15 years of N-TV
Germany's first news channel celebrates its 15th anniversary

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On Friday of last week, NTV’s staff celebrated the channel’s birthday at the up-market Cologne venue Rheinterrassen, together with their new CEO, Hans Demmel, and VIPs from the worlds of business, politics and the media.

Speeches were given and words of welcome spoken by Hans Demmel; Director of the Berlin-Brandenburg Media Authority, Hans Hege; Chairman of the Board of Evonik Industries and former German Minister for Economic Affairs, Werner Müller; and Mediengruppe RTL Deutschland CEO Anke Schäferkordt. About 500 guests celebrated N-TV’s jubilee into the early hours of the following morning.

To mark its birthday, N-TV presented an extensive self-portrait of the channel to viewers in a report entitled Nachrichtenfieber – 15 Jahre N-TV (Bitten by the News Bug – 15 years of N-TV), comprising archive material and modern-day footage and the most amusing mishaps in the channel’s history, as well as hinting at what the future might hold. In addition, on its website N-TV set up a special anniversary page, with plenty of images and videos to download, as well as a host of information relating to its anniversary.

When N-TV was founded 15 years ago, its 24-hour news coverage prompted a fresh awareness among the German public of the value of up-to-the-minute news. ”N-TV is all about the rapid, competent delivery of dependable information, i.e. competence at presenting news and producing live coverage,” said CEO Hans Demmel, explaining the concept behind the channel. “Whenever anything important happens in the world, N-TV is there to report on it,” he added.

N-TV’s schedule rests on three pillars: up-to-the-moment news, competent business reporting and ambitious talk shows. On top of this, at weekends and times when there is a dearth of news, the channel broadcasts programmes on such diverse subjects as health, lifestyle and celebrities, sailing and vintage cars. N-TV’s programme Telebörse also significantly influenced the emergence of a new culture of shareholders in Germany.

But TV isn’t everything. That often underestimated medium, teletext, is extremely popular with N-TV’s viewers, attaining market shares of as much as 7 per cent in brisk news months.
And that percentage is almost three times as high among shareholders and people interested in business. In addition, with N-TV Plus, which can be accessed via the Windows Vista Media Center, N-TV offers viewers interactive television. News is particularly suited to this new form of TV, and viewers of N-TV Plus have no problems finding additional information on a specific news item since the service offers more in-depth coverage in the form of texts or video clips. Viewers’ response to N-TV Plus so far has been tremendous, with up to 318,000 hits a month. “N-TV was, is and will remain a forerunner in the new media and was very quick to utilise the opportunities arising from the digital switchover”, Hans Demmel pointed out.

N-TV has now become an established brand in the German TV market, and early in November it was once again recognised as a ‘super brand’, because in the meantime Germany’s first news channel has become a multimedia platform that gives its viewers information whenever and wherever they want. “N-TV started multimedia broadcasts to its users on all platforms long ago”, said Anke Schäferkordt. And this expansion to other media is set to continue in the future.

N-TV’s past is rich in history and memorable stories, one of the most unforgettable of which was the Christmas tsunami in 2004. “Probably the worst piece of news and most challenging item was the tsunami in Southeast Asia”, said N-TV’s top presenter, Christoph Teuner: “It was a quiet Boxing Day in 2004. Then the first reports started coming in, causing a stir. Then the number of victims started rising rapidly. Soon it became clear that the tsunami had been one of the biggest catastrophes in recent decades”. Teuner then added: “Once that realisation set in, people became obsessed with following the news. There were special programmes. There was non-stop live coverage. And there was not enough – in fact way too little – time to really think about the victims and imagine what they must be going through”.

Another event burned into the collective memory and also into the minds of N-TV’s editors was 11 September 2001. As the former N-TV presenter Sandra Maischberger recalled: “After the second plane slammed into the tower, we stopped preparing for our live show and sat besides our colleagues in front of the news editors’ bank of TV monitors. That was the best way of dealing with the shock: immediately discussing and assessing what we had witnessed and trying to think beyond that dreadful day”. But N-TV’s everyday coverage doesn’t just comprise bad news; there are plenty of upbeat reports too: on sporting successes, elections, and milestone events, like N-TV’s own jubilee!

**About N-TV**

Every day, N-TV is watched by some 5.5 million viewers aged 14 and above. So far in 2007, the channel’s audience share in the relevant target group for news has been 0.8 per cent. RTL Group has owned an interest in N-TV since 2002, initially taking a 47.3 per cent stake when it acquired the TV and radio activities belonging to Germany’s Georg von Holtzbrinck publishing group and subsequently raising that stake to 50 per cent, on a par with its joint venture partner at the time, CNN. In April 2007, RTL Group took full control of the channel.
Possible Bertelsmann share offer

According to recent media reports, Bertelsmann is considering making an offer to acquire all the outstanding shares in RTL Group it does not already own.

