Accenture helps Mediaset launch Premium Play—a groundbreaking, multi-device, Over-the-Top TV service—and maintain high performance with ongoing innovative offerings

Accenture Video Solution attracts more than 1 million users for Italy’s leading broadcaster’s Premium Play OTT-TV service.

High performance. Delivered.
About the Mediaset Group

Mediaset Group is the first commercial broadcaster in Italy and a major media company in Europe. The group operates a wide range of broadcast and related media, including free-to-air generalist (Canale 5, Italia 1, Retequattro) and mini-generalist television (other Digital Terrestrial TV channels), pay TV (Mediaset Premium), TV drama and film production, broadcast infrastructure management and home shopping (Mediashopping). The company has also expanded its business beyond Italy by becoming the major shareholder of the Spanish broadcasters Telecinco and Cuatro, and by acquiring Endemol—a leading global TV format producer. In 2011, Mediaset Group reported consolidated net revenues of over $4.250 billion.
To diversify its revenue stream, the company launched in January 2005 a new business unit, Mediaset Premium, a subscription-based pay-TV offering on digital terrestrial television that achieved rapid success. This success led the company to develop a new offering in non-linear video distribution over broadband networks—what is now known as “Over-the-Top-TV” or OTT-TV. The new Mediaset OTT-TV service, called “Premium Play,” is an innovative product that complements the company’s traditional linear TV premium channel offering, evolving the broadcaster’s capabilities toward convergent, personalized, multi-device models.

Premium Play has since become an important source of growth for Mediaset, becoming one of the leading on-demand subscription services in Italy and Europe, boasting more than 1 million users across all available service-enabled devices (STB, PCTV, iPad, Connected TV and Xbox 360). It is also differentiating the Mediaset Premium brand from its competitors.

Considered the first OTT-TV service in Italy, Premium Play is helping Mediaset improve customer loyalty by providing richer and higher-quality "anywhere and anytime" services, helping both to increase average revenue per user and attract new customers. Customer growth has been on a steady rise since the debut of Premium Play, reinforced by high use of the service with virtually no churn rate for such devices as STB. Premium Play continues to hold potential to help increase the company’s advertising revenues by enabling better customer profiling and targeting.

To deploy this strategic program, Mediaset selected Accenture as its robust solution provider and systems integrator, making this choice from a range of other large, global integrators and technology players. According to Franco Ricci, Managing Director at Mediaset’s RTI, “Accenture is our natural innovation ally because of their deep industry vision, experience, strong convergent broadcast and broadband skills, and their knowledge of communications network technologies, IT applications and video content delivery and content management solutions.”
How Accenture helped

Accenture, in collaboration with Mediaset engineers, developed the Premium Play solution based on an open architecture that gives Mediaset both technological and business flexibility, facilitating greater interoperability between components and easier collaboration among allies across the communications and broadcast ecosystem.

Achieving product launch

During the preliminary strategy phase of the Mediaset Premium Play project, the Accenture team worked with Mediaset’s engineers to design a set of new, leading-edge OTT-TV capabilities, including Video-on-Demand, Catch-up TV, and linear and virtual linear channels, helping Mediaset achieve first-mover advantage in the Italian video broadband market.

Mediaset asked Accenture to help confirm that the new service would be available at launch through industry-standard, DGTVi Gold-labeled, hybrid set-top boxes, available in the retail market. In addition, the company wanted to provide a seamless consumer experience by making Premium Play content available on a wide array of digital devices including tablets, PCs, connected TVs, gaming consoles, smartphones and Blu-ray players.

The program was delivered on a very challenging timetable—the service had to be ready for technical trial testing in just seven months. One important advantage the project team had in meeting this challenge was the ability to leverage the Accenture Video Solution, a suite of pre-integrated assets capable of orchestrating Mediaset’s legacy digital video ingestion and assets management system. This powerful mix of integrated technologies enables the delivery of digital video over broadband as a seamless user experience, and allows for the integration of broadband and broadcast digital video on multiple devices. The solution is based on a smart IT architecture that enables service providers to launch new, high-quality services quickly and economically while at the same time reducing risk and the initial costs of IT and infrastructure set-up.

