MEDIAGENIX

THE CIRCLE OF CONTENT LIFE IS CHANGING.

HOW TO BEST MONETIZE THE CONTENT RIGHTS?

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Best practices for a journey through a changing landscape

With this white paper we hope to give you actionable pointers as you carve your own way through today's challenges in rights management.
Not to lose sight of the bigger picture, we will outline the business priorities that drive the development of rights management solutions in 2021 and beyond. We will also sketch the broad outlines within which MEDIAGENIX will continue to co-create best-practice solutions. The ultimate aim of these solutions is always to enable media companies to navigate the changing media landscape, each in their own special way, with strategic rights management as their trusted rudder.
These insights are the summary of what we have taken away from co-innovation projects, try-out sessions, user experience days, user advisory days, workshops, implementation projects, training sessions and informal talks during decades of close cooperation with our international customer community and experts in the field.

Digital-first

We believe that however hard COVID-19 hit the media industry with a sudden content crunch, it will turn out to be a mere pause in the further continuation — and even acceleration — of an ongoing trend. We are indeed witnessing a content explosion. And all of that content needs to reach an increasingly fragmented audience through an increasingly diverse set of delivery platforms and a mix of business models.
As the whole industry is pivoting to a multiplatform and even digital-first strategy, content is being repurposed and repackaged for use on diverse platforms, including social media. The notion of content is no longer limited to long-form content, as media companies are taking a more generic look at it. Short video or audio clips, texts, press articles, books, e-book, user-generated content, … it can all be valuable content. This underlines the need for flexible and extensible content data models and multi-level rights verification.

Return on investment

The cycle of content is rapidly changing. Revenues are under pressure. Costs need to be reduced, efficiencies raised, and maximum value needs to be squeezed from every piece of quality content available or produced.
Maximum return on investment is to be achieved through supply chain efficiency, a tighter grip on business models, and strategic windowing. The use of available rights

is to be optimized based on a central, real-time and granular view on rights assets as a single source of truth for the entire media operation. The challenge is to capture the multifaceted complexity of rights, obligations and restrictions right from the start, and to shift that start further upstream. This can be done by enabling diverse parties to capture data very early into the process and enrich the data as the content proceeds through the supply chain. This implies facilitating rapidly evolving use cases for a growing user base, through web workflows that are simplified for task-based contributions.

Improved decision making

The key is to unlock the data. Across the end-to-end content supply chain, a growing pile of operational, consumer and environmental data can be harvested, managed and leveraged. BI tools and smart analyses can be applied to that data to gain important insights. By distilling these insights into AI algorithms the intelligence of the human experts can be augmented, which further improves the decision-making process and the quality of rights, content and schedule management. To improve the decision-making process when scheduling, for instance, MEDIAGENIX is further developing a rights-based suite of augmented intelligence solutions, including automated off-peak scheduling, rating predictions and scheduling recommendations. Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning and Natural Language Processing are also playing a growing part in content data enrichment (e.g. automated document uploads) and, eventually, in capturing the DNA of content.

Closed-loop orchestration

We believe that the best way to offer our customers the best-of-breed solution for rights management is to make it pluggable into our platform for closed-loop orchestration of the end-to-end content supply chain. As this supply chain extends beyond the confines of the media company, the platform also allows third parties to plug in and interact in innovative ways, while it can in turn also blend seamlessly into wider ecosystems.

The Cloud

The Cloud is a key element in this as it facilitates the central view and opens a natural way to make the central platform accessible from anywhere. The Cloud also supports globalization as it enables international companies to manage rights on both the global and the regional level. In combination with web technology, the Cloud provides portability and remote collaboration. Media companies are moving to the Cloud driven by the need for agility, flexibility and elastic scalability. They are also increasingly convinced by the benefits of SaaS/Paas and OPEX. That is why we offer a flexible, hybrid framework that supports the customer's gradual adoption of cloud technologies and cloud deployment models.

As a company with more than thirty years of experience at the heart of media operations, we are spurred on to keep innovating by a wide range of companies and organizations. These companies include content creators, distributors, media networks, streamers, broadcasters, telcos, publishers and content aggregators. Standing on the shoulders of these giants in their field, MEDIAGENIX has always kept a clear view on the road ahead in this hyperdynamic market.

So do share your vision with us. Tell us about your challenges and ambitions. Over the years we have built many strong and long-standing customer relationships. Each of these shared journeys started with us listening.

Neeraj Shah
MEDIAGENIX Product Manager

INTRODUCTION

"From the day we arrive on this planet
And, blinking, step into the sun
There's more to see than can ever be seen
More to do than can ever be done
There's far too much to take in here
More to find than can ever be found."

You probably recognize the lyrics from 'Circle of Life', the theme song of the Disney classic The Lion King. The film started its theatrical run in 1994 and for more than 25 years it featured in various portfolios of video-on-demand providers. It is still acclaimed as the 'highest-grossing traditionally animated film of all time', as well as the best-selling film on home video, with over 30 million VHS tapes. The classic circle of life of content took care of that: theatres, A-channels, and rental and sales of VHS tapes and DVDs.

TIMES HAVE CHANGED

To watch The Lion King now, or any Disney classic or new release for that matter, you are best to subscribe to Disney+, Disney's streaming service offers 'the best stories of Disney, Pixar, Marvel, Star Wars and National Geographic in one place'. We are talking about more than 500 movies and in excess of 7,000 TV episodes. Walt Disney Animation Studios alone has produced more than 60 feature films, starting with Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs in 1937.

The Disney library is a treasure trove of strong brands and storytelling content which they judiciously monetized over many years, putting home video releases on moratorium until the re-release of the feature in the theatres. And now they offer nearly all of it on their own online platform, which has met with instant success. Launched in November 2019, Disney+ already had gained over 73.7 million subs worldwide by 3 October 2020. When the Covid-19 pandemic struck in March 2020, it only accelerated a process that had already begun.

