas on streamlining business processes. They were ambassadors for IT and promoted the Google tools to their individual departments.”

Other change management best practices included Lunch and Learn events; the creation of an internal website to house training videos, FAQs and other materials; and staggered communications prior to migration to help employees prepare for the Go Live date.
“The Lunch and Learns sessions we held had great attendance and sparked good, creative dialogue between different departments,” says Monsma. “We all learned about G-Suite together. We showed everyone how easily the tools worked in conjunction with each other. A daily reminder went out to employees starting two weeks prior to launch and made it a very smooth transition at Go Live. Creating an internal training Google site proved to be beneficial for employees to reference at their leisure and employees could dive deeper into one particular tool that they may not have fully grasped in the live sessions as these resources were set up as self-paced trainings with exercise files to go through the motions as users found time.”

Yet, there are always challenges during a major project; SADA worked closely with DFM’s team to address situations unique to the company. “We are a company of journalists, so changing people’s email and telling them that they cannot share files publicly for security reasons was bound to create a good deal of pushback,” Kinney says. “Some people were scared to death that they would lose years of notes and interviews or that their contacts wouldn’t transfer over.”

While the change management team assured employees that those scenarios wouldn’t occur, they did need to address the need for employees to share documents with people outside of the company. The solution involved deploying Google Workspace Business and two-factor authentication, which allowed for an improved level of controls for the enterprise to further secure access to documents as well as having unlimited storage capacity.

Results and benefits

Working with SADA, DFM successfully transitioned all 5,000 employees, as well as partners and service providers, to Google, constituting 6,100 user accounts. Employees are benefiting from a single, online email system to more easily connect with anyone in the company, share contacts and schedule meetings from any device.

Other outcomes of the migration include:

- **Application and infrastructure cost avoidance:** Today, DFM has avoided the cost of upgrading and maintaining servers and software for email, calendars, and word processing. DFM also expects to avoid new data storage equipment costs, by using Google Team Drive as an alternative storage solution.

- **Employee onboarding:** New employees of acquired company, IT sees cloud computing taking on a broader role. “We definitely want to look at Google Cloud for hosting our environment and for projects involving machine learning,” Kinney says. “This could be really useful for market research and advertising, which is an exciting part of our business.” Kinney calls the company’s new Google environment a “tremendous success.”
- **Maximizing investment in collaboration:** Employees are expanding their use of Google technologies such as Google Meet and Google Docs. DFM plans to work more closely with SADA on increasing awareness and usage for the full Google portfolio, including Forms and Sites. “We held two Google Transformation Labs in 2016 which gathered open-minded individuals from different departments from DFM to brainstorm how to leverage Google Workspace in our daily work lives,” Monsma says. SADA facilitated the Labs in Boulder, Colo. and Mountain View, Calif. “These two sessions sparked some good conversations and gave people new ideas on how to solve legacy business processes within DFM. Keeping the Google momentum and excitement is important to us,” Monsma says.

- **A roadmap for the cloud:** As DFM progresses on its journey to becoming a modern, digital publishing company, IT sees cloud computing taking on a broader role. “We definitely want to look at Google Cloud for hosting our environment and for projects involving machine learning,” Kinney says. “This could be really useful for market research and advertising, which is an exciting part of our business.” Kinney calls the company’s new Google environment a “tremendous success.”
“Moving everyone to the Google Cloud allows us to be nimble and do acquisitions and onboarding faster and more easily, along with divesting papers when needed. SADA has been an instrumental partner for us, both from technical expertise and change management. They are available whenever we need them for consultative and support services, and we have a great working relationship with their team.”

Bob Kinney  
VP of Information Technology, DFM (West)
SADA helps TVG network scale with Google Cloud Platform

4. TVG Network

TVG Network is a U.S.-based online horse racing wagering business and sports-oriented digital cable and satellite television network that is owned by Dublin-based Paddy Power Betfair.

Challenges

The first Saturday of May is the biggest horse racing event in North America each year. Minutes before the race, millions of dollars in online bets will flow in through advanced deposit wagering (ADW) operators such as TVG Network. For TVG’s IT team, it’s a high-stakes game: If wagering systems can’t handle thousands of requests per second, revenue and customers will be lost.