The solution’s open architecture approach gave Mediaset both technological and business flexibility, enabling greater interoperability between components and easier collaboration among allies across the communications and broadcast ecosystem. The horizontal scalability of the new platform can also enable the future growth of Mediaset’s IP broadband business.

This interoperability is supported by the Accenture Video Solution. Using a service-oriented architecture approach, the solution’s platform exposes and orchestrates business services, and integrates with critical business support systems and operating support system capabilities. As a result, the Mediaset Premium Play solution powered by Accenture is characterized by extensive flexibility and interoperability between components. The solution’s unique platform is also helping Mediaset to expand into the broader European device ecosystem.

The pre-integrated assets and the industrialized development processes used by Accenture enabled the development team to deliver the Premium Play service in record time—only seven months from project start to the initial piloting phase.
Accenture helps Mediaset launch Premium Play
Accenture helps Mediaset launch Premium Plays

Ongoing innovations

Following the design, build, implementation and launch of the Premium Play product, Accenture continued to collaborate with Mediaset on a number of initiatives as part of a multiyear contract, including:

**Xbox 360 and iPad application**

Premium Play was further enhanced with the launch of an innovative iPad application that lets customers watch their favorite content wherever and whenever they want, becoming the first service of this type on a mobile device. The application is an addition to the same one already available on Xbox 360, PC, STB application, and was completed in a short span of three months. Customers can download the app for free from the Italian Apple Store and use it to access live TV, as well as the Mediaset On-Demand video library of around 2,000 items. The library also offers a Catch-up TV and a Virtual Linear Channel section. In the week after being added to the Italian Apple Store, the Premium Play app became "App of the Week," and earned a four-star consumer average rating.

**iPad Download & Play**

Accenture continued to innovate within the iPad application, and collaborated with Mediaset to develop and launch a "Download & Play" feature. With this feature, users can download and store their favorite video on-demand contents on their own devices based on their Mediaset Premium Subscription.

**Samsung Connected TV**

Mediaset complemented its Premium Play offering by enabling Samsung Smart TV to the service. The new Premium Play Samsung Connected TV application was immediately well received by customers due to the proliferation of connected TV devices that continues to steadily grow.

**Advertising**

Premium Play features were enhanced further with the launch of advertising on different enabled devices, such as STB, PCTV, Connected TV and the iPad. This new feature allows Mediaset to manage the advertising function, including the pre-roll, an advertising banner in a detail page, and the post-roll, allowing Mediaset to increasingly monetize more from the service.

**Supporting new business models**

Support for new business models was also a critical goal for Mediaset. Premium Play includes different customer plans such as subscription and transaction-based models (credit cards, prepaid vouchers, and so on) and new advertising functionality. Once again, the Accenture Service Delivery Platform enabled the flexibility required to address these needs. Because of its extensive configurability, the platform enables Mediaset to quickly change the business rules defining the access rights of different types of users and to offer new promotions to different audiences at different times without being restricted by the processing rules of Mediaset’s CRM system.

To enable a differentiated and interactive consumer experience, Accenture worked with Mediaset to deploy a range of innovative functions, including:

- A recommendation engine that promotes relevant content to individuals based on their user profile, which holds information on their viewing preferences and stated interests, and provides them with a "personal content channel."
- Adaptive streaming on all the devices to provide a guaranteed quality of service, both in standard and high-definition, in an open Internet environment, even if the broadband line is congested or unstable. The ability to provide a consistent, high-quality service has a positive impact on customer acquisition and retention.
- Interoperability across content delivery networks to scale the number of customers that concurrently ask for video streaming, enabling more effective management of content distribution costs to network providers.

According to Francesco Venturini, Accenture’s Global Broadcast Industry Lead, “This ability to serve a ‘market of one’ is a strong differentiating aspect of the solution we built for Mediaset. It enriches the traditional TV consumption experience and will bring a new level of engagement typical of the online world—greater flexibility and more consumer choice.”