"What we are witnessing is the digital-first transformation of the entire media industry."

Scott Kirkpatrick, NENT Studios UK

In 2020, early into the pandemic, ***Scott Kirkpatrick***, Senior Vice President of North and South American Sales for NENT Studios UK, said to us: "You can now see the most efficient and truest windowing strategies developing fast. Feature movies typically premiere in theatres, but that has become problematic with social distancing. Instead, the major movies are going out on digital platforms in an elevated transactional slot first, and then they start shifting downwards."

After several attempts at a wide theatrical release for the 'Mulan' remake during the summer of 2019, Disney finally decided to make the movie available to Disney+ subscribers only, for the first few weeks at a premium fee. Pixar's Soul, initially to be released in June, also skipped the theatres and debuted exclusively on Disney+ in time for Christmas. All the big Hollywood studios followed suit, moving away from theatrical releases and going straight to streaming, catering to the viewer who embraced online entertainment in times of social distancing and appreciated the explosion of cinematic quality video content on offer.

In light of this rapid success of Disney+ — and the fact that other parts of the Disney business were badly hit by the pandemic — the Walt Disney Company accelerated its direct-to-consumer strategy shifting more resources to streaming platforms (Disney+, ESPN+, Hulu and Hotstar) with a big corporate restructuring. A similar shift of resources to streaming can be seen at companies with broadcast, film and Pay-TV roots, such as NBCUniversal, WarnerMedia and ViacomCBS. What we are witnessing is in fact the digital-first transformation of the entire media industry.

The Walt Disney Company accelerated its direct-to-consumer strategy shifting more resources to streaming platforms

COMPLEXITY RULES

The Disney+ case also shows that high-quality, high-value content is in high demand, and there is an avalanche of that coming our way, not only from the big players such as Disney, Netflix, Amazon, Apple, WarnerMedia or ViacomCBS, who each invest billions of dollars in new content every year. At the other end of the spectrum, the low threshold of OTT has opened access to a new breed of content providers, such as sports clubs, sports federations, cultural organizations, musicians and artists. All enjoy the new technologies that open up ever more ways to create, share and deliver content, eliminating the middleman and establishing a direct relationship with the consumer.

The race for granular consumer data is on, especially now that Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning and Natural Language Processing help to target, capture and engage audiences, deepen viewer relationships and enhance the viewer experience through personalization and recommendations.

The viewers have even higher expectations, spoiled as they are by the easy accessibility to high-quality content and the optimum viewer experience offered by the likes of Disney and Netflix. They are now in the driving seat of the media industry, demanding content to be available, anytime, anywhere including on the go. Not being on the devices and platforms they want to watch video content on is to lose their attention. As a result, content is consumed in multiple formats, on multiple platforms and devices, and in multiple territories.

With the proliferation of platforms, the market is growing overcrowded and fragmented. As the big content providers are retreating to their walled gardens, viewers need to take multiple subscriptions or constantly switch subscriptions. Confusion and frustration grows.
This opens the door to a new breed of aggregators who promise the viewers one point of access for all the content they want. But even then, the viewers will eventually have their way and some kind of flexible, customized content bundling will probably prevail.

In the meantime, the cost of quality content has risen steeply, while the viewer wants to pay as little as possible. To generate a proper return on investment, media companies go for maximum audience reach and minimum revenue risk. They distribute their content over diverse channels and platforms. They also mix business models based on transaction, subscription or advertising, in consecutive exploitation windows that need to be strategically planned for optimum results.

"With the proliferation of platforms, the market is growing overcrowded and fragmented."

This context explains why managing rights, restrictions and obligations is so complex today, and why no two acquisition contracts are the same. It has rendered Excels and many home-grown rights management systems obsolete.

In the meantime, the current reality of teams interacting even more remotely throughout the media company's creative and business workflow is accelerating the need for task-based solutions. Together these solutions control the whole end-to-end content workflow around a single source of 'enterprise truth'. This cries for cloud-native platforms, provided these platforms match the maturity, depth and breadth of legacy systems in terms of functionality and integration capabilities.

All this leaves one with the feeling that as far as rights management is concerned, 'there's more to see than can ever be seen, more to do than can ever be done'.

The STRATEGIC CHALLENGE for RIGHTS MANAGEMENT

Enabling optimum monetization through one source of truth

"Although there are several servicing companies that have developed rights management tools to help simplify this process (...) some companies simply maintain their rights records via Excel sheets. But all of these systems are only as reliable as the data entered into them."

*(**Scott Kirkpatrick**, Introduction to Media Distribution. Film, Television and New Media)*

Before we get all flustered and confused, let us go back to the essence of rights management. You need proper rights management in the first place to ensure that you:

- **always know what content you can distribute in which format to which platforms, and in what specific time windows and territories;**
- **optimize and maximize the use of content within the constraints of rights, restrictions and obligations;**
- **comply with contractual and regulatory stipulations;**
- **can track the present and future value of your inventory and schedules.**

A well-known fact is that the complexity of rights, restrictions and obligations has only grown over the years, certainly in sports broadcasting. Right before the pandemic hit, ***Scott Ferguson***, Vice President Content Planning and Analysis at DAZN, painted this picture: "For the Italian Serie A football league we have the rights for Germany, but not for Switzerland. We also have obligations to broadcast additional content. For the UEFA Champions League, for instance, we are not only obligated to broadcast a number of matches but also several magazine programmes, highlights and sponsorships. As we have the UEFA Champions League in Germany, Canada and Japan, that is a complex issue for us. You can have a huge number of concurrent games on a Tuesday and Wednesday evening, for instance, which should all have the right bumpers and branding for the different territories. We use WHATS'ON to manage all that, in addition to our other tools."