Luxembourg - 4 December 2007

RTL Group notes the recent speculation concerning a possible offer for the company.

RTL Group acknowledges that Bertelsmann indicated that it was considering making an offer to acquire all the outstanding shares in RTL Group not already owned by Bertelsmann, subject to a number of conditions precedent.

RTL Group understands that no offer has been approved yet by the Bertelsmann executive and supervisory boards and that there can be no assurance that any offer will be made by Bertelsmann.

Should Bertelsmann make an offer, RTL Group will assess such offer in accordance with the interests of the company, its employees and its minority shareholders.

Digital radio gets go-ahead in France

Government selects T-DMB standard, RTL Radio in France pleased with move into promising new era

France - 6 December 2007

On Wednesday, 5 December, the Minister for Culture Christine Albanel signed a decree establishing the standard for digital radio broadcasting - marking the official launch of digital radio in France. The T-DMB standard selected has been given the go-ahead by Brussels. Consequently, starting early next year the CSA (Higher Audiovisual Council) can launch a call for bidders to award digital frequencies, since new frequencies will be freed up due to the transition from analogue television to the less frequency-hungry digital television.

Axel Duroux, Chairman of the French radio arm (RTL, RTL 2, Fun Radio), said he was pleased that radio “has secured a future for itself by joining the extended digital family and that it is no longer confined to transistor radios”. In an interview with the French newspaper La Tribune, he added: “We want to offer RTL’s audience a different kind of listening experience. RTL-L’Equipe and RTL Autrement, which were launched on the Internet at the start of the autumn season, are precursors of our digital bouquet”.

Digital radio can be listened to on any device fitted with the right kind of processor, such as a portable mp3 player, a computer, a mobile phone or, of course, a car radio. It offers better sound quality and new features, such as the ability to pause, ‘rewind’ and link the audio signal to visual information such as CD covers, weather news, traffic reports and more.
RTL Group staff pack 113 shoeboxes for needy children in Ukraine

For the first time, staff at RTL Group in Luxembourg have taken part in the major donation project “Christmas in a Shoebox” and are sending 113 shoeboxes full to the brim to poor children in Ukraine.

Luxembourg - 3 December 2007

Each of the over 100 packages looks similar on the outside, but each has been individually packed with contents ranging from cuddly toys and games to sweets, clothing, hats and scarves. Staff of RTL Group and their families were given the opportunity to fill shoeboxes for needy children up until Saturday, 1 December when all the packages were handed over to the German aid organisation “Geschenke der Hoffnung” (Gifts of Hope) at RTL Group’s traditional Saint Nicholas party. The packages will soon be embarking on their long journey to Ukraine. The postage cost of EUR 6 per package will be covered by RTL Group.

RTL Group’s Chief Financial Officer and Head of the Corporate Centre, Elmar Heggen, said: “Our television, radio and content production businesses are active supporters of charitable causes. I am very grateful to see our staff in Luxembourg and their families responding generously to our shoebox appeal for children in need in the Ukraine.”

“Geschenke der Hoffnung” spokeswoman Esther Heyer was also pleased at news of RTL Group’s involvement: “After seeing first-hand the impact that these gifts can have on a child’s life, I am delighted that RTL Group joined our shoebox appeal. Many children in the Ukraine live in extreme poverty. For many of them, the gift-filled shoeboxes will be the only present they have ever received.”

The project originated in Great Britain but quickly spread to other countries such as The Netherlands, the USA and Germany. Over the past year, over 7.6 million packages have been sent to needy children in many different countries throughout the world.
“We’re pressing ahead with future plans more vigorously than ever before”

In an interview with the German media magazine Horizont, Vox CEO Frank Hoffmann spoke about his channel’s growth ambitions, entertainment formats, new series and plans to diversify on the Internet.

Germany - 4 December 2007

Vox’s cookery shows like *Das perfekte Dinner*, *Unter Volldampf* and *Die Kocharena* remain hot favourites with viewers. And now Hoffmann’s made it clear which direction the development of these big ‘crowd-pullers’ is to take.

“We’d be trying to do too much of a good thing if we sought to establish two prime time cookery shows. So next year *Die Kocharena* will be screened once a month,” Hoffmann said. This plan should see *Die Kocharena* becoming a real – and necessary – alternative to *Das perfekte Promi-Dinner*, because as Hoffmann pointed out “there are only so many celebritties”. Vox also plans to become more active in the show segment, and Hoffmann revealed that negotiations on additional formats are already under way.

