



Business challenge

As digital media proliferates, traditional TV audiences are migrating to platforms of their choosing. Media companies need smarter ways to find and engage with viewers, or risk losing audiences and advertising revenues.

Transformation

As TV audiences fragment across a growing range of digital channels, it is becoming harder for media companies to convince advertisers to keep spending. To help its media clients find and engage with TV viewers, and thereby maintain and grow ad revenues, RSG Media migrated its analytics platform to IBM® Cloud™, gaining the scale and performance to deliver deeper insight from larger and more complex data sets.

Results

Accelerates insight

into richer and more complex sets of audience data

Allows fast, easy scaling

as demand changes with flexible resources

Frees up time

to focus on business enablement rather than technology and operations

RSG Media

Delivering faster and deeper insight into TV audiences with IBM Cloud

RSG Media is a media tech company that believes in using both art and science to deliver radical insights and deeper connections to drive the evolution of the media ecosystem. The company drives clients' revenue and profits through rights, audiences and advertising across platforms using deep analytics, AI, enterprise systems and expert advisory services. Its customers are industry-leading TV networks, studios, distributors, video on demand (VOD) over-the-top (OTT) media services, and brand licensors located in more than 170 countries.

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— Shiv Sehgal, CEO, Media Mantra at RSG Media

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Finding the elusive audience

Although US adults are spending more time than ever interacting with media — 12 hours a day on average — analysts expect the audience share for linear and time-shifted TV to continue falling in the coming years. This resulting reduction in advertising spend will require TV networks to get much smarter about how they find and retain their audiences. With profit margins falling across the industry, competition for viewers has intensified dramatically, while the ongoing proliferation of digital platforms is making it harder to effectively target and engage with audiences.

To monetize their content and keep advertising revenues flowing, media companies need better and faster insight into their audiences. RSG Media aims to help media companies “follow the eyeballs” by deploying deep analytics and machine learning to provide real-time insights that support decision making around scheduling and advertising. RSG Media’s Media Mantra analytics platform employs behavioral targeting to identify likely viewers and determine how best to reach them, whether on home, sister or competitor networks.

Shiv Sehgal, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Media Mantra at RSG Media, explains: “Content is still king, but you also need to know your audience and who they are, so that you strategically target the right time to air the right programming, to grow audiences and ad revenue. Additional complexity within linear media, is that programmers share TV programming time with ads and promo[tion]s for content, which compete for the same block of time. Naturally, the ad team wants to sell that time to bring in more dollars, but the promo team wants to use it to bring greater brand awareness and draw larger audiences. The tug of war between bringing in ad dollars today versus growing larger audiences for greater monetization tomorrow is a prime example of how data-driven strategies can add to the bottom line and deliver value across the enterprise.”

With both data volumes and user demand skyrocketing, RSG Media saw that its existing on-premises technology stack would struggle to meet client requirements for deep and rich analytics. Recognizing that expanding the existing solution would only temporarily solve the issue, RSG Media sought a new architectural approach offering high scalability for deeper analytics across a larger user base, around-the-clock availability and cost-effective performance.

Speed in the cloud

RSG Media migrated to a highly automated, cloud-based technology stack built for scale and continuous parallel processing. The company moved its on-premises extract, transform, load (ETL) stack to the IBM Db2® Warehouse on Cloud platform.

“Why IBM? The real answer is the people,” says Sehgal. “It’s people that make things happen, and from a technology perspective, we really wanted to team up with a provider willing to evolve with our changing business needs.”

In RSG Media’s new cloud landscape, a persistent, scalable, event-driven ETL layer on IBM Cloud parses and validates incoming data from Nielsen and other third-party sources. The IBM Analytics for Apache Spark pulls big data from both the IBM Cloud Object Storage and Db2 Warehouse on Cloud platforms and transforms it into valuable insights.

“From a pure technology standpoint, the heart and soul of everything we do at RSG Media is IBM Db2 Warehouse on Cloud,” says Sehgal. “We have benchmarked it against leading competitors such as Snowflake and Amazon Redshift, and Db2 Warehouse on Cloud gives us the best price-performance ratio. The

engine and structure of the database provide the fastest way to crunch our Nielsen MIT, NAD and AMRLD audience data.”

RSG Media uses IBM ILOG® CPLEX® Optimization Studio software to build and train AI and machine-learning models.