Football rights are sold in small parts, for instance, to post highlights on social media

With sports as with any other kind of content, rights management also needs to be granular enough so that you can swiftly, safely and judiciously reuse it, slice and dice it, or repackage it for different purposes and different platforms. Football rights are sold in small parts, for instance, to post highlights on social media. Belgian bank KBC sends exclusive video fragments of goals and highlights of the customer's favourite team via its banking app. The fact that different rights are needed for different platforms, such as digital-first platforms and social media, adds to the complexity.

Another change that impacted rights management is the emergence of global players, whether or not through mergers and acquisitions. These international companies need to assign specific rights for the different regions and affiliations and ask themselves questions, such as: when do we release content, in which region, for how long?
They have to make these strategic decisions also from the perspective of the legal office.

TO THE ORIGIN OF RIGHTS, FURTHER UPSTREAM

To know what you can use when and where, and anticipate any other use of the content, it has become paramount to capture and enrich content metadata right from the start. But where exactly is the start for rights management? The fact is that it is shifting further upstream. Producers, for instance, could provide rich metadata on the content they are selling so that you don't just buy the rights to a piece of content, but also all its metadata. And there is also the example of smaller companies who built their business ad hoc around new types and formats of content. They don't have big fairs such as MIPCOM in Cannes to go browsing and negotiating, but they nevertheless need and want to work in a smart, technology and data driven way, right from the start.

Speed and accuracy of distribution are of the essence nowadays. This means you also need a real-time central inventory of available rights so that you can automate rights clearance and steer clear of litigation and suboptimal use of rights. To keep different systems for VOD and Linear rights would be counterproductive and flying in the face of reality. VOD rights, linear rights, digital rights, underlying rights, conditional rights ... all need to be managed

You need a real-time central inventory of available rights from one rights cockpit, with the one toolset of a content-centric system that is tightly integrated with planning and scheduling. As a single source of truth, the available rights catalogue keeps all departments that are involved in the life cycle of content, abreast of what content can be scheduled when and where, what content rights are available for selling (Rights Out), and what content your company might shortly need to acquire or produce (Rights In).

Thanks to sophisticated analysis tools, detailed reports on this use of rights provide management with actionable insights.

ACCELERATED CHANGE

The examples above give you an idea of how rights management has grown more sophisticated over recent years. This evolved at a steady pace until the pandemic ushered in a new era of accelerated change.

When in March 2020, social distancing measures wiped away live sports and severely hampered scripted productions, there were sudden gaps in the schedules and offerings. Easy access to what was available in the back catalogue suddenly became a key challenge. Media companies had to be creative. They needed to re-evaluate their quality content and look for ways to re-use it or repurpose parts in other formats, rehashing it in a different way to create 'new' content. To 're-engineer' content effectively and without the risk of infringing rights, they often missed easy access to the copyrights and other underlying rights, not to mention data about participations and revenue shares. This emphasized the need for further segmentation of rights with in-depth layers on the level of talent, contributors, music, and so on. This kind of segmentation should give media companies the freedom to exploit their archive as a revenue generator with a clear view on costs, and to extend the content life cycle into the digital long tail of the market.

DIGITAL-FIRST

With viewers turning to streaming platforms to quench their thirst for new content, the pandemic also accelerated the already nascent digital-first transformation of the media enterprise.

When vaccines liberate us, we will find ourselves in a new landscape, where an explosion of content needs to be distributed in an omnichannel way to meet an increasingly fragmented audience through a mix of business models. To maximize revenues, media companies need a flexible, comprehensive, and — above all — strategic end-to-end rights management that enables them to mix business models over a strategically chosen succession of exploitation windows on the most diverse platforms. To minimize costs, they need automation and workflow optimization. In either case, they need augmented intelligence to make sense of an avalanche of data amid immense complexity.

But whether they will thrive or barely survive will eventually depend on how relevant they are.

Content needs to be distributed in an omnichannel way to meet an increasingly fragmented audience through a mix of business models.

STAYING RELEVANT

To stay relevant in today's world, media companies need to target their content better with marketing, content development, and a deep understanding of their audiences and what they want. They need to understand what viewers are watching, how that splits across the different platforms and changes over different segments. They also need to gain better insights into how the different genres and topics are performing, how that develops over time, and what all that implies in terms of future planning.
With predictions and simulations, they should be able to find and fill gaps between their offering and customer demand. Finally, they also need to know how different types of content perform in terms of financial investment against the KPIs.

"Relevance starts with proximity to your audiences", says ***Ezra Eeman***, Head of Digital, Transformation and Platforms at the EBU. "This is first of all about local connection and being audience-centric in your company culture, processes and workflows. This is less of an investment with money, more of an investment in focus, in strategy. You are no longer in an ivory tower deciding what people will watch. You need to focus on interactions and feedback loops with your audience."

Or as Management Consultant ***Gijsbert Voorneveld*** puts it: "Nowadays the vital need to stay relevant implies that you need to broaden your engagement. You have a show, for instance, and you start up a website where people can interact around the show. But do you own the property or title? Do you own the rights to the music on that website? And have you asked consent from the people that interact on the website to engage them afterwards? All of a sudden you are also a web publisher, or an event organizer, all around that same piece of intellectual property."

MULTIFACETED

It is the task of the rights management system to capture this multifaceted complexity of rights right from the start. As a consequence, such a rights management system should also be more generic and flexible in also capturing assets such as pieces of merchandise, ebooks, hardbacks, or short clips and user-generated content.

Gijsbert Voorneveld: "You need to think: What is the minimum rights set I want to capture, so I can keep track? And, yes, that includes the rights on books and ebooks, and the rights around scripts. Interestingly, these are the kind of things the big studios have been capturing for years. But they do that with a thousand people. Now it's being done everywhere, by just a few people who don't have lawyers, a legal department, content management systems, Adobe Sign, ...
So how do you support them in capturing all that?"

