

CASE STUDY

SKY'S BROADCAST SUPPORT SYSTEM



ABOUT BRITISH SKY BROADCASTING

British Sky Broadcasting is Britain and Ireland's leading home entertainment and communications provider, offering a comprehensive multi-channel, multi-platform television service to more than 11 million homes. BSkyB has led a revolution in entertainment, innovation and choice. In less than a decade, it has established a leading position in sports and movie programming and has been responsible for a dramatic increase in the number of channels available. The Sky platform offers access to over 500 television and radio channels, as well as other telecommunication and internet services such as Sky Talk and Sky Broadband. BSkyB's Broadcast Services Division is responsible for the support and evolution of all technology underpinning production and distribution of content at Sky.

FIREFLY MIGRATION'S TOOLS ALLOWED US TO ACHIEVE OUR GOALS AND TRANSITION US TO A TECHNOLOGY PLATFORM TO SUPPORT OUR FUTURE GROWTH.

– Tim Taylor
Head of Broadcast & Media IT, BSkyB

BSS MAGIC TO .NET MIGRATION IN NUMBERS:

- Over 800 active business users
- 2000 uniPaaS programs
- 300MB uniPaaS Export (code)
- 15 Magic developers
- 2 QA team members
- 2 weeks of specialized .NET training
- Migration completed 8 weeks ahead of schedule



Firefly Migration
Magic to .NET



... WE COMPLETED THE MIGRATION PROCESS EIGHT WEEKS AHEAD OF SCHEDULE. IT WAS A REAL PLEASURE WORKING WITH THE FIREFLY MIGRATION TEAM. THEY PROVIDED UNWAVERING SUPPORT DURING THE ENTIRE PROJECT, AND WERE COMMITTED TO DELIVERING REAL RESULTS.

– Jimmy Kawa, Senior Project Manager



BSS, THE “HEART” OF SKY’S BROADCASTING OPERATION

Sky’s Broadcast Support System (BSS), developed and maintained by the Broadcast Services Division for over a decade, holds all broadcast scheduling information, serves as a repository for programmes and commercials, manages media slot acquisition, and is responsible for ensuring that transmission schedules are ready to air.

BSS is also a key enabler of both products such as Video-On-Demand (VOD), and services such as Sky HD Movies. The system contains approximately 2,000 programs and serves over 800 active users across the business. It has extensive interfaces with Sky’s business applications and is mission-critical to Sky’s 24/7 broadcasting operation.

SKY LOOKED TO MOVE TO A MAINSTREAM TECHNOLOGY

BSS was originally developed in 1997 using the Magic development platform, and underwent several platform upgrades including its most recent upgrade to Magic’s uniPaaS platform.

The use of a non-mainstream development platform led to several issues, including:

- Difficulty in finding and hiring developers.
- Burdensome quality assurance processes.
- Challenges in integrating with other platforms.
- A general feeling of being limited in attempts to enhance the system.

Therefore, Sky was interested in migrating BSS to a supported, mainstream and progressive platform that would not only allow them to recruit developers, but also to introduce new development capabilities.

Tim Taylor, Head of Broadcast & Media IT, at BSS said, “We were looking for a technology ‘refresh’. We needed to move to a standard platform that could help us keep up with the industry’s constantly changing landscape, as well as have access to modern tools and methodologies that would improve our application development. Firefly Migration’s automatic migration solution gave us that option.”

FIREFLY MIGRATION: MOST CERTAIN AND LEAST COSTLY OPTION

Sky considered a few options for moving BSS forward to a modern platform:

- Complete rewrite to Java.
- Complete rewrite to .NET.
- Fully automated conversion to .NET with Firefly Migration.

Sky also considered an option to convert BSS to the latest Magic technology, uniPaaS RIA.

The BSS development team, along with external .NET experts, thoroughly evaluated and analyzed all of the above options, comparing both the cost and the risk of each one.



Throughout the due diligence process, it was clear that Firefly Migration's solution was both the most certain, and the least costly compared to the other options, and also guaranteed the quickest delivery, lack of development freeze, minimal impact to business productivity and easiest transition for development team.

GRADUAL ROLLOUT OF THE BSS APPLICATION

Sky tested Firefly Migration's automated migration on its smaller but no less critical applications before migrating BSS. This proved successful and Sky moved on to migrate BSS. Throughout the testing phase of the migration project, the development team continued to release features on schedule without any interruption.

Those features were automatically migrated as well, a unique benefit of Firefly Migration's solution. Moving a few of BSS users to .NET at a time, Sky gradually rolled out the migrated application to all of its 800+ active BSS users, without ever freezing development, or disrupting business operations. The parallel, fault-tolerant deployment of .NET, allowed users to instantly revert to the Magic-based version if a problem was encountered.

Jimmy Kawa, Senior Project Manager oversaw the work and said, "One of our main concerns is that

a migration project would disturb development and maintenance of BSS, which is something we could not afford to have happen.

We encountered absolutely no disturbances during the project; in fact we completed the migration process eight weeks ahead of schedule. It was a real pleasure working with the Firefly Migration team. They provided unwavering support during the entire project, and were committed to delivering real results."

SMOOTH TRANSITION FOR SKY'S DEVELOPMENT TEAM

Sky's Magic developers smoothly transitioned to become .NET developers and subsequently Sky was able to scale its team by recruiting additional .NET developers. In retaining one of its main assets—its developers—the BSS team gained the ability to maintain the pace of its development projects and .NET has provided opportunities and tools to work quicker and more efficiently.

"Not only are we now using an industry standard, flexible platform thanks to Firefly Migration, but we were also able to retain our development team. With more resources available to us now, our development projects can only go forward from here, allowing us to deliver effectively and efficiently to our business users," said Tim Taylor, Head of Broadcast & Media IT.



WE NEEDED TO MOVE TO A STANDARD PLATFORM THAT COULD HELP US KEEP UP WITH THE INDUSTRY'S CONSTANTLY CHANGING LANDSCAPE, AS WELL AS HAVE ACCESS TO MODERN TOOLS AND METHODOLOGIES THAT WOULD IMPROVE OUR APPLICATION DEVELOPMENT. FIREFLY MIGRATION'S AUTOMATIC MIGRATION SOLUTION GAVE US THAT OPTION.



– Tim Taylor
Head of Broadcast & Media IT

