

Fingertip Weather

How WDR is using AMD FirePro™ professional graphics to bring sun and rain to life – instantly!



Customer:
WDR

Industry:
Broadcasting

Business opportunity:

- > Give meteorologists the flexibility to design and present their own television weather forecasts
- > Enable quick and easy real-time updates during the breakfast show

Solution:

- > ATI FirePro™ V8750 and Ventuz real-time multimedia technology

Business impact:

- > Weather maps prepared in minutes and presented in seconds
- > Presenter has complete real-time control
- > Reliance on external graphics service eliminated
- > WDR leads the way in real-time weather forecasting

"This real-time application gives the freedom to create individual weather forecasts with multiple multimedia content. The forecasts can be more up to date than any other show in Germany due to the real-time capabilities of the graphic-hardware."

—Donald Bäcker,
Weatherman at WDR

Umbrella or sun cream?

The morning weather forecast helps people everywhere make daily decisions. In Germany 3 million people tune in to ARD Morgenmagazin, the popular breakfast television show produced in Cologne by the public broadcasting institution WDR (Westdeutscher Rundfunk or West German Broadcasting). Beginning at 5.30am the show runs for three and a half hours with a weather report every 30 minutes. In order to put together these seven forecasts WDR's in-house meteorologist used to prepare hand written documents that were either passed to the internal graphics department or faxed to an external supplier. Data was compiled into a presentation and returned electronically. With weather changing continuously the forecaster was always under time pressure to produce updates. Because WDR was reliant upon external agencies it was not always possible to incorporate the most recent changes in each forecast. As a public body, WDR wanted to improve its service to viewers and increase the speed, accuracy and control of this whole process.

FirePro Fast Facts:

AMD FirePro™ V8750 for speed and reliability, clear content and high resolution



Drag and drop ease

WDR turned to INCAS Training und Projekte. The leading worldwide provider of training for Ventuz software, INCAS also designs and develops real-time 3D solutions using Ventuz. Stephan Otten, CEO of INCAS, explains, "In order to maintain its high viewing figures, it is essential that WDR provides accurate and up-to-the minute weather information. We therefore developed a two part solution: a graphics editing tool which incorporates a database and a presentation interface."

Meteorologists at WDR can now design maps by dragging and dropping weather symbols simply and easily, exactly where they want them. They can quickly incorporate satellite or cloud pictures and amend temperature and wind direction details. Seconds later they can be presenting the forecast live, using their fingers on a large-scale touch screen in the studio. This real-time graphics solution incorporates VENTUZ 2008 on a standard PC, powered by an ATI FirePro™ V8750 professional graphics card. The large-scale display is a Panasonic 103" full HD plasma display equipped with a touch overlay enabling instant control of the application.

"Although the television station had been using another supplier's graphics cards, we recommended the ATI FirePro™ V8750 based on our experience of its reliability, speed and performance," explains Stephan. "In particular, Ventuz has a good working relationship with AMD, ensuring that we receive a high level of support; AMD technical experts do everything they can to help their customers."

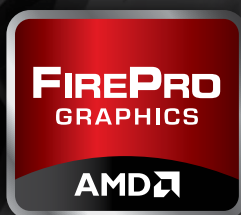
Fast forecasting

Weather forecasters at WDR Breakfast TV now have a complete solution in their office. With full control, they can develop their own maps just in time, putting together a report exactly as they wish. They can use their hands to present the latest information. In contrast, data was previously streamed back to the studio as a fixed graphic that appeared on a small screen. Presenters had no opportunity to interact with the data or change anything. As Stephan comments, "The weather map came in and they simply had to tell a set story, even if there was an evolving situation".

Control and efficiency

WDR no longer needs to rely on an external service provider to produce weather maps; the station has full control. The solution went live in June 2010 and WDR was therefore the first broadcaster in Germany to bring interactive real-time weather forecasts to its audience. "Feedback from the client was fantastic. WDR is very pleased with the results and very proud of the solution," adds Stephan Otten.

The speed and clarity of WDR's weather updates really attracted the attention of the industry throughout Germany. As a result, other television stations approached INCAS to find out more. "This was very nice for us. It has already helped us to win new project work and we have been commissioned to develop new ways in which to present election results."



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