BROADER USER BASE

In this new reality, there is an increasing number of use cases that the current rights management systems fail to cover. Through lack of appropriate tools, a lot of content escapes centralized data entry and does not get connected to the central rights management and content planning. This is the case when content creators also publish the content, particularly news-type or very topical content that is too urgent to go through a lengthy central process.

Gijsbert Voorneveld: "Nobody remembers what was agreed for a three-minute item in a news show. And to send a lot of paperwork out afterwards, isn't productive. That is why one of those companies actually decided to have one person in the studio verbally capturing what is being agreed while they are collecting the news. This way they have at least a rudimentary rights management database."

Another example is where creatives join forces with television makers, and both parties feel a growing need to automate that collaboration. ***Gijsbert Voorneveld***: “As creatives don’t necessarily have the proper business systems in place (...) funneling the rights through the rights management mothership won’t work. So, what is happening at some broadcasters is that the local teams find a workaround, with parallel processes. And that’s where you see a gap growing with the corporate business. Before you know it, you don’t see where all the resources are going.”

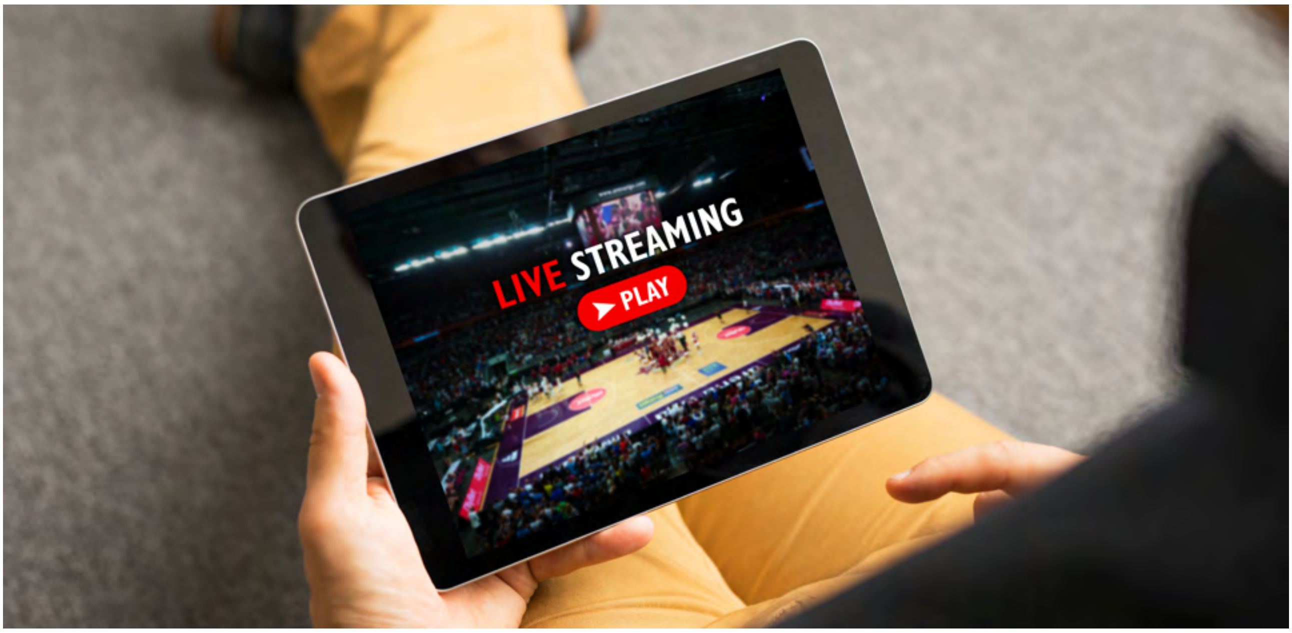
A solution would be to have an ecosystem various users can tap into with easy-to-use apps that capture data and translate it to the central rights management platform. That would make it possible to enter data early into the process. Such apps are web-based and have a fast development turnaround. They could start out as a Minimum Viable Product and grow as they are being used in their respective use cases.

This rights management system for the future is in turn pluggable into the wider company ecosystem. It leverages ecosystem data as everything is connected to a single source of ‘enterprise truth’.
The whole ecosystem automates the parts that humans shouldn’t be bothered with, and augments human intelligence with Machine Learning, Artificial Intelligence and Natural Language Processing to decipher the DNA of content and improve decision-making. In that ecosystem, strategic rights management helps media companies to actively generate value as the content is created, acquired, planned and sold. This is based on massive and granular data sets about exploitation rights, audiences and their viewing behaviour, budgets, and operations, even information about moods, the weather, the time of year, or upcoming events.

“Everything is connected to a single source of ‘enterprise truth’.”

The endpoint is an ecosystem that provides end-to-end, data-driven agility, all the way from content acquisition to smartly engaging the viewer, thanks to a closed-loop orchestration of the content supply chain workflows.

Let us now look into how a strategic rights management platform can create value for typical use cases.



How the ACQUISITION EXECUTIVE/ CONTENT MANAGER pumps new lifeblood into the company's circulation

"It all begins when whatever party decides to invest in the content to make it work. Even when it is still nothing more than an idea. And whoever is investing in it, will try to exploit it with the windows they get the most value from."

*(**Scott Kirkpatrick**, Introduction to Media Distribution. Film, Television and New Media)*

Content is the lifeblood of a media company. It enters the company's circulation in the form of negotiations and acquisitions, or even vague concepts in the long-term plan. It moves through the company, crystallizes into fully prepared and formatted material, is published on diverse services and channels, and eventually ends up sold or gathering dust in the back catalogue. All along this life cycle its flow and data need to be managed and monitored. The strategy for this journey has been revolutionized by access to data right from the word go.

AND SO THE CIRCLE OF CONTENT LIFE BEGINS

Right at the beginning of this circle of life, the acquisition executive of any media company with decent rights management and a real-time avails inventory in place should know which content needs to be produced or acquired by when. And as long as a sound return on investment is to be achieved, they need to do that with a data-based strategy. Thanks to the massive quantities of available data about viewer behaviour, acquisition executives can now get insight into how new content acquisitions will perform with specific audiences and how these acquisitions will help achieve specific targets, such as attracting new subscribers or reducing subscriber churn.