To avoid downtime before a major race, TVG used to bombard its systems with ad-hoc load tests a month in advance. Before each big race event, a team of seven people spent eight hours a week deploying new infrastructure and testing various scenarios. But with complex legacy systems and manual processes, the team’s efforts could only go so far. If an unexpected system issue or undetected bottleneck was found during the run-up to the big race, all bets were off.
Solution

After a brush with downtime in 2016, TVG decided to move its ADW application to the cloud, taking the opportunity to rewrite the application to take advantage of modern, container-based architectures. After a short period of development on a different cloud services provider, TVG moved to Google Cloud Platform using Google Kubernetes Engine to automate container management and orchestration.

“We chose Google Cloud Platform because it was the most reliable, cost-effective, and automated cloud solution available,” says Tim Morrow, CTO at TVG Network. “We get better security, strong compliance, and the peace of mind that when the biggest race day rolls around, we won’t have any downtime.”

Results & benefits

To keep its IT team focused on value-added tasks, TVG uses Google Cloud managed services such as Cloud Bigtable, a highly scalable NoSQL database, as well as Cloud Storage for backups and Cloud Pub/Sub for real-time messaging between applications.

“We like the software-defined nature of Google Cloud Platform,” says Saeid Vafaeisefat, Vice President of IT, TVG Network. “The managed services are so easy to use. Google Cloud Platform even helps us mitigate and absorb distributed denial of service attacks with its global load balancing features, which we don’t pay extra for.”

Google Cloud benefits

- Maximizes revenue by allowing customers to place bets faster and more confidently
- Scales for major racing events with 80% less IT involvement and up to $500,000 annual savings
- Improves time to market for new product releases by more than 30x
- Helps enable richer mobile experiences to keep fans engaged
“SADA helped us gain a deeper understanding of the advantages of Google Cloud Platform so we could make better decisions about how our application would perform and scale. They provided the facilitation, follow-up, and expert advice we needed to make our deployment a success.”

Saeid Vafaeisefat
Vice President of IT, TVG Network
SADA helps MadHive deliver blockchain ad tech with privacy by design

7. MadHive

MadHive is the blockchain ad-tech firm that developed the MadNetwork protocol, for accurate, efficient, and completely private ad serving. Using blockchain technology, machine learning models, and artificial intelligence agents deployed to users’ devices, MadHive has created a platform where the traditional ad tech intermediaries are unnecessary, and advertisers can target consumers more effectively without ever accessing their personally identifiable information. As consumer privacy regulation mounts in key ad markets, MadNetwork’s technology marks a major step forward, allowing advertisers and publishers to reach their intended audience while simultaneously delivering complete privacy to the consumer.

Challenges

MadHive’s technology is a completely new approach for ad tech. Leveraging blockchain and technology at scale can be a real challenge, requiring serious scalability coupled with reliably low latency and massive processing power. Add to that MadHive’s sophisticated machine learning requirements and a short timeline to get to market, and you’ve got a tall order for a cloud provider. The MadHive team knew not just any cloud provider would suit their needs.
Solution

To face this challenge, SADA recommended Google Cloud Platform (GCP), based on the cloud provider’s reputation for handling huge-scale data and low latency requirements.

“Google definitely had the right solution,” says Tom Bollich, MadHive CTO and former Zynga founding team member. “At Zynga our products generated so much demand that we had to scale out our infrastructure to match all of Facebook’s. AWS was too piecemeal to do that effectively. Google has ‘recipes’ for everything we need to do at scale with data.”

GCP’s industry-leading machine learning engine, as well as its large suite of plug and play tools, makes them a natural partner for MadHive.

SADA’s consultants first analyzed the limits of the Kubernetes and Docker-based implementation MadHive had previously used for prototypes. Then they applied their in-depth knowledge of GCP to help MadHive redesign the entire platform using Google BigTable, Google App Engine, and TensorFlow.

