

Pharos Mediator and Ascent Media's European Media Centre deliver proven business benefits

Ascent Media maximizes the business potential of clients at its world class Stephen Street facility in central London following the successful integration of Pharos' Mediator content management and workflow platform.

"Mediator provides our customers with tangible efficiency improvements and cost savings by helping them switch to a new managed service model. It provides our clients with total flexibility to scale new services. Importantly we can deploy new services rapidly giving Ascent and our clients a competitive edge where speed to market is vital."

Steven Samwell, Director of Technology, Ascent Media

Ascent Media's Stephen Street Media Centre has been completely transformed from a transmission centre based on linear playout to one capable of realizing the fluid distribution needs of clients faced with multi-channel playout and delivery to multiple new media platforms with media asset management and workflow at its core. Crucially the new technology enables Ascent Media to build revenue for its clients as they seek to scale operations nationally or internationally.

"Our customers saw a huge benefit in moving from a transactional based model to a managed service fee model," explains Steven Samwell, Director of Technology, Ascent Media. "Previously a core client like Sony would pay separately for each job from ingest to playout. Every encode, dub or Fedex of tape was a one-off transaction. Mediator now allows us to offer a managed service and our clients can benefit from a single monthly inclusive rate. This new business approach is of huge benefit to customers, significantly helping them to reduce their media administration overheads."

Ascent's Media Centre, part of its European Transmission Centre (ETC), manages services for 18 channels for international broadcasters including Sony Pictures Television International (SPTI), InfoTV and Disney with another major broadcast customer on the verge of being added. Typically Mediator now manages 300 hours of new content per week as a combination of electronic file delivery and tape based ingest. Regardless of the automation system or distribution engine Mediator provides a single point of reference for all the ingest workflow at the ETC, streamlining content encoding into MPEG-file formats ranging from low-res proxies at MPEG-4, SD typically at MPEG-2 15Mbps or IMX50 and HD across the board as XDCAM HD 50Mbps. Following ingest every short or long-form item is subject to a rigorous Spot Check via Mediator to check its integrity and ensure the right material can pass further into the workflow.

"Our key requirements included automated and accelerated ingest, electronic file processing and the ability to handle multiple languages more efficiently," says Samwell. "Just as our workflow for subtitling and languages was previously tape-based so our clients' ability to edit promos is now file based."

SPTI teams in Soho or at Sony's European headquarters in Budapest have remote visibility of their material in Mediator. Promotions teams can browse low-res material, send a shot list to Mediator which automatically performs a high-res restore of those shots and sends them to the relevant Sony office for editing on Final Cut Pro. The finished promo is output as a file and returned securely to Mediator ready for approval and playout.

Originally incorporated within the ETC to serve the existing transmission needs of broadcasters, Mediator has also enabled Ascent Media to add video on demand provider Filmflex to its roster.

"One of the key reasons we selected Mediator was that it could service different types of business model," says Samwell. "It offers the flexibility to increase or scale the system for clients without escalating the cost. Today we ingest content for Sony for transmission but since the assets we store for them are now entirely browseable and accessible they can start to publish content for other platforms like VoD, web and mobile. This truly is ingest at high quality once, and repurpose many times to maximize the value of your asset."

The ETC also integrates with Ascent Media's global networks which deliver over 35,000 hours of media content each week and plays out over 100,000 clock accurate elements daily across more than 300 linear channels.

"Pharos specializes in content process reengineering, helping world class service providers like Ascent Media transition to the most efficient file-based workflows," comments Russell Grute, Marketing Director, Pharos. "The platform that we've helped establish within Ascent's Media Centre allows them to accept multiple clients, provide clients with a menu of options with which to expand their business and the tools to rapidly carry out those new deployments. Pharos' expertise is the ability to link media, material and metadata together with workflow and we are working with Ascent to help improve services for all its clients"

About Pharos

Pharos delivers content management and workflow solutions to broadcasters and service providers in television, radio, VOD and mobile distribution. Pharos solutions help global media companies rapidly adopt and benefit from file based multi-platform distribution. With Pharos, media organisations can simplify workflow processes, unify operational teams and better utilise their technology infrastructure across the entire broadcast value chain. For further information, visit www.pharos.tv

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