If the strategy and stock forecasts indicate that they need to acquire more sports rights, for instance, they will evaluate specific content for each channel or service, group it into a package, apply budgets, expected costs and desired rights to it, and send it through an internal approval process. More often than not this involves a series of separate systems or Excel sheets, while this could be coordinated by one central platform that directly interacts with the rest of the media operation ecosystem.

Acquisition executives can enter information specifying what they want, such as titles, exploitation windows and number of runs. At this early stage, they may also describe the required material, such as video, script, press kit, and soundtracks, together with the expected deadlines.

If this buying order gets the go-ahead, the negotiator has all the information they need to try to come to an agreement with the distributor, production house or another content provider, and if all goes well the result is a deal memo which leads to a signed contract. The central system will have managed the whole process from screening and negotiation rounds — keeping track of negotiated agreements — through to acquisition. During the process it will describe the status and the corresponding restrictions on what data specific departments can view or edit. Screened programmes and ttheir evaluations can for example be entered into the system hidden from view until the process has reached a stage where specific information about the content can be made visible to other departments. By the time the contract is signed, the system already has amassed a wide range of information including a rights summary that captures the restrictions, obligations and elemental rights in all their granularity.

The central system is also where the contracts are checked and approved, and the commitments with distributors are monitored, indicating whether the expected values have been reached, exceeded, or failed, with an overview of current and predicted discrepancies detailed down to the contract details. It also has the data on invoices.

"By the time the contract is signed, the system already has amassed a wide range of information."

As all this needs to work in an international setting, the system should be able to describe multiterritory rights, language needs and multicurrency payment schedules.

CAPTURING RIGHTS DATA FOR A NEW CONCEPT OF CONTENT

This focus on centralized and structured information right from the start, ensures that all parties enter data in a consistent way, that the data is searchable and can feed reports, but also that the system can act on that data, for instance warn on specific deadlines, track the use of rights, and raise the accuracy of the data.

"The sheer magnitude of data that needs to be entered will render AI increasingly important."

To meet the current reality in the media industry, the model for capturing rights should be extended to the earliest stages in the acquisition process and be scaled up to support all forms of content, including audio and text for instance. The sheer magnitude of data that needs to be entered will render Artificial Intelligence increasingly important, for instance for automatic document uploads.

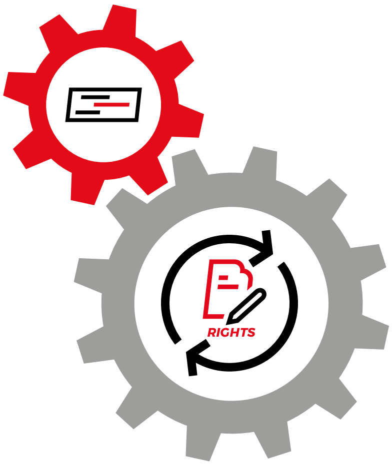
Where data entry cannot be automated, the effort should be minimized thanks to easy-to-use web-based applications that plug into the central, cloud-based rights management platform and enable the usual as well as new user profiles to easily enter the required data through a simple task-oriented interface. To further raise efficiency and avoid unnecessary and duplicate data entries, the diverse parties should only have to enter the data they are unique to, and not data that can just as well be queried from sundry databases.

CONTENT MARKETPLACE IN THE CLOUD

Big international media groups centralize their rights management for all their channels, platforms and services worldwide. They put all content they have acquired or produced in a global content management system in the Cloud, ready to be shared by channels and platforms across the globe. If the media assets in the system each contain all video, audio and subtitle files for one item of content, that content can be shared by all channels in whichever territories, and each channel automatically receives the content in the right localized version. The idea of providing access worldwide to content and rights data that is centralized in the Cloud has also given rise to global content marketplaces in the Cloud where content is showcased to a global community of buyers and deals can be made in a matter of days.

From this virtual place, content can start a new circle of life anywhere in the world.

How the CONTENT PLANNER/ SCHEDULER tackles the multidimensional challenge with augmented intelligence



The one constant principle – that all media properties devalue over time – provides enough of a foundation to guide distributors toward the correct title-by-title release strategies to ensure the strongest margin of profit."

*(**Scott Kirkpatrick**, Introduction to Media Distribution. Film, Television and New Media)*

CRAFTING VOD RELEASE PLANS

Setting up a VOD release plan seems simple enough: you check what's available and you put it in your offer. But that is not how you will get the most out of your investment. You have one certainty to work with: that your content devalues over time. It's up to you to map out its journey over platforms in a way that maximizes its potential for profits in successive steps that each time generate less revenue. Will you put the show on your Pay TV channel first before you put it on your VOD service? First TVOD, then SVOD and later AVOD? For how long? Or is EST an option? If there ever was a single approach for this, there certainly isn't one now.

You might want to draw up a yearlong release plan as Disney+ does, build up a hype around big titles, and draw up a strategy to keep attracting and retaining viewers in the long run.

And what with series? Do you have the rights to release all episodes of a season at once, Netflix-style, or will you wait for each episode to be broadcasted on your linear channel first? Or will you apply some other kind of staggered release plan that maximizes return on investment? Anyway, you always need to know exactly what rights you have in what time frames, for which territories and which platforms; which parts of the content cannot be shown where; for which embedded content extra clearances are required; whether there are holdbacks on certain episodes. And do you always know what your sales department has been up to, and what rights have been sold?

"You might want to draw up a yearlong release plan like Disney+ does."

In this context, we are not even talking about how you help your viewers find relevant content and deal with the paradox of choice, nor how you know all the required materials will be ready in time for all the localized and platform-conform versions. Yes, It's a challenge with multiple dimensions.