“We required technologies that could be tuned and tweaked for the media industry,” says Sehgal. “Considering how Nielsen delivers audience data, we needed the ability to process data and reprocess corrections to an underlying data set – while gaining the capacity to support complex business queries about granular audience behaviors. IBM Cloud gives us these capabilities.”

The flexibility and connectivity of IBM Cloud components enabled RSG Media to build a cloud platform that meets its production workflow needs, creating a fast data platform. The IBM Cloud Kubernetes Service acts as the central nervous system for this cloud-based analytics environment, scheduling and orchestrating containers to distribute the right data to the right analytics components at the right time to meet business needs.

“Our key objectives for the new platform all revolved around speed: speed in innovation, in access to

data, in delivery of actionable insights, in time to market, and even in failure,” says Sehgal. “IBM Cloud allows us to fail fast without breaking the bank, so we can try out new technologies to bring added value to our clients. IBM provided the tools and resources for us to build a perfectly tuned platform to deliver insight to the media and entertainment industry.”

Adopting a cloud-based approach also accelerates the onboarding of new clients. RSG Media can set up a standard client environment in as little as 15 minutes, and fully customize it to the client’s workflows and reporting requirements within a month. In an industry where traditional analytics implementations can take years, this is a huge step forward.

Deep and rapid insight

One of the key business challenges that RSG Media helps solve is creating the business case for promos, including which shows should be promoted, when, how and to whom.

“Issue number one is making the ROI case for time on the network,” Sehgal explains. “Issue number two is making sure you can actually deliver that ROI. That’s where the modeling side and analytic side comes in: where do we get the most bang for

the buck? And how can we precisely find the target viewers, whether that’s on our network or our sister networks, and pull them away from competitors?”

Solving these tough challenges requires increasingly sophisticated analysis of the highly nuanced behaviors of TV viewers. RSG Media gives its clients analytics tools on IBM Cloud to transform deep and rich audience data into timely insights that aid decision-making processes. The solution takes care of the heavy-lifting work on enormous data sets, freeing up human experts to apply their experience and ingenuity to understanding the stories behind those data points.

“We give our clients the flexibility to be creative, to analyze things in different ways, to segment the audience in different ways,” says Sehgal. “We’re putting data together to tell accurate stories, and that’s what moving to the IBM Cloud has allowed us to do. Having a programmatic platform based solely on machines and models is not the best approach, because people have so much institutional knowledge to add. We give them the tools and the data points so that they can make the best decisions.”

RSG Media’s new cloud-based platform brings analytical insights to its clients faster than before, providing

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deeper and more accurate insights while simultaneously reducing data costs for the service provider. The company can flex its cloud resources up and down as demand changes, and the modular architecture will enable RSG Media to swap in new technology components as they become available.

“IBM Cloud enables us to be cost-effective and to scale up by flipping a switch, so we now have a smart platform that adapts to changing business environments,” says Sehgal. “There is no longer a single point of failure, and combined with built-in health management, automated recovery and self-service infrastructure, this means that we can offer a more resilient and secure service to our clients.”

Sehgal concludes: “For many years we had to worry about engineering issues. IBM Cloud gives RSG Media a platform where we don’t have to think about the underlying technology or

data management decisions, so we can concentrate on the business and helping our clients make money.”

In the near future, RSG Media will work with IBM to bring a customized IBM Watson® AI platform to the media and entertainment industry, providing the ability to intelligently forecast ratings, share and delivery for TV programs. This partnership combines RSG Media’s 30 years of domain expertise with world-leading Watson™ technology to help TV networks understand and reach their increasingly diverse and fragmented audiences.

Mukesh Sehgal, CEO, President and founder of RSG Media, comments: “IBM’s technology platform gives us the scalable technologies to bring to market product offerings that can identify our client’s core content amongst their vast portfolios. Finding that needle in the haystack is less of an act of excavation, more playing match maker to fit programming with network audiences over time. I truly believe our organization’s value to our clients in today’s rapidly changing landscape is the freedom to focus on their core competencies — to align their business around a core content portfolio and build on that foundation to drive distribution and anchor measurable relationships with audiences over time.”

Solution components

- IBM® Analytics for Apache Spark
- IBM Cloud™ Kubernetes Services (Managed Cloud Spark Service)
- IBM Cloud Object Storage
- IBM Db2® Warehouse on Cloud
- IBM ILOG® CPLEX® Optimization Studio

Take the next step

To learn more about IBM Cloud, please contact your IBM representative or IBM Business Partner, or visit the following website: ibm.com/cloud

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