SADA assisted on the research side as well. “Blockchain gave us a platform to push machine learning out to the edge,” says Aaron Brown, MadHive’s VP of Engineering. “Google’s TensorFlow and Cloud ML were the perfect tools to build on. It let us focus on our core tech: fully private targeting through collaborative and anonymous machine learning.”

Results & benefits

It began with an analysis and a redesign, but SADA work with the ad tech company continues. MadHive continues to reap the benefits of SADA’s expertise and the GCP toolkit at every stage.

- MadHive’s network responds to traffic surges while maintaining extremely low latency and high availability for all users.
- MadHive is saving 60% on cloud services with GCP, due to building more efficient scaling and lower latency reads and writes.
- When MadHive hits limits of certain Google products, SADA is immediately available to assist, either by suggesting an alternate implementation or connecting MadHive engineers directly with Google Cloud engineers to work on problems together, quickly.
- The MadHive team spends its time researching, iterating, and deploying, instead of patching scaling issues and performing DevOps.

Ultimately, MadHive’s success will benefit consumers, advertisers, and publishers, delivering full compliance for regulations like the EU’s General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) which goes into effect in May 2018. Using the collaborative machine learning models enabled by TensorFlow, and deploying those models to the MADNetwork’s blockchain, Madhive is recreating digital advertising with privacy by design. SADA is proud to be part of such a transformative moment in advertising technology.

*Note: At the time of this case study, Google Workspace was known as Google Apps*
“The solution SADA suggested has been working amazingly well, we process and analyze terabytes of data in real time. When our traffic suddenly spikes 10 times, we can boot new instances — and use them to handle requests — in under 200ms. It’s the first platform that’s truly elastic under intense loads.”

Denis Kezerashvili
SVP of Engineering, MadHive
Real-time collaboration to drive real-time news

6. McClatchy

The newspaper business has changed dramatically in the past 20 years, thanks to the internet. The revenue model is evolving, with paid subscriptions becoming more important to the bottom line while also continuing to attract advertisers. Meanwhile, with 24/7 news cycles and social media, the competition for readers’ attention has never been greater.

To survive and thrive, McClatchy, which started publishing in 1857, has evolved into a leaner, more agile, digital-first media enterprise. Google Workspace is playing a significant role in McClatchy’s business transformation in two ways: By giving reporters, editors, and others the tools to collaborate in real time, which in turn has engendered a cultural change throughout the organization that aligns with its digital-first mission.

“Google Workspace gives us the tools we need to make sure our reporters can be productive and mobile, and to enable reporters and editors to collaborate in real time so we can respond to news instantly,” says Terry Geiger, Vice President of Technology Operations for McClatchy. “Google Workspace is helping us transform into an organization with a digital DNA.”

*Note: At the time of this case study, Google Workspace was known as Google Apps*
Challenge

A seismic shift

Prior to the mid 2000s, the local news brands owned by McClatchy were a collection of 30 media companies operating independently. Then came the Great Recession of 2007-2009. With the need for belt-tightening measures, McClatchy’s decentralized approach was no longer viable. “We had to radically change our cost structure to operate more efficiently,” says Terry. “But our fragmented technology wouldn’t allow for it.”

The company had 25 servers dispersed around the country supporting its on-premises email, calendaring, and contacts system. Without standardization across the various markets, and with a newsroom’s constant need to be up and running, the McClatchy team knew they had to shift dramatically.

Solution

Adopting organically

A few years later, McClatchy had centralized most of its technology operations. Along with that, the company wanted to standardize on a set of productivity tools across the organization and chose Google Workspace for its availability, flexible pricing, simple and highly secure manageability, and real-time collaboration.

To significantly transform McClatchy into a cohesive enterprise, the company’s head of IT, supported by the CFO, started the Google journey by moving users to Gmail, Contacts, and Calendar to replace its legacy email, contacts, and calendaring solution. “As soon as people began using Gmail, Contacts, and Calendar, they started using Google Docs extensively, too,” says Terry. “It just happened organically and really took off.” Along with those apps, McClatchy users also work in Sheets for tracking articles in production and other things; Slides for training and other presentations; Sites for teams and departments to create their own internal information-sharing sites; Forms for conducting internal surveys; and especially Hangouts and Google Meet.