CRAFTING LINEAR SCHEDULES

If crafting a release plan isn't as straightforward as it might appear to be, what then to say about scheduling content on TV channels, an extremely complex and time-consuming task if ever there was one. Some say it is more an art than a science. It is handled by experienced planning managers that have deep knowledge of how to attract and retain viewers by scheduling the content that is available to them in a way that is in line with their company's mission — and in the case of commercial broadcasters — generates the kind of ratings they promised their advertisers.

What makes a schedule a good schedule? First of all, there are a lot of financial considerations to keep in mind. Staying within budgets and controlling the cost of the broadcasted content is very challenging because of the complex nature of content rights. Rights often include free reruns during off-peak hours, the content has license windows during which it needs to be scheduled, the costs of a series are amortized over the different runs of the different episodes according to very specific rules, … And often, multiple simulations of the schedule need to be made with stock, budget and quota forecasts.

Content volumes and durations are measured, monitored and reported on to comply with legal and regulatory criteria, such as quota. The business benefit for the company resides in the fact that planners and schedulers can act on targets rather than react on error reporting, and as they can predict the final values, they needn't 'overshoot' just to be sure.

"IT IS IN SELF-LIMITATION THAT A MASTER FIRST SHOWS HIMSELF." (GOETHE)

Planners and schedulers need to work creatively within rights and restrictions, obligations and commitments, editorial targets, quotas, parental ratings, business rules and all kinds of regulations and legal boundaries. Even when their state-of-the-art scheduling system automates rights validation and monitors all of the requirements just mentioned, they need to be creative, while they cannot for a second neglect technical perfection.

There must never be any overlap or gap between transmissions. Viewers also expect a certain rhythm in the schedule. They expect episodes of the same series to be broadcasted in the same timeslot each day or week. The flow in the schedule is also important.

Consecutive transmissions should not be targeted at a totally different target audience. If you broadcast a cooking show after a football match, for instance, people will switch channels. And one schedule is not enough. Often you need to prepare alternative schedules to deal with contingencies or to keep your options open.

And what about catch-up? Can you automatically plan programmes for your catch-up service straight from the linear schedule, with the certainty that all rights are validated? For all this and more, a multidimensional, versatile and rights-driven scheduling system proves to be an essential tool.

LIVE BROADCASTING

The complexity and unpredictability of live broadcasting is another thing. As last-minute changes are inherent in sports, you need to be able to quickly adapt the short-time schedule and steer Playout accordingly.

If this seems stressful, what to say about the pandemic, when nearly all live events came to a screeching halt? When we asked RTBF TV Director ***Thierry Delrue*** how he was coping, this is what he said: "Now that sporting events have been cancelled, we've had to review things and restructure our schedule. So we've been working a lot on the archives. We cover mainly the most important moments in Belgian sports, both old and more recent, and try to add a new, fresher touch. For example, we use Skype interviews with witnesses of the event in question, specialists and athletes who talk about their achievements. (...) It is up to the production team to check whether we are actually authorized to broadcast it."

REPURPOSING AND REPACKAGING

As Covid-19 also brought non-live productions down to a trickle, the sudden shortage of new scripted content sent media companies back to the proverbial cellar to dust off their archives and rummage through them looking for quality content they could re-purpose or repackage in any way. They had to speedily reuse product extracts on multiple platforms, without taking any risk of dropping the ball when verifying all rights and restrictions involved. That emphasized the need for segmentation on the product, with restrictions and metadata inherited or directly added on the level of the constituent extracts.

Having such a segmentation ensures that whenever extracts are reused separately or as part of a new programme, all applicable rights and restrictions are verified. Besides, metadata on extracts helps to enhance the viewing experience and enables viewers to swiftly navigate within an on-demand programme to the topic they want to see. The extracts can, for instance, carry their own press descriptions, cast information, copyright sheets and images. Additional metadata on extracts can also be used for reports on ratings and costs.

FLEXIBLE CONTENT MODEL

To offer the viewer a new angle on existing content, media companies also want to reorder episodes of a series, combine content of different seasons or even make new series by compiling unrelated content around a chosen theme or purpose. They can, for instance, assemble a best-of series, or a series of superhero films. This requires a flexible content model which allows schedulers to define and package new lists of elements and their order.

When management gathers to explore ideas like that, or to make decisions for the long term, on company level, on medium-term plans, even on the programming for the coming weeks. they could use a web app that keeps them 'au-dessus de la mêlée' by giving them an easy-to-interpret, graphical overview of the planning on any level.

MULTIDIMENSIONAL REQUIREMENTS

We have just discussed how there is a large variety of dimensions that make or break a release plan or linear schedule. Recent years have seen this complexity increase considerably as media companies try to reach and engage viewers with ever more content on an ever-widening array of channels and platforms.

At the same time, both viewers and advertisers have come to expect ever-higher levels of, respectively, addressability and personalization. As a result, the list of dimensions that make a schedule successful has never been so wide and varied.

A HANDLE ON THE DNA OF CONTENT

The relative importance of these dimensions differs from company to company, even from channel to channel, but if there is one constant, it is that only granular and multidimensional data provides the much needed handle on the DNA of content.

To start with, long- and short-term schedulers need a clear, granular view on what content or extract is available for planning when and where. This real-time overview of avails should immediately adjust to any changes anyone makes in the planning, or any acquisition or sales of rights.

By opening the overview from the schedule and specifying criteria such as title, product category or duration, it should be easy to find what you need for the period you are working on. You then just fill in the gaps with a simple drag-and-drop.

