



In February 1989,
Sky ushered in the
dawn of TV's new
age, with a
four-channel satellite
service, bringing
competition and
greater quality
choice to viewers.
Last year, Sky Digital
was launched,
offering the UK's first
fully digital television
channel.



BSkyB CASE STUDY

In its first five months, Sky had only 10,000 subscribers. Now, BSkyB (In 1990 Sky merged with BSB to form BSkyB) serves more than 20 million viewers in 7.44 million households throughout the UK and Ireland. In Britain alone, BSkyB reaches approximately one third of all homes.

The launch of Sky Digital was a carefully planned exercise initiated by one of the biggest mailing campaigns ever seen in the UK. PReS was used to compose the 8 million+ letters that formed the main subscriber recruitment vehicle. Fully personalised, this mailing incorporated a sophisticated stock integrity and document tracking system, based on bar codes hidden in the binding margin.

BSkyB rightly anticipated a massive take-up from the direct marketing campaign, and needed to be ready to provide the best administrative service to their new subscriptions, which could include both

television and telephony users. As well as billing and statements, a new method of producing all the non-marketing, customer-facing letters was needed. These included various administration letters and debt collection documents. This system needed to be fully scalable to grow from an initial low volume PCL output, to today's requirements to print over 500 different document types, on two PageStream machines!

BSkyB invited Program Products to design and implement this printing application, which had to present an easy means of generating letter texts and options, whilst handling the complexities of high-volume output. We chose Word/PReS as the primary means of generating the document texts. This enabled BSkyB document creation staff to concentrate on the main task without the distraction of learning a new software tool.

The ability to embed their own coding routines in Word/PReS applications then allowed BSkyB to handle some of the more complex requirements including printing the necessary barcodes for the Pitney Bowes inserter and catering for duplex and multi-page letters.

Since the inception of BSkyB's Digital service the number of applications has been increased to include letters and invoices for digital customers as well as commission statements for dealers. Word/PReS is now used to compose the letter text, which is then passed (complete with its formatting) to a controlling, master PReS script. There is one incoming data file which, using variable record contents, tells PReS which text to use for the appropriate document type.

We have also developed a number of other small utility scripts by which BSkyB control items such as tray selection and

stock usage automatically. The controlling scripts use information generated by these utilities to select the input tray to be used and provide information to the operators about which stationery to load prior to printing.

The invoice and statement documents are much more complex. For example, the structured data-file has to be checked to see if the information will all fit on one page; if it won't, PReS creates a front-page summary followed by detail pages. The payment slip must always appear on the front page and, as the documents can be multi-page, PReS has to ensure that the integrity barcodes are in the correct places to trigger the appropriate inserts.

Not only have BSkyB used PReS and Word/PReS internally to create the initial subscriber demand and all of their customer facing documentation, but

they are also using PReS for their continuing Direct Marketing and Fulfilment, and for billing telephony services.

K2, one of the UK's longest standing PReS users has been chosen by BSkyB as an outsource supplier to complement the in-house applications.

In summary, PReS has been a key component in the creation of BSkyB's hugely successful digital television business, and in its smooth and effective administration, through its very rapid growth curve.

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