



StreamGuys' SGrewind Boosts WBEZ's Online Ratings

"It's really nice when we're able to identify a problem or an opportunity and StreamGuys is already working on a technology that solves that for us. That's happened multiple times."

Nick DePrey, Director of Product for Chicago Public Media

WBEZCHICAGO

Your NPR news source

WBEZ 91.5

History

Chicago Public Radio is one of the largest public radio stations in the country, also known as WBEZ. A community stronghold for news reaching over one million listeners across radio, streaming, website, podcasts, and newsletters keeping constituents informed through local, national, and international news. WBEZ produces stories that encourage and improve civic discourse, and foster connections within the Chicago community.

The Chicago Board of Education established WBEZ in 1943 as an extension of their services. Initially their main focus followed that of an educational program used solely in the classroom. They steadily grew into a more recognizable radio broadcast after those first early years. Eventually expanding out to be a fully fledged radio station recognized by Nation Public Radio in 1970, (one of the first charter

member stations) they have continued to grow and broaden their offerings.

In 2007 they added a sister station for Chicago-based Urban alternative music, and in 2010 officially adopted the name Chicago Public Radio. They have played a key role in developing well loved radio shows such as This American Life, Serial, and Wait, Wait...Don't Tell Me.

"Chicago Public Media seeks to nourish, curate, and elevate the public conversation. We believe our mission and our work are tied to broad core values, which include: accuracy, fairness, independence, truth, accountability, and creativity. We believe our ability to serve those values, our mission, and ultimately the public good, rests on our credibility and reputation."

Situation

WBEZ's reliance on two or more solutions for audio development, hosting, and distribution, significantly affected and slowed their production. These solutions, provided by multiple vendors, required a complicated tech stack under multiple platforms. Troubleshooting issues meant calls with multiple support services to sometimes attain no implementable solutions at all.

Relying on their own CMS to upload audio, manage podcast feeds, and distribute links to audio was not a good use of the WBEZ team's time. In order to continue to grow, they needed to move away from troubleshooting their internal workflow and focus on their strengths and expansions.

They looked to find a more efficient solution in order to implement their plans for a mobile application, disaster recovery, moving from their limited in-house CMS uploading, and increasing the interactivity of their media through

on-demand time-shifting following recent broadcasts.

"We were behind on podcast iTunes RSS compliance and a bunch of things that SGrecast solved for us very quickly."

It became essential to find a smooth method to transition to this new solution that would not trigger redownloads or create additional setbacks. WBEZ searched for technology that could develop and expand parallel to their growth. StreamGuys provided cost-effective and comprehensive solutions aligned with what they needed. This meant a simple and seamless migration of existing content, reduced workflows, and a greater degree of collaboration in support and development of future content delivery methods.



SGrecast is a platform that allows broadcasters to manage, monetize, analyze and create podcasts.

SGrewind provides listeners with audio and video content that is rewindable for streams needing Rapid Replay, Live Pausing, and Radio Replay.



Solution

After ten years of a beneficial partnership for general streaming and on-demand tools and hosting, WBEZ expanded their use of StreamGuys products and services in 2015. By adopting the SGrecast tool, WBEZ attained a single platform solution for management of multiple RSS feeds, monetization, and content monitoring.

“SGrecast gave us a built-in full featured audio CMS that allowed us to upload audio, keep track of content, manage RSS feeds, and distribute podcasts to multiple platforms where we want to find users.”

The collaboration helped to resolve challenges, improve internal procedures, and develop custom products that met WBEZ’s needs. Some of StreamGuys’ tailored solutions replaced WBEZ’s existing technology and infrastructure that was prone to errors and issues. SGrewind became a product addition that brought WBEZ’s iOS star rating from 3.3 to 4.2 over a 2 month span.

The SGrewind feature allows listeners to pause and rewind live podcasts as well as revisit missed streams. This helped WBEZ’s audience to participate more thoroughly in archived or live streams, and as a result, Chicago’s #1 NPR experienced an improvement in user engagement, reviews, and downloads of their app.

Conclusion

WBEZ’s relationship with StreamGuys is one of collaborative trust that values innovation. Both companies are working together to provide outstanding products and technologies adding continual value to the broadcasting industry.

While the core functionality of the SGrecast platform improves outcomes for broadcasters, streamers, and podcast networks across the globe, the team at StreamGuys continues to drive high-impact results through custom deployments and consultation.

The migration from the existing WBEZ infrastructure to StreamGuys’ SGrecast solution was a painless procedure providing them with an audio CMS offering a single solution for the WBEZ team to upload audio, keep track of content,

manage RSS feeds, and distribute podcasts to multiple platforms. Their later adoption of SGrewind saw near-immediate improvements for the WBEZ mobile app ratings—contributing to a higher volume of application downloads, content replays, and overall listenership.

“I would much rather work with a company that is willing to let me influence the features as they’re being developed, the technologies, and the initiatives, rather than a more rigid, larger company.”

Nick DePrey gives StreamGuys a heartfelt recommendation, especially for public news providers in the process of looking for on-demand audio hosting that provides a flexible, easy to use audio CMS with integrated time-shift capability.