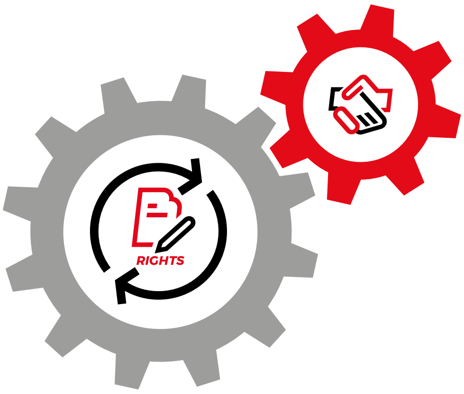
AUGMENTED INTELLIGENCE

This kind of real-time catalogue will also help to meet a fast-growing need to automate time-consuming manual processes on the one hand and leverage augmented intelligence on the experts' input, on the other. The former frees up time to make informed decisions, the latter improves the decision-making process. The two combined result in optimum use of available content.

MEDIAGENIX is already applying Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning for rating predictions, scheduling recommendations and automated off-peak scheduling, all tapping into the Available Rights Catalogue and business insights. Admittedly, primetime scheduling will basically remain a human craft, whether or not assisted by augmented intelligence.

The new-generation tools we described in this chapter will eventually lift the entire content supply chain to new levels of operational and strategic excellence.

How the *SALES EXECUTIVE* unblocks a welcome revenue stream



"When sales executives enter into discussions with potential buyers, they rely on their internal rights management systems to see if a particular title is available to sell (or if any holdbacks, restrictions or clearances might prevent a deal from going forward."

*(**Scott Kirkpatrick**, Introduction to Media Distribution. Film, Television and New Media)*

Global competition and the pressure on revenues are pushing media companies to produce more exclusive content than ever. This comes at a cost that has to be balanced with new revenues. Licensing rights for other countries, markets or platforms to third parties is one of the possible revenue generators.

Management Consultant ***Gijsbert Voorneveld*** points to the strategy of the big streaming services: "Some are now actually carrying what the Americans call 'locally produced' content, by which they mean content that was produced in France or Canada, for instance. As a big American studio or network, you can publish your content around the globe. That is one way of playing the game. The other way is that you allow local presence in terms of scheduling, marketing and sales, through the affiliates and the ad agencies. You let them engage with the commercial opportunities in the local market. Product placement, co-sponsoring, co-producing, ... all that benefits from local presence if you agree on what value it has and on appropriate rights sets.
That is where the interaction with your rights management system comes into play."

GLOBAL TO LOCAL, LOCAL TO GLOBAL

According to ***Gijsbert Voorneveld***, having a proper rights management system and procedures in place enables media companies to invert what was traditionally a top-down, global-to-local big-deal business. "You can say: if we co-produce a show, I get the local rights, you get the worldwide rights, because you are best placed to take care of global distribution and sales. Anyway, if I produce a show, I am the originator of the Intellectual Property, so by definition, I have the worldwide rights. But I might only have the budget to exploit that in my territory because that is what it was intended for and how the business case was built. That is one way you can stay relevant."

A nice example is what happened with Spanish heist crime television series 'La Casa de Papel'.

It was produced for television channel Antena 3 (Atresmedia) in Spain, without any intention to distribute it elsewhere. After Netflix acquired global streaming rights in late 2017 it soon became the most watched non-English language series worldwide.

'La Casa de Papel' became the most watched non-English language series worldwide

RE-NEGOTIATE

So, a local broadcaster can finance expensive productions this way.
But to distribute content to the world, you need to show that you have the rights to do so. These rights include rights for media, authors, creators, ... All these rights have been negotiated upfront, before the production of the programme started, which means that all of these people have given their agreement for broadcasts in, say, Spain, not for broadcasts in other parts of the world. This means you need to negotiate again with every party and agree on a revenue redistribution.
In order to finalize a deal, a music piece might require additional clearing or additional subtitles need to be produced. You need to keep track of all this work to avoid that the deal is jeopardized because crucial steps have been skipped. Also, you need to make sure that the price you negotiate covers all of the costs and fees.

CENTRALIZING SCATTERED INFORMATION

This process is cumbersome and time-consuming because information is scattered over many places in Excel sheets, Word files, paper documents or the schedules, if it hasn't gone missing at some production facility.
Time and time again you find yourself copying data from one system to another. And with so many rights holders involved how can you be sure you have cleared all rights? And how can you detect which titles are even available for selling? Above all, you want to avoid legal issues and penalties.

Keeping a clear view on costs, following up on tasks, dealing with complex revenue distribution calculations ... it is all so time-consuming and error-prone. Losing track of communications around proposals, deals and sales you are left with the feeling you could make more and better deals if only the information was consolidated in a central place.

PLUG-IN WEB APP FOR SALES

Here again is where the power of a real-time available rights catalogue comes into play.
If this central catalogue also specifies which specific rights are available for selling, the sales team can tap into that catalogue with an easy-to-use web app. This way the sales team can select titles in the catalogue with a clear view on those distribution rights, make a proposal to the market — or at the request of a potential customer — and come to an agreement on licence rights, conditions and pricing. As the offer converts into a deal, additional information about the proposal is stored and throughout this entire workflow the data about what exactly is being sold is captured in the licence right.

Such a sales web app can offer support for all actions to be performed — clearing rights with actors, archives, rights owners, finalizing the deal with a deal memo document — as well as for managing costs and revenue distribution to the various parties involved.

If this set-up is plugged into the wider content supply chain ecosystem, all of this information can be seamlessly synchronized across departments. If a deal stipulates new exclusivity provisions, for instance, the scheduling department will know whether changes need to be made to the schedule. They will also be kept up to date on any upcoming changes.

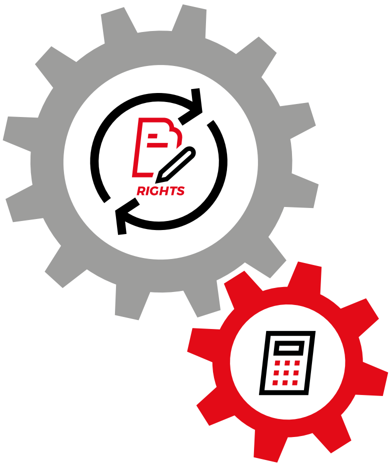
Rights Out, the web app MEDIAGENIX developed for this purpose, supports the whole process of (sub)licensing content to third parties for specific countries, markets or platforms. It enables sales officers to efficiently identify sales opportunities, plan sales, clear rights, draw up deals, orchestrate and follow up on tasks, and calculate and manage revenue distribution.