To help McClatchy make the move to Google Workspace, Google recommended the company work with SADA, a Google Cloud Premier Partner. “SADA did the implementation planning and a lot of the integration,” says Terry. “We still use SADA services and solutions to help manage our environment. They’ve been a wonderful partner for us.”

Results

Saving money and time

The Google Workspace pricing flexibility was another attraction for McClatchy. “After the recession, we needed flexibility, we didn’t want to have to commit to a set number of user licenses,” Terry says. “With Google Workspace, we avoided spending mid-six figures on hardware and software refreshes, and we only pay for what we truly consume.” Plus, working with SADA and Google has been much easier than it was with the company’s previous productivity suite provider, especially in regards to receiving helpful and timely support, Terry adds.
The reliability of Google Workspace has made an enormous difference for McClatchy reporters and editors. “The real-time news team moves really fast, so we need reliable tools,” says Julie Moos, Shared News Director for McClatchy. “With Google Docs, some of our reporters have cut the time spent writing by over 65 percent. Because Google Docs is so reliable, they don’t worry about losing their work. Reporters get feedback and edits faster, too, because of the collaborative nature of Google Docs. And they can have real-time chats in the document with editors.”

Real-time collaboration helps the news team post breaking stories as quickly as possible, sometimes before competitors. In turn, this helps the company stay competitive in the endless race to attract site visitors, which helps McClatchy’s bottom line, given the importance of site traffic to advertisers.

Julie adds, “Google Workspace really helps our news team work in real time. My team of 20 is constantly using Hangouts, Gmail, and Sheets. With team members around the country, in different time zones, and facing around-the-clock deadlines, we simply couldn’t have a successful news team without Google Workspace.”

Enhancing employee satisfaction

Google Workspace also helps new employees get up to speed much faster than the previous legacy productivity suite. “More students today use Google Workspace, so when they come to work for us after graduation, they don’t need training on the tools,” says Terry. “They just start working and collaborating. You can’t put a dollar figure on how valuable that is.”

Enabling eDiscovery

Like any news organization, McClatchy is no stranger to legal action, and the company relies on Vault for reliable documentation archiving and eDiscovery. Other security features of Google Workspace, such as spam and phishing protections, have helped protect the organization from threats such as ransomware and spoofing.

Radically changing how work happens

Google Meet has had perhaps the biggest impact on how McClatchy team members work, and thus helped bring about the organization’s biggest cultural change.

“All day, our teams have video chats in Hangouts Meet. They’re sharing their screens and documents with each other, working on the same Doc at the same time. They can see each other in real time, wherever they are. Hangouts and Google Meet have radically changed the way we do business, and how effective we are,” Terry says. He adds that nearly all meeting spaces are equipped with Google Meet hardware as well, to help facilitate video conferencing.

“Google Meet has significantly reduced our travel expenses and phone bills,” Terry adds. “People don’t have to get on planes just to go to a meeting, and they don’t have to pick up the phone as much. Instead, they do a Hangout.” McClatchy has offshore partners in Europe and Asia who provide technology development and business processing services. Terry adds that Hangouts Meet makes meetings with those partners in other countries more meaningful, because participants can see reactions and understand each other better.
Making the move to Chromebooks

Looking ahead, many end-of-life PCs and Macs at McClatchy may one day be replaced with Chromebooks wherever possible.

“Compared to PCs and Macs, Chromebooks are less expensive, are more secure out-of-the-box, and require much less administration,” Terry says. “If someone breaks a Chromebook, they could just log into another one and keep moving. They wouldn’t lose productivity time. And I wouldn’t have to spend time imaging a new PC for them, which is one of my biggest support issues these days.” Eventually, Terry would like for 80 percent of the McClatchy workforce to use Chromebooks, with the remaining 20 percent using PCs or Macs to access specific desktop applications.

McClatchy is also in the process of moving its on-site file storage to Cloud Storage, which should give the company a big savings in infrastructure costs while making files more widely and easily accessible.

