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## **Speaking notes from 3G content & mobile devices seminar**

When Martin, Graham and I sat down to discuss our presentations I was very quick to point out that it would be useless for me to talk about the shape of 3G services in July 06 - or any time in the future for that matter. All I really can tell you about is how Fairfax and Fairfax Digital in particular, is responding to consumer demand to be informed (or entertained) when and where they wish - be that news video clips to mobile phones or stock quotes to hand-held devices.

What this really means for us as a publisher is that multiplatform delivery is no longer an option - it's mandatory.

As everyone in this room knows Fairfax has long been synonymous with quality print journalism in Australia - journalism that is independent, credible, intelligent and trustworthy. For us creating content for 3G devices offers the opportunity to extend beyond quality print journalism to quality journalism per se - to reach Australians through text, photos, audio and moving pictures.

For the grand old lady of print this has presented quite a challenge. But its not like we're going from 0 to 100 overnight. During the last 8 years, the rise of the narrowband Internet has provided a great training ground for repurposing print content for use on digital platforms.

However, the narrowband Internet naturally advantaged newspaper publishers as print text and picture content can be repurposed for the net with relative ease. The emergence of video enabled mobile devices along with broader and cheaper bandwidth means that our traditional text and pictures product will no longer be sufficient.

We have had to start thinking about the unique challenges of 3G delivery - and how to best repurpose our content in ways that suit the new consumption patterns of the phones and PDAs.

Our first real attempt at doing this was last year's Olympic games held in Athens.

In many ways, Athens was a major pilot for us in that we consciously sought to provide Australians with simply the best non-TV experience of the Olympics by publishing firstly **richer** media - including text, pictures, audio and video and secondly publishing to multiple platforms including print, our own online sites, third party sites such as Yahoo and to mobiles such as 3.

Athens presented 3 specific challenges:

1. How to leverage the power of our print newsrooms to produce rich media i.e. audio and video
2. How to publish different types of content across different platforms and;  
  
(in fact, the challenge here was to see how effectively we could publish with existing legacy systems designed primarily for our newspaper)
3. How to effectively engage distribution partners

So what did we do and what did we learn?

Ironically, the greatest challenge of Athens to us as a print media business - the 7 hour time difference - turned out to be our greatest advantage in terms of leveraging the power of our newsrooms. Because it forced us to completely rethink our workflow processes with regards to news production.

For 175 years our business has worked to end of day deadlines in order to print our newspaper product in the wee hours of the morning. Up 'til now, the emergence of the Internet has not yet dramatically changed our workflow processes as we still work to the end of day deadline, but now we publish the website as well as the newspaper in the wee hours of the morning.

Yet for Athens, this would have meant that the 100m sprint run at midnight Australian local time wouldn't be published online until some 30 hours later. It meant that our newspapers couldn't break news; rather they needed to provide news analysis and commentary.

So we asked each of our 26 print journalists at Athens to file 5 paragraphs for online immediately after events. To co-ordinate this stream of content, Fairfax Digital sent two editorial producers who then worked through the night to make sure all stories were collected, subbed and ready for 7 am when Australian audiences would be waking up.

Athens was also the first time we sent a video producer to work with our print journalists to cover a major sports event. As a publisher, rather than a TV or radio company, we were restricted from any filming at venues or access to any press conferences. As a non-rights holder we were unable to shoot any competition.

Despite this we were able to produce over 40 compelling video clips focussed on 'piece de camera' interviews and analysis by our key journalists. These were shot and edited on a laptop by the producer and then sent via broadband back to Sydney where they were enhanced with Fairfax photographic images before being compressed for online and more importantly in this context for use on the "3" network. To get these filmed,

edited, compressed and distributed in a matter of hours was a huge technical and logistical achievement.

Here are some examples of what we sent back to the "3" network:

### **Cut to video on the screen - Paul Whybrow**

As you can see, the emphasis was on taking our print journalists and transporting their commentary to video, without losing any of the integrity and personality they have in print.

What we learnt was that with our multimedia producers we can create motion media news coverage and stories very efficiently compared to the TV networks. That a single producer was able to compile so much great content and get it live so quickly demonstrated that we can play in the 3G and broadband space.

So what have we learnt about changing our culture and workflow practices to deliver content into a 3G world?

Firstly, we learned that it's not only possible to leverage our quality print journalism beyond the newspaper by enabling our journalists to file directly to the web and to camera, but that consumers really like it.

Our Athens coverage was immensely popular on the "3" handsets with over 100,000 of our videos being downloaded across the competition period.

This knowledge has proved invaluable as we were then able to apply these skills to our Tsunami coverage at the beginning of this year.

Because we had changed the way we gather and construct our news in Athens within an hour of the Tsunami news breaking, our editorial and FD production team were able to provide continuous coverage with text, audio, photo galleries and video content.

### **Link to Flash piece – show maps, slideshows and then activate video.**

While not specifically built for 3G delivery what the Tsunami coverage demonstrated was that we could quickly and easily move to what we call "Interactive Story Telling". As you can see from this example our team created a detailed flash piece with links to maps, animations of the tsunami's path across the globe, death tolls, and compelling photos and video along with the usual Fairfax text analysis and commentary.

In one of the most interesting video pieces Nick Moir, one the Herald *stills* photographers also took a small video camera as he flew in on the first Thursday. Using a combination of video, stills and audio commentary we were able to bring a far richer story to light about Banda Aceh.

## **Cut to footage of Banda Aceh with Nick narrating.**

While incredibly moving – these pieces are relatively cheap to produce and with satellite technology – they can be sent back via broadband to Australia, packaged in our studios, combined with data from our print journalists and be live either on the websites or on phones within a matter of hours of the news event occurring.

Besides learning about different newsgathering skills and ways to tell stories we have also learnt that we can leverage legacy content management systems.

At Athens we used rubber bands, sticky tape and 24/7 dedication from our staff to publish rich media to multiple platforms, but sensing ongoing demand for this “interactive story telling” we need to develop the business cases that enable us to build content management systems that are media and platform agnostic.

As for distribution, it sounds reasonably straightforward, but building our organisational capability around effective partnering with 3<sup>rd</sup> party distribution is also a key requirement for our future. Traditionally Fairfax has controlled the distribution of our news through delivering newspapers either to people’s doorsteps or to the newsagents.

Even in the Internet sector until now, we have substantially continued to publish to our own branded sites including the smh.com.au and theage.com.au. In the Digital Age we have to form strategic partnerships with websites, mobile and wireless companies who add significant breadth to our potential audience and brand penetration.

Prior to Athens, we spent time with 3<sup>rd</sup> parties including Yahoo and Hutchinson 3 to develop Olympics packages that worked on their platforms and within their business models. And together we developed content that included text, pictures and video supported with medal tallies and results tables.

From this experience we learned that we can reach new audiences via distribution partners, that we can assist them in differentiating themselves...but we need new service level capabilities...so for instance when the video clips on the 3 service goes haywire on Saturday night, we need to fix it on Saturday night not on Monday morning.

Despite these small glitches, as publishers we were tremendously encouraged when we learned that our Olympics content on 3 became their most utilised product to date. And we were blown away by the reaction to our Tsunami coverage – both by consumers through downloads and traffic figures, but also from our colleagues and peers in the journalist community.

We understand the direction we need to go and over the last year we’ve begun a programme that focuses on unlocking the power of our newsrooms so that Fairfax can definitely play in the new 3G space.