Vox also firmly intends to start showing new US series, traditionally a strong area for the Cologne-based channel. Hoffmann is upbeat about this, confident that the new series *Shark* can achieve double-digit ratings. The second new US series, *Men in Trees*, will be screened at 22.00 on Fridays, starting on 4 January. For now, Hoffmann thinks it’s still too difficult to predict how it will do in the ratings. But he was adamant that it was “still too early” for Vox to start thinking about producing its own fiction “and too expensive”. As Hoffmann pointed out, German productions are struggling at the moment anyway, so “for now we can’t afford to produce such formats,” he said.

By contrast, Vox is intent on attacking its development online with greater gusto over the next year: “We want to develop more sub-brands and promote them accordingly using our strong programme brands,” the 41-year-old CEO said, before adding: “We’re working on a cookery platform on the Internet” and intimating that Vox is not short of other ideas to pursue as well.

All things considered, Hoffmann is confident that Vox’s success story will continue. “One reason our success lasts so well is that we rely on programmes that won’t just boost our ratings for three months, but will strengthen our brand in the long term,” he explained. As for advertising, Vox “definitely ought to be accepted into the top flight,” Hoffmann insisted, stressing that “as for market share, we’ve already joined the top flight in the relevant time windows”.

The best evidence to back up these claims was provided by the channel last Thursday, the day on which the interview was published: for Vox’s market share of 12.4 per cent among viewers aged 14 to 49, Vox was well ahead of its competitors Sat 1 and Pro Sieben. And when it showed the film *Independence Day*, it even ranked top in prime time.
Sport on the Internet

RTL Digital has launched a brand new sports magazine to be watched on the Internet, and is confident that all Belgian sports fans will quickly warm to it.

Belgium - 4 December 2007

RTL Digital’s mission is to structure and develop all the activities prompted by the advent of digital technology.

The new ‘mini-magazine’ that is just 6 minutes long, is called RTL Sport. At around 18.00 every Thursday evening, Internet users are invited to log on for a round-up of the week’s sports news presented by Luc Maton.

A princess topping the charts

At the end of October, Sheryfa Luna was crowned the winner of Popstars 2007 on M6. Since then, the public has shown strong interest in her work, and record sales are now taking off.

France - 4 December 2007

Chérifa, which is how her first name is really spelt, means princess. And it seems that she was indeed predestined to become a princess of the French R’n’B scene. For the past three weeks she's held the number 1 slot for singles, shifting 100,000 copies of her song Quelque part since its release on 5 November. Meanwhile, her successful eponymous debut album, Sheryfa Luna, has gone gold, to the great delight of its two co-producers, Universal Music and M6 Interactions.

With a crystal-clear voice and her beautiful blue-marine eyes, Sheryfa Luna already has the charisma of a great artist, and her background is pretty extraordinary, too: she's part Kabyl and part French and is one of eight children, six of whom have music pulsing through their veins. Indeed, her brothers have even set up a recording studio in the family home. Besides her busy professional agenda, Sheryfa Luna is expecting a baby in January. Benjamin Chulvanij, a member of the jury on Popstars, will be godfather to her child.

Sheryfa Luna’s success further consolidates M6’s reputation in unearthing new talent.
A new winter line-up

Five unveiled winter programmes for 2008, with an emphasis on engrossing human interest stories, factual programming and contemporary documentaries.

United Kingdom - 3 December 2007

*It Pays To Watch* is a new programme presented by Martin Lewis, one of Britain’s leading consumer journalists. In this magazine series, money-saving zealot Martin Lewis shows viewers how to get more cash in their pockets without having to get a new job, downsize or rob a bank.

In the human interest content, Britain’s Bravest tells the incredible stories of real emergencies, rescues and bravery from around the country. The series will make use of all available archive footage from the emergency services videos and recordings, CCTV images and user-generated footage.

The series *Make Your Child Brilliant* follows expert brain trainer Bernadette Tynan as she embarks upon a nationwide search to spot children who are slipping through the net of our education system, and unlock their hidden gifts.

*The Shop* is an eight-part high street fashion entertainment series. *The Shop* will be a place where the audience can genuinely interact with the show, with fashion takeouts and entertainment stunts featuring the shoppers themselves.

Other titles in Five’s portfolio include new travel magazine *The Rough Guide To…* (Backstage reported), *I Own Britain’s Best Home*, the format examining the architecture, interior design and construction of desirable domiciles in Britain; the two-part documentary *The Kate Moss Years*; *The Man Who Lives With Bears*; and *So You Think You Can Be A Single Parent* which follows three celebrities as they attempt to cope with the rigours of being a single parent.
Cinema for television

Recently, Teamworx CEO Nico Hofmann spoke to the online media magazine DWDL.de about German series, new productions and his own ambitions to produce films.

Germany - 6 December 2007

The latest Teamwork project, Das Wunder von Berlin (The Miracle of Berlin), will already be screened by ZDF in January. “This production is unusual in not being a classical Teamworx event,” Hofmann said. “For us it’s an experiment, to see whether viewers take to films that boast a strong element of realism”. Hofmann said he sees a new trend taking the form of a shift away from the hitherto dominant powerfully structured melodrama and towards actual stories based on real-life experiences.