> ***“The web app MEDIAGENIX developed, supports the whole process of (sub)licensing content to third parties for specific countries, markets or platforms.”***

At all times the sales officers are warned about conflicts with their company’s exploitation rights, with rights that have been sold exclusively, and holdbacks. Cutting through complexity and eliminating time-consuming and error-prone chores, they find more time to close more and better deals, which optimizes a welcome revenue stream for the company.

With real-time information shared across acquisition, scheduling, finance and sales departments, the ecosystem this web app plugs into, enables all departments involved to work in perfect synch with one source of truth. Costs are reduced and monetization is optimized as they jointly manage the circle of content life.

5 How the FINANCE TEAM show stakeholders the money



"For content producers and rights holders, royalties would be considered those monies received on top of any advance or minimum guarantee (...) or as their share of the net receipts on a revenue share arrangement (...). Distributors also receive royalty revenues, primarily from consumer-facing platforms."

*(**Scott Kirkpatrick**, Introduction to Media Distribution. Film, Television and New Media)*

"Show me the money", is what Rod Tidwell (played by Cuba Gooding Jr.) says to Jerry Maguire (Tom Cruise) in the 1996 comedy-drama movie Jerry Maguire. With a budget of 50 million US dollars, the movie showed its stakeholders revenues to the amount of 273 million US dollars worldwide.

"SHOW ME THE MONEY" IS WHAT CONTENT PROVIDERS, DISTRIBUTORS, PLATFORMS, BROADCASTERS, TALENT AND ALL OTHER RIGHTS HOLDERS SAY AT THE END OF THE DAY.

The way revenue is shared is defined in complex contracts, which are the result of detailed negotiations between the parties involved. With new players adding to the competitive clutter and the rise of digital platforms fed by the multiplatform expectations of the viewer, ever more business models and revenue split models are popping up.

"Millions of consumption records a month need to be ingested for intricate revenue share calculations."

Calculations for royalties and participations have grown in complexity now that business models have become more and more sophisticated. Millions of consumption records a month need to be ingested for intricate revenue share calculations if each party is to get what is theirs by right. To get your calculations right, you have to agree on the percentage split between beneficiaries. You need to know how many people consumed your content and possibly even how long they viewed a particular programme.
For TVOD or EST you might say this is quite straightforward. Subscribers pay a specific amount to watch or buy a movie or a series. This money is to be distributed across platforms, licensors and licensees. But what if you have also paid a minimum guarantee? At what point do you begin to pay overages? Matters get more complicated as soon as SVOD enters the equation, and when you start mixing business models you are in for a treat.

Take the case of RTL Netherlands. Their revenue system involves 435 companies, including studios, distributors, and production houses.

Monique Slootbeek, Rights & Royalties Manager at RTL Netherlands told us that they are working with more than 100 revenue split models (and counting), and have to deal with minimum guarantees that are far from straightforward, with different options based on title, package, period and/or box office category.

“We needed a system that was also able to deal with 8 million consumption records a month,” she said. “We also needed statements to report on the shares of the royalties and participations the beneficiaries get. MEDIAGENIX helped us with that.”

MANAGEMENT AND SHAREHOLDERS WANT YOU TO SHOW THEM THE MONEY

When you ask management and shareholders what they dream of at night, they invariably speak the three magic words: return on investment (ROI).

Management wants to see the achieved ROI on different levels — transmission, day, channel, contract, ...— to make informed decisions and make sure they hit the targets.
They want to make — or at least see — simulations that show which schedules or release plans make the best use of the available content and generate the best return.

A handy web app could be of great help. It could, for instance, take a snapshot of the long-term schedule, and give them quick and easy overviews of specific aspects of that schedule, based on the search criteria they select and combine with a click of the mouse.

When taking decisions affecting long-term planning, acquisitions or productions, management will also want to do that based on a proper trend analysis of stock use in the past and on the — multicurrency — value of plans, schedules and stock at any moment in the past, present and future.

“A web app could give managers quick and easy overviews of the long-term schedule.”

Ascertaining the value of plans, schedules and programmes in stock — down to programme segment level — is based on contract, run and amortization information that should be available in the Broadcast Management

System. It should in fact be possible in that system to drill down to the actual cost, status and expected cost of each run, even for each episode of a series, and this cost should also cover programme-related costs, such as versioning, dubbing and subtitling costs.

Any cost calculation considers initial cost, exchange rates and amortizations. Amortizations can be date or run based; they can be nominal or in percentage, in straight line (fixed value) or accelerated, or in any combination imaginable. At all times you need an overview of accumulated amortizations.

What every manager needs, is overview and control, starting from budgeting and acquisition down to the approval of related invoices and the creation of multicurrency payment schedules. They want budgets and cash flow to be monitored and predicted, and payments and invoicing to be accurate.

To make diverse calculations and report on all this and more, you need a comprehensive set of reporting tools, as well as integration of your content supply chain management platform with best-of-breed BI tools.

SHOW ME THE MONEY, IS ALSO WHAT THE AUTHORITIES SAY.

If tightly integrated with your financial ERP systems, the readily accessible, real-time data in your content supply chain management platform should also be of great help for the mandatory review of the company's financial status at the end of a financial period. The system should support the monthly closings, for instance.

Smart analytics and BI reporting are the ultimate way of ascertaining whether the company is running its media operations efficiently and squeezing maximum value from its content investments.

Do you share this vision on the very near future of rights management? What is your vision? What are your challenges and ambitions? Let's talk.

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