

case study **Scripps Networks**



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— **Skiff Wager**, CIO *Scripps Networks*

Scripps Networks Expands and Relies on Ascertain for Development Towards Strategy

THE ORGANIZATION

Scripps Networks operates two of the nation's fastest growing cable television networks — Home & Garden Television (HGTV), with more than 80 million subscribers, and Food Network, with more than 76 million subscribers — as well as the DIY-Do It Yourself and FINE LIVING networks. With offices in Knoxville, Tenn., New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Atlanta and Detroit, the company is part of The E.W. Scripps Company, a diverse media concern with interests in newspaper publishing, broadcast television, category television and interactive media. Scripps operates 21 daily newspapers, 10 broadcast TV stations, and four cable television networks, and its programming can be seen in 25 countries.

THE CHALLENGE

Scripps Networks was embarking on a multiyear media asset management strategy, requiring a large-scale systems architecture. A key piece of this strategy was video-on-demand (VOD), a strategic new capability that would allow Scripps Networks to deliver compressed video content from networks like HGTV and the Food Network to multiple cable TV operators, creating opportunities to offer new services and expand market share.

THE SOLUTION

Skiff Wager, CIO for Scripps Networks, turned to Ascertane, an IT consulting and implementation firm, because of its deep roots in the media and entertainment industry.

Ascertane provided essential research, architecture design, and database work that supported the company's strategic asset management plan. This activity provided information to assist in the creation of a presentation to gain traction within the organization. Having supported the high-level architecture and strategy, Ascertane

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engineers assisted in building the system for internal customers. Ascertane's process was to issue statements of work for the components of the architecture, with clear milestones, so that Scripps Networks was able to track progress incrementally and see results. The architecture work was completed rapidly. Ascertane combined custom software development with commercial off-the-shelf technology. “That's part of their value add. We relied on Ascertane to evaluate the technology independently.” Wager noted.

THE RESULTS

The video-on-demand pilot has been up and running smoothly for over a year, according to Wager, and was instrumental in a major VOD trial between Scripps Networks and the cable

providers. As cable operators move more aggressively into digital formats, many believe that enhanced services such as VOD may reduce customer “churn.” In an independent survey of those who purchased on-demand programming through the Scripps Networks-Time Warner trial in Cincinnati, 67 percent said they are more likely to retain their digital services due to the Scripps Networks On-Demand offerings.

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A particular Ascertane differentiator, according to Wager, is the firm's ability to be proactive about Scripps Networks future business and technology needs. “Ascertane is already looking out six to twelve months ahead for me. They anticipate what my future needs may be. They're ready when I'm ready.”

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