Giovanni Gagliardi, Accenture’s Premium Play project Delivery Lead adds, “This solution will give Mediaset new ways to enhance customer relationships and strengthen customer loyalty, especially with younger generations, and can boost advertising-generated revenues and content usage. These are critical objectives for broadcasters as the role of the television continues to evolve from home television to personal television.”
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Operations services

On an ongoing basis, an Accenture Operations Team for Mediaset monitors around the clock, seven days a week, every aspect of on-demand delivery by using the Accenture Video Solution, which provides a fully featured control room. The status of the service on each device is controlled through a powerful operating support system from the platform to the network, through response time, the monitoring of each technical service, and the monitoring of the content delivery network performance, in order to deliver robust, high-quality service.

The Accenture Operations Team monitoring Mediaset service delivery provides in-depth experience in the following:

- Service management
- Video streaming troubleshooting engineers
- Video ingestion and scheduling experts
- Information technology (IT) and database administration (DBA) engineers
- Monitoring operators

Accenture Innovation Center

Supporting the success of all initiatives is Mediaset’s access to the Accenture Innovation Center in Rome. With more than 500 professionals who are deeply knowledgeable and experienced in the requirements of digital TV projects, the center is ideally positioned to help companies seize the opportunities of digital transformation. It offers services and application solutions such as digital supply chain, OTT-TV, Web TV, mobile TV and mobility services. The Innovation Center can also serve as the primary integration point for multiple vendors and teams working at other locations, testing the range of technologies needed to deliver solutions.

According to Marco Pellegrinato, Deputy Director of Research and Development at Mediaset, “I have been positively impressed with the competence of the professionals at the Innovation Center. Accenture hosted the ‘early bird’ of our new services on their platform and also provided the business and operational support solution. The launch of Premium Play was very challenging and a complex development program involving a broad range of new technologies. Accenture has played a critical role in managing this complexity together with Mediaset expertise and competencies. They helped us drive the successful implementation of our Premium Play service.”
Teaming with Accenture supports Mediaset’s growth objectives and vision of becoming a true multimedia company. The pre-integrated assets and the industrialized development processes available at the Accenture Innovation Center enable the development team to deliver innovative products and services in short time spans, helping Mediaset to continue to gain speed to market in a dynamic and competitive marketplace.

Greater knowledge of their customers’ interests and viewing patterns also provides Mediaset with new revenue opportunities through more targeted advertising, and gives the company a closer relationship with consumers. Where once the only communication with customers was through a monthly bill, Mediaset can now understand the preferences and viewing habits of more than one million people, and then leverage that information to propose new services to increase average revenue per user. Even anonymous users on Premium Play can register for the service and receive personalized offers—and this can encourage them to become a Mediaset Premium subscriber.

Total cost of ownership has also been reduced. A smaller team is now required to manage the robust editorial process thanks to the high level of automation offered by the platform. Because the platform developed for Mediaset has a reusable set of services for all devices, the company can continue to launch other new services very quickly. In addition, the flexible solution and the use of a common back end enable Mediaset to extend existing services to new platforms quickly and easily, avoiding the implementation of ad hoc solutions for each new device introduced to the market.

High performance delivered

The innovative, high-quality Over-the-Top-TV solution delivered by Accenture enabled Mediaset to be a first mover and gain a competitive advantage for broadcasting and broadband convergent services in the important Italian TV and Internet marketplace. Subsequent initiatives enabling the launch of new products and services continue to support this leadership.

Premium Play together with ongoing collaboration with Accenture will continue to be a vital part of Mediaset’s business strategy. “The launch of this new service underscores Mediaset’s reputation as a market leader and innovator,” says Franco Ricci, Managing Director at Mediaset’s RTI, “and represents a significant step forward in becoming a true multimedia company and maintaining our content and technology leadership position in the current dynamic and competitive market.”
About Accenture

Accenture is a global management consulting, technology services and outsourcing company, with approximately 261,000 people serving clients in more than 120 countries. Combining unparalleled experience, comprehensive capabilities across all industries and business functions, and extensive research on the world’s most successful companies, Accenture collaborates with clients to help them become high-performance businesses and governments. The company generated net revenues of US$27.9 billion for the fiscal year ended Aug. 31, 2012. Its home page is www.accenture.com.

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