German series are continuing to struggle, Hofmann said. “Which German series has been so exciting that viewers felt it was unmissable?”, Hofmann asked rhetorically. According to him, the fact that none come to mind is down to the programming structure predominating in Germany which – unlike US television – consists primarily of one-off programmes and fewer ongoing series. “In the USA, series have always played a different role, so viewers have been educated to behave in this way right from the outset,” the Teamworx CEO explained. That’s the big difference with Germany – and it needs to be taken on board. Hofmann conceded that some family series are still aired on Saturday evening on ZDF and on Tuesdays on ARD, “but private operators would be ill-advised to take up ideas for series that are 10 years old,” he warned. Having said that, he admitted that it’s very hard to find room for fresh ideas in, say, the crime domain, since there the market’s already saturated with US productions.

At the same time, Hofmann suggested that German series constitute the only real problem. “By contrast, Germany is very good at producing strong one-off productions, thanks to the very wide range of highly relevant topics covered,” he added. Moreover, judging from media fairs like Mipcom and Mip TV in Cannes, German TV films are setting standards worldwide. “That’s also reflected in very high sales figures,” said Hofmann contentedly: “As Jon Mojto once said: ‘in Germany we make cinema for television’.”

In future Hofmann even plans to take things a step further. Together with Gavin Scott, who also wrote Die Nebel von Avalon (The Mists of Avalon), he’s working on a project that will portray the last 10,000 years of German history. “This is another example of very special material that will confront viewers with images the like of which they’ve never seen before” Hofmann promised, stressing that his aim is “to produce ideas and images that have never been seen that way before”.

Nonetheless, Hofmann promised that future Teamworx productions wouldn’t stay confined to television: “It’s no secret that the cinema will once again come to play a greater role in my future thinking,” he explained, hinting that negotiations on two projects were already under way, though he didn’t wish to say any more about those for now.
RTL Klub fights aids

To protect Hungarians against the dangers of aids, RTL Klub launched an awareness campaign in cooperation with Hungary’s National Aids Counselling Service starting on 1 December.

Hungary - 5 December 2007

RTL Klub’s contribution consists of short films highlighting dangerous aspects of the disease. To reach as wide an audience as possible, RTL Klub provided other TV channels with the films free of charge. Hir TV and Cool TV are already broadcasting ads for the campaign.

The National Aids Counselling Service in Hungary maintains that the State is not doing enough to actively fight HIV. It was this that prompted it to turn to RTL Klub, to make sure that the appropriate message gets through to the public.

És óvszer = How about a condom? (translation)
A programme on a hot topic for Belgium
Given the tense political situation in Belgium at the moment due to the failure to form a government, RTL-TVI has broadcast on 5 December the programme entitled Vivre ensemble? Paroles de Belges on the red-hot topic of whether Flemings and Walloons can carry on living together.
Belgium - 5 December 2007

Christmas spirit on the Internet radio
104.6 RTL launched the brand new web-based radio station 104.6 RTL-Weihnachtsradio during its scheduled morning show Arno und die Morgencrew on Friday.
Germany - 5 December 2007

High ratings for November
In November the channels run by Mediengruppe RTL Deutschland extended their lead over the ProSiebenSat.1 group.
Germany - 4 December 2007

Die Flucht wins 2007 Bambi Audience Award
Television viewers choose historically based Teamworx two-part miniseries as “TV Event of the Year.”
Germany - 3 December 2007

Neighbours continues to deliver for FremantleMedia Enterprises
Scandinavia is the latest region to welcome FremantleMedia Enterprise’s (FME) soap Neighbours into its neighbourhood.
United Kingdom - 30 November 2007

Country music on the French and Belgian airwaves
Early this month, the Country Music Association (CMA), based in Nashville, Tennessee honoured Georges Lang with an award as the radio presenter who had done the most to promote country music outside the USA.
Belgium - 30 November 2007
As Five reported on Monday, Jay Hunt, Five’s Director of Programmes, is leaving Five to return to the BBC.

Jana Bennett, Director of BBC Vision, announced on Monday that Jay Hunt had been appointed the new Controller of BBC One. She will take up her new role sometime next year. Hunt was appointed Director of Programmes at Five earlier this year.

Five’s Managing Director Content, Lisa Opie, said: “Jay has already achieved a great deal during her brief time at Five, and the first half of 2008 is already scheduled and commissioned”. Opie then added: “She will be with the channel for a few months yet and we look forward to having the benefit of her enthusiasm and creativity until she leaves for the BBC.”

"We know this has been a very hard decision for Jay to make and wish her all the best in her new role”, she concluded.