The vision is to continue creating an even more radical workforce transformation, enabled by the combination of Google Workspace and Chromebooks. “What can we do better and how can we be more productive? Google Workspace and Chromebooks will be invaluable to us as we go down this path. They will help us save money because we’re not slowed down by tools that are hard to use. Google Workspace and Chromebooks just work, so we can focus on what we need to do next.”
“SADA did the implementation planning and a lot of the integration. We still use SADA services and solutions to help manage our environment. They’ve been a wonderful partner for us.”

Terry Geiger  
Vice President of Technology Operations, McClatchy
The Bakersfield Californian keeps Kern County informed with Google Workspace

7. The Bakersfield Californian

The Bakersfield Californian is an independent, family-owned newspaper and media company. Originally published in 1866 as The Weekly Courier, it was the county’s first newspaper. Today, The Bakersfield Californian is a recognized innovator in incorporating user-generated content into its media.

Challenges

The Bakersfield Californian had hardware that was at its end of life. The newspaper publisher had been running a “bare bones” setup for both employees and users - each had approximately 18 gigabyte archives of mail per inbox, with the overall size of Exchange storage being 300 gigabytes. The Bakersfield Californian approached SADA for assistance in developing a more cost-effective solution that would provide more inbox space and reduce their administrative overhead.
Solution

Many employees of The Bakersfield Californian were already using Gmail as their personal emailing system, and were familiar with its features. The SADA team and The Bakersfield Californian staff decided that the transition from their former messaging system to Google Workspace would have the least migration impact. The SADA team's goal for the Google Workspace migration was for it to go as smoothly as possible, to allow The Bakersfield Californian to continue to meet critical deadlines. Additionally, the decision to “go Google” would be cost-efficient for the publication, a persuasive point that prompted employees to be open-minded about the prospect of the move. Another compelling point for The Bakersfield Californian was SADA’s referral via Google. SADA deployed Google Workspace and held numerous training seminars to assist The Bakersfield Californian employees in using Google Workspace efficiently and to its full advantage.

Results & benefits

Following SADA’s assistance with the Google Workspace deployment and follow-up training, The Bakersfield Californian reported their usage of the suite was smooth. The Bakersfield Californian employees now have the option to utilize various functions in Google Workspace to finish their work remotely.

Although The Bakersfield Californian is focused on the benefits of emailing within Google Workspace, they perceive the convenience and possibility for innovative use within Google Docs. Given the ability to share documents and hold conversations through options within the document itself, Docs is an invaluable tool in a community where heavy collaboration and real-time edits are tantamount to success. Users in the advertising department at The Bakersfield Californian also find Google Workspace very productive. The fact that they are now able to work whenever they’d like, from wherever they wish, makes responding to customers in a timely matter a much simpler task.

*Note: At the time of this case study, Google Workspace was known as Google Apps*
“The Google Workspace migration and deployment process was extremely successful. With over 120,000 users migrated, Google Workspace has reduced the administrative strain on IT resources allowing us to focus on key objectives. SADA was extremely responsive during the entire implementation process and provided exceptional technical support to ensure a smooth and seamless deployment.”

**Ed Mahon**  
Vice President for Information Services and CIO, Kent State University

*Note: At the time of this case study, Google Workspace was known as Google Apps*
About SADA

At SADA, we climb every mountain, clear every hurdle, and turn the improbable into possible – over and over again. Simply put, we propel your organization forward.

It’s not enough to migrate to the cloud, it’s about what you do once you’re there. Accelerating application development. Advancing productivity and collaboration. Using your data as a competitive edge. When it comes to Google Cloud, we’re not an add-on, we’re a must-have, driving the business performance of our clients with its power.

Beyond our expertise and experience, what sets us apart is our people. It’s the spirit that carried us from scrappy origins as one of the Google Cloud launch partners to an award-winning global partner year after year. With a client list that spans healthcare, financial services, media and entertainment, retail, manufacturing, public sector and digital natives – we simply get the job done, every step of the way.

Your challenges are ours. We’re ready. Let’s go.