

GLUON extends Quark Dynamic Document Server to create business opportunities

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GLUON Inc., located in Maplewood, New Jersey, produces high-quality software tools for the publishing industry. GLUON's tools address four major areas of publishing: creativity, productivity, management, and automation. GLUON's software includes everything from enterprise applications for workflow management and production tracking to cutting-edge productivity-enhancing add-ons for QuarkXPress® and other applications. Its customer list reads like a who's who of publishing powerhouses, ad agencies, design firms, and financial institutions primarily in the New York metropolitan area. The technical staff at GLUON has more than 100 years of combined electronic publishing experience, and is conversant in many languages, including English, French, Russian, Korean, Indonesian, and Chinese. An interesting fact: Many of the staff members were professional musicians in the past (even playing with stars such as Billy Idol) before they were bitten by the publishing bug 10 years ago.

Over the years, GLUON has developed a number of XTensions® modules that work with QuarkXPress — indeed, the GLUON name is derived from the strong subatomic particle that holds the fabric of matter (quarks) together. When Quark introduced Quark® Dynamic Document Server (QuarkDDS™), GLUON immediately saw that not only the product addressed a number of needs its customers had, but that GLUON could also add value to QuarkDDS.

QuarkDDS: much more than a Web connection

Quark designed QuarkDDS to help publishers create customized, design-rich documents on the fly using only a Web browser. QuarkDDS combines the power and convenience of the Internet with the industry-leading design capabilities of QuarkXPress. With QuarkDDS, publishers (and more important, a publishers' customers) can create and publish professionally designed documents more quickly and cost-effectively than ever before.

QuarkDDS is much more than a standard version of QuarkXPress with a Web connection: It is a fully engineered server software that can generate many documents simultaneously,

which is especially beneficial when multiple Web users access the same site or page at the same time.

GLUON has developed two technologies around QuarkDDS:

- HyperTemplate is an XTensions module for creating intelligent templates from ordinary QuarkXPress documents. It works with two of GLUON's other creations, HyperRender and HyperDocument, to turn ordinary QuarkXPress documents into intelligent templates with all sorts of special rules applied to boxes and groups of boxes. The software is represented by a palette and a rule-setting dialog box that is laid out in highly logical tabbed format for creating "tags," which can then be applied to any box and used again and again. Using this tool, customers can "teach" any template to do all sorts of tricks, such as evenly distributing boxes after text and pictures have been flowed in and resizing documents intelligently, which reduces the number of templates users need and much more.
- HyperRender for QuarkDDS is a server XTensions module that interprets all the rules



applied to a template by HyperTemplate and renders documents accordingly. HyperRender translates HTTP Web protocols into instructions to use a given template or new document — and can then tell it to fill it in, adjust it, resize it, and render it in a number of formats, including native QuarkXPress, PDF, GIF, JPEG, EPS, and



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PostScript files. Functionality is cross-platform. How the XTensions module goes about adjusting the template is somewhat determined by how HyperTemplate specified the template and what commands are sent via HTTP. In addition to the ability to quickly create templates within a QuarkXPress-based creative workflow, the GLUON solution offers several powerful options not found anywhere else. These options can greatly reduce the number of templates users need and increase the quality and usefulness of the final output.

Working closely with the QuarkDDS team, GLUON offers QuarkDDS consulting services that can help publishers and ad agencies from start to finish in implementing this exciting technology. Not only can GLUON help customers get up and running, but it can leverage its vast experience in XTensions software development, database connectivity, and publishing to bring significant new capabilities to a publisher’s online publishing system, allowing customers around the world to create publications to the publisher’s specifications.

“All this is done with great ease, using QuarkXPress to create templates which are then ‘filled in’ and manipulated via a Web browser,” said Peter McClard, GLUON’s president. “In the end, customers can receive a Quark file, a PDF, a TIFF, an EPS, a GIF, a JPEG, or other formats, cutting the design/print process to a fraction of the time it normally takes.”

McClard said that QuarkDDS applications include on demand printing, brand-control advertising, circulars and flyers, corporate forms, collateral and cards, and localized and personalized documents. McClard said he believes that QuarkDDS will provide the foundation GLUON can use to rise to the next level and offer solutions rather than just XTensions software.

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Case Study: Trader Publishing Company

GLUON’s first hard-core QuarkDDS installation was at Trader Publishing Company, which produces a wide-ranging line of consumer trade magazines dedicated to the dissemination of extremely current information on everything from real estate to automobiles.

“Anybody who has walked out of a grocery store has seen at least one of their magazines, such as ‘Harmon Homes,’ ‘Auto Trader,’ and ‘Boat Trader’ stacked up near the exit,” said McClard.

“Harmon Homes” lists houses available for sale in a given region.

“Needless to say, there are a lot of regions in the US, and an awful lot of houses for sale at any one time,” said McClard.

The listings in “Harmon Homes” are in the form of full-page or partial-page ads, which are “owned” by participating realtors and are continually updated as houses go on and off the market. Most pages are represented by a grid of house photos and information about the houses listed next to each photo.

“The variety of these grid configurations is astonishing — some with 3 columns, some with 4, some with background graphics, some with rounded corners, some with drop shadows, some with ornate borders — almost no two are the same,” said McClard. “Over the years, this variety had built up as realtors worked with Trader Publishing staff to manually and semi-automatically update pages to differentiate themselves from others.”

When the “Harmon Homes” group came to GLUON for consultation in late 2003, they were seeking a new way for realtors to maintain content and designs that would be more efficient and require less Trader Publishing staff involvement.

“As we all know, realtors are not designers, nor are they desktop publishing experts,” said McClard. “So the desired system could not require them to know anything about these things and had to be easy to use.”

After identifying QuarkDDS as the perfect engine for the new system, Trader Publishing staff sought out a qualified technical partner that could help them fulfill their extensive need for flexibility.

“GLUON was the perfect choice,” said McClard.

GLUON engineers immediately determined that a regular template-based model would not be adequate for Trader Publishing’s needs because the extensive variety of layouts demanded by realtors would require the creation and maintenance of thousands of separate templates, which was not practical.

“So we went about inventing the HyperGrid solution that is now in use — to the delight of Trader Publications and their customers,” said McClard.

GLUON engineers created new versions of their HyperTemplate and HyperRender XTensions modules, which allowed Trader Publishing to modify and assemble custom templates based on a sophisticated grid system. With this method, Trader Publishing can maintain a handful of master templates and an increasing library of small, block templates, which are then assembled into the final pages. By weaving together multiple templates, GLUON was able to provide infinite configurability to any page, thereby allowing Trader Publishing to offer the same level of variety to its customers.

“We at GLUON are excited by the potential that QuarkDDS provides us to deliver solutions that have a clearly defined ROI to our customers, and we look forward to having many more QuarkDDS customers in the future,” said McClard.

“By making the process much more self-service, Trader has cut out endless amounts of tedious busy work for its staff, which can now concentrate on more profitable activities, such as new designs or new titles,” said McClard. “The cost savings are tremendous, and on top of that, the consistency of the outgoing product has gone from poor to near perfect because each page is now assembled mathematically, making it more attractive for new customers and readers alike. A real QuarkDDS success story!”

McClard said that due to the success of the “Harmon Homes” solution, Trader Publishing now wants to install QuarkDDS solutions at its other properties.

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