

## Macy's Home Store Cleans Up with Wowza Flash® Streaming



**Overview** Macy's Home Store is responsible for buying, planning and marketing home-related merchandise sold in all 800 stores in North America. An independent division of the beloved retailer generating almost \$6 billion a year, Macy's Home Store has remained on the cutting-edge of new technology by aggressively driving streaming video and new communication technology consistent with the interactive Web 2.0 paradigm.

**Challenge** The Macy's Home Store began considering how technology could be used to create greater community for its 3,000+ bridal associates dispersed across its vast network of locations. With online video popular among its consumers, Macy's decided that streaming content could facilitate communication, distance learning, and open a feedback loop for associates to share experiences. Macy's Home Store knew it needed a solution that addressed both immediate needs and a future, rapid, company-wide deployment.

**Solution** Macy's Home Store chose the award-winning Wowza Media Server™ Pro, over Adobe® FMS for its rock-solid performance, innovative capabilities and the incredible technical support.

### Benefits

- Wowza Pro provides Macy's with reliable video streaming for its network of 3,000+ Home Store associates at 800 locations across North America
- Wowza Pro increased the efficiency of corporate communications, distance learning and helped establish a tighter employee community
- Wowza Pro's Home Store deployment proved an effective video communications model for other operational units within Macy's
- Wowza Pro saved Macy's 75% in total cost of ownership as compared to Adobe FMS

Macy's Home Store develops and coordinates home assortments that make Macy's a destination in areas such as furniture, decorative home accessories, tabletop, housewares, and home textiles. An independent unit within one of the US' oldest and best-loved department stores, Macy's Home Store strives to provide thought-leadership to the larger organization through a combination of technical expertise and a relentless search for new and innovative ways to serve the bottom line. With the remainder of the company divided along regional lines, Macy's Home Store enjoys an unique position that brings with it the great responsibility to live up to its own reputation, both internally and in the eyes of its millions of loyal consumers.

*Wowza has given us a fantastic platform for streaming video content. ... while at the same time providing unbeatable price and support.*

*—Sunil Verma, DVP IT,  
Macy's Home Store*

Macy's Home Store has also supported increased employee brand awareness through the conversion and streaming of past broadcast campaigns. "We support other divisions wherever and whenever possible," said Sunil Verma, DVP IT, Macy's Home Store. "In this instance, the goal was to a clear sense of our more recent brand narrative. Truly, it was as much about educating new employees as it was about reminding more establish staff." What was surprising to some, however, was the notion to make the content available online.

"We are still building up our online video muscles within our group as well as cross-functionally," said Verma "Our hope is that our various experiments will get us to a point that we are comfortable using video as an everyday tool. It's crucial that we connect with the tech-savvy youth customers that comprise our bridal business before going broader with our other units. They are the future of our business, so we need to make sure that we get it right with them, first and foremost."

### Gone Shopping

Macy's Home Store was approached by the bridal team in 2006 with a request to create a greater sense of cohesion and community for its 3,000+ bridal sales associates across North America. At the time, they were still working through integration issues related to their various acquisitions as they made the transition

from long-standing regional to newly-minted national brand. "It was certainly a challenging time," said Verma, "particularly since we were also planning a new division intranet that would facilitate communication across our new units as well as streamline business processes."

The challenge was no sooner laid down than the Home Store team began investigating options for transforming this business request into a larger experiment for deploying video, a much-needed and heretofore missing technology at the company.

"We knew that we couldn't wait any longer on streaming," said Verma. "There couldn't be a 'better' time. We had just gone national and there was an incredible sense of possibility across the entire company." Verma also knew that in order to win big, they had to start small with a project that was nonetheless exciting and high-profile enough to draw attention.

## Streaming at the "Right" Price

Macy's Home Store's move into the realm of streaming content turned out to be much different than expected. Unlike previous initiatives to locate best-of-breed technology solutions, the process this time around was both swift and simple. After first ruling out Adobe FMS as overpriced, inflexible and lacking in performance, the Home Store team turned to a brand new product that was just hitting the market with a storm of enthusiasm from both users and the streaming press.

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"It was early 2007. Wowza Media Server Pro had recently been released, yet was already attracting attention," said Verma. "As soon as we downloaded and began testing the free version, we understood why. Here was a product that was obviously architected with the day-to-day concerns of the enterprise customer in mind."

Macy's Home Store's experience with Wowza was so seamless that it didn't take them long to make a decision. "I would be lying to you if I said that choosing Wowza was a long and belabored process," said Verma. "As a matter of fact, it was probably one of the easiest—if not the easiest—vendor decisions we have ever made. Wowza delivered on all accounts, particularly price, performance, extensibility, and support."

The Home Store team was also attracted to Wowza Pro's extensive capabilities. Another factor was the product's footprint. Well-architected and tightly coded, with only a 1.5MB footprint, Wowza Media Server Pro consumes a fraction of the server resources compared to Adobe FMS, which in its latest iteration tips the scales at over 15MB.

Further proof of the rapidity and ease of the Home Store's Wowza implementation is that it took place concurrently with a major redesign of the division intranet. "Our initial reaction was that bringing video to the bridal team was going to interfere, but when we got going with Wowza, everything worked so well that we just kept moving forward. We went from the free Wowza Pro10 to the Unlimited license in short order, while not missing any of our dates with the larger corporate rollout."

In the spring of 2007, the new intranet went live with Wowza Media Server Pro fully in place as the video solution for the Home Store division. With this deployment, Wowza had scored its first major corporate customer, a milestone that would be soon replicated thousands of times as both the word-of-mouth and rave reviews from the media would propel the streaming upstart to a global level of praise and market penetration.

"The simplest way to explain it is that Wowza was the right product at the right time at the right price," said Verma. "The bridal associates team was immediately thrilled with the results and it wasn't before long that we were being approached by other divisions to stream content for them. From both a project standpoint and a larger, strategic point of view, our experience with Wowza could not have been more positive, which is something that IT professionals don't get to say very often."

## Further Satisfaction Guaranteed

Macy's Home Store's embrace of streaming video has since expanded to other areas. "We have quickly moved beyond simply supporting the bridal associates. At the moment, we also stream for HR, marketing as well as our Star Council group, which is in charge of employee recognition and other similar initiatives," said Verma. "Statistically, we have gone from 100 percent of our streaming being bridal associates-related to roughly only 60 percent, bringing the grand total to more than 4,000 users in just over a year. Clearly there was a need for streaming that wasn't being met until Wowza entered the picture."

"Wowza has also given us a clear path forward as we further experiment with online video. It's safe to say that the success we've had thus will lead to further scale up in the coming year."

To prepare for such changes, Macy's Home Store team is monitoring very closely what happens with the bridal associates deployment.

"Not only are these customers an incredibly important piece of our overall business, they are a crucial component of the future of our business," Verma said. "They are the youth market, they provide us with invaluable market data and raw emotional feedback. The truth is, we have to make absolutely sure that we are getting streaming content right with them first, before making an all-out commitment as an organization."



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1153 Bergen Parkway, #181 | Evergreen, CO 80439 | phone: 888.778.7997 | fax: 408.904.5396

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CS-00008 07/08