

WRN Broadcast has just closed a major deal with a platform operator in Africa and is delivering Kenya's first triple-play service. The company's new Media Centre is one of the finest state-of-the-art ingest and playout centres in Europe. Managing Director **David Treadway** says the big growth currently is coming from managed services for television – here he explains the background to the company's new brand identity



100% BROADCAST

WRN has grown from its origins as a successful international radio distributor – it's a very different company now to what it was 10 years ago.

The World Radio Network is still a very important product and service, part of what we do, and we will continue to use that name as it relates to our twelve language networks around the world. Today we are 100% about broadcast, and we are doing more and more in TV. Whatever it is in the value chain – facilities, enabling, distribution, EPG management, content management, workflow management – WRN Broadcast does it and we wanted our new name to reflect that.

What is the ratio of radio and TV in WRN Broadcast today?

In terms of the business and from a revenue perspective, it is roughly 60/40 in favour of TV. Since we acquired TSI Broadcast about a year ago, more and more of our growth is coming from TV and video, digitisation, managed services, ingest and so on. One has to recognise that over the next two to three years most of the growth will come from managed services for TV.

What is the outlook for radio?

We are still committed to radio and innovating. We continue to be a big provider of shortwave services for clients throughout the world. Recently we launched the Radio with Pictures product, which allows satellite and cable radio stations to display visual content on TV screens – such as live graphics, web content or interactive SMS and Twitter feeds. Radio Netherlands Worldwide is using this for its Arabic service to the Middle East and we are currently in discussion with other broadcasters in the UK and elsewhere.

How do you fit into the mix of playout centres that exist in the UK?

The reason why we are winning clients and building our business is that we have got Europe's most up to date enterprise class software and hardware based playout centre with Pharos Mediator 4 and Omneon video servers. The fact that we are winning major playout contracts such as Top Up TV is indicative of the fact that the customer is at the centre of everything we do, and always has been. We offer everything that our competitors can do and more.

Our approach is to drill down and find out what the client needs and develop a bespoke solution. That's exactly why we won the business for Top Up TV. We offer an end to end solution which is future

“**Radio with Pictures allows satellite and cable radio stations to display visual content on TV screens**”

proof to enable customers to scale up or down as their business requirements change. And we have that balance of the right pricing levels with the right bespoke solution.

In terms of being innovative – are developments customer-led?

Yes, we are client-led. The client is absolutely at the centre of everything we do and we are led by their needs and requirements. You can either take a product from the shelf and hand it to clients – if our clients want that, we can do this. Or we can offer a totally bespoke solution. The decision for WRN to go into TV playout and satellite provision was initially driven by client demand. Often it is a mixture of both. We have taken a more strategic look at the market place since we decided to grow aggressively. We are fully HD ready and we look forward to attracting our first 3D client. In fact, we are in discussions with a platform about that at the moment.

Interactivity is important to broadcasters – what's new there?

We offer full VOD and indeed that is a great part of what we do for [the UK's] Top Up TV. We are agnostic about platforms, so if a client wants us to deliver to mobile we do that, if they want to go to the web, we deliver to the web. In the



past we were specifically looking at fulfilling client's requirements with solutions on an ad hoc basis. What we have done now is broadened that, focusing on asset management and content management.

Once we have got the content in the building – in whatever format – we can then publish to multiple platforms. We can send it to an IPTV platform, we can do VOD streaming as an extra to playout. It's that easy now.

Which markets are you looking at?

The African market is extremely interesting and looking healthy in terms of the amount of discussions we are having with existing or new clients about distribution. Earlier this year we closed a major deal with Nairobi-based Wananchi Group.

We are providing encoding, multiplexing and fibre delivery of more than 12 channels for distribution on Zuku, Kenya's first triple-play service. The channels include MSNBC, Eurosport News, Nickelodeon and Bloomberg, with more to follow. Wananchi Group needed a partner that could offer a robust delivery method, due to the high profile nature of the channels and the strict SLAs in the carriage agreements.

They will be able to receive services from virtually any broadcaster worldwide, using our London teleport, international satellite network

and global fibre connectivity.

How do you market your services?

A good proportion of our business comes by referral. As we are moving to more pro-active marketing we are going out and grabbing the business as opposed to it coming to us. We also picked up a considerable database of clients and leads from the TSI acquisition. We have doubled the size of the sales team, and we issue regular circulars for radio and TV that go to existing and prospective clients. We are at the beginning of a whole new strategic campaign now as we have engaged with a PR company – you're going to hear a lot more about us.

What impact has the worldwide downturn had on you?

Interestingly we continued to grow. We have seen opportunity in the economic downturn and tried to grasp it with both hands, be it acquiring another company or providing services for clients in slightly different ways to meet their economic needs. You do have to take some practical decisions based on your clients' situation, I think the downturn has caused us to work smarter.

How do you see the industry evolving - where is it all heading?

I used to work in the cable industry

“ The big growth currently is coming from managed services for TV ”

and the buzz word was convergence at the beginning of the 90's. Recently we have seen a real opportunity in the sector to deliver that, it's all about what the end user wants, where and when they want it and how they consume it. It's a gradual evolution, often led by the way younger people use media and expect it to be delivered to them. Younger people might want radio delivered in a slightly different way than in the past but they continue to want it and consume it in vast numbers.

We will continue to see TV consumed in its traditional form, but we will also see more and more TV consumed in the way that Top Up TV is consumed – that is, where and when the consumer wants it. And on which platform. I think we are much better placed now to deliver what the consumer demands rather than us trying to lead them down a technological path just because we as broadcasters think this is the right thing to do. We have seen some very dramatic examples here in the UK where if you don't deliver what the consumers want they will abandon your channel.

And the idea that the radio or TV would die because something else came along has been shown to be nonsense.

David Treadway, thank you.

www.wrnbroadcast.com