EGYPTIAN CONNECTION
Inside Al Ghad Al Arabi’s new Cairo TV station

FIT OR NOT FIT?
Harvey Glen gives his verdict on the Sony PXW-FS7

ON CLOUD NINE
Ensuring business continuity with cloud-based DR

MAN WITH A MISSION
Al Jazeera’s Head of Technology and Operations, Mohamed Abuagla, on steering the network’s workplace transformation project in the right direction

THE OTT CLUB
// Developing du View
// Diwan Videos’ OTT strategy
// DMI breaks new ground
// Selevision unleashes online
I don’t have the luxury of sitting back on my couch every evening and watching my favourite programmes on TV anymore. Juggling a busy career and motherhood left little time for such luxuries until I discovered a couple of years ago that I could catch up on my favourite programmes while waiting to chauffeur little feet back from a dance class or whiling away my time in a hotel room, jet lagged and unable to sleep. Today, the only programmes I watch are those that are available on my mobile device anytime, anywhere.

I bet it’s the same story with many of you, although our circumstances may be slightly altered. The demand for content anytime, anywhere has spurred the OTT bandwagon, several young Arab entrepreneurs enjoying success with their OTT ventures, and the UAE and Saudi Arabia having the world’s highest rates of smartphone penetration, OTT is being taken to the next level here. With leading broadcasters having hopped on to the bandwagon, several young Arab entrepreneurs enjoying success with their OTT ventures, and the UAE and Saudi Arabia having the world’s highest rates of smartphone penetration, OTT is being taken to the next level here.

OTT, therefore, is the basic premise of our stories for the CABSAT show issue of BroadcastPro ME. You will see fewer traditional broadcast case studies in this issue, and more OTT deployments. This, by no means, reduces the significance of traditional integrations, but our primary aim has always been to inform and share the experiences that are new to this region. With these stories, we have brought a fresh set of suppliers and solution providers into our traditional mix. You are likely to meet some new faces at CABSAT for the first time.

Speaking of new faces, it gives me great pleasure to introduce to our readers the man who dominates our cover this month. Meet Mohamed Abuagla, who serves as both CIO and CTO of Al Jazeera Media Network. For the first time in its history, Al Jazeera took a strategic decision to place its worldwide technology and operations teams under one person. Abuagla is the man! He gives us a fresh perspective on Al Jazeera’s recent projects and reveals some impressive numbers. More importantly, we begin to respect and appreciate why he holds such an important role in the media organisation.

BroadcastPro ME has always lived up to its promise to bring you the best stories in the region, and introduce you to new and dynamic faces that are pushing the envelope in the Arab world. We believe we have set now standards of excellence with this issue of BroadcastPro ME. See you at CABSAT!
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March 2015
RED appoints Advanced Media as official distributor for MENA

RED has opted to include channel distribution in the Middle East and North Africa region in light of rising competition and increasing demand for local support and training. Dubai-based distributor Advanced Media Trading (AMT) has been appointed distributor of RED cameras and peripherals for the MENA region and will work closely with Mike Grieve, recently appointed Regional Sales Director for RED EMEA, BroadcastPro ME can reveal.

“There’s been an increasing demand for RED cameras and peripherals in the region, but in equal measure, there has also been a dire need for local support, training and improved service delivery here,” Kaveh Farnam, CEO of Advanced Media Trading, told BroadcastPro ME.

AMT already distributes several products, such as the Firefly and aerial solutions that it claims works well with the RED camera. This new arrangement, however, will enable it to keep stock of RED cameras and peripherals such as plates, batteries, cables, adapters and connectors. AMT is also the only company in the region that undertakes lens calibration, which has significantly raised its profile in the production market. It also conducts regular training workshops and demonstrations on the products it distributes for end users across the region. All of this made AMT suitable to distribute RED solutions in the MENA market.

RED has also made greater inroads into cinephotography, again a strong point for local distributor AMT, which sells high-end photography solutions to the regional market.

“There has been an increasing demand for cinephoto solutions and our digital cinema workshops, some of which will be held in conjunction with RED and seek to train end users here to maximise the potential of these cameras. Besides a scheduled stream of educational information via workshops, we will also encourage online engagement and will have on-site demonstrations at CABSAT,” added Farnam.

Dur Alpha Media, a Riyadh-based production house, recently acquired a high-end graphics solution from Vizrt to produce real-time 2D and 3D animated graphics. The solutions, which include Viz Artist and Viz Trio, will be deployed in live studio productions to make the graphics production and overlay process more efficient. Viz Artist enables the 3D animation and visual effects, while Viz Trio will be used to control video output and make quick changes to content whenever needed. The Viz engine real-time rendering software will deliver animations in HD SDI video or as a DVI digital output. With five fully-equipped studios and OB vans boasting HD capability, Dur Alpha claims to produce live programmes as well as commercials and documentaries in line with the cultural values of the Arab region. Next on the cards is a Vizrt Social TV solution. Commenting on the deployment of Vizrt solutions, Bandar F. Alabdulsalam, CEO of Dur Alpha Media, said: “Our decision to go with Vizrt has helped us to build a very efficient workflow in our production. We are now able to create and play complex 3D graphics with ease and manage all these with a simple interface.”
Kurdistan 24 TV opts for Avid Everywhere

Kurdistan 24 TV (K24), a 24/7 HD news, current affairs and information satellite outlet based in Erbil, Kurdistan region of Iraq, has embraced Avid Everywhere by implementing a full content creation to distribution workflow powered by the Avid Central Platform.

K24 plans to function in several languages to maximize its potential and service reach. To facilitate multi-lingual broadcasting, K24 needs tools to help journalists and editors deliver high-quality material and programming, and the agility to respond to new opportunities and future developments quickly and comprehensively. K24 also needs to facilitate collaboration across the entire business.

"By embracing Avid Everywhere and the MediaCentral Platform, K24 has an end-to-end solution that meets its news production and broadcast needs now and into the future," said Nevedlin Waaya, General Manager of K24.

"The efficiency and simplicity of K24's state-of-the-art news infrastructure will enable us to focus on finding and covering the most important stories," he adds.

K24 has deployed a workflow provided by the MediaCentral Platform to provide all the tools it needs to create high-quality content. It has chosen Avid Media Suite, Storage Suite and Artist Suite solutions, covering the entire process of media production, from acquisition and ingest, through storage and editing, all the way to archiving and distribution. These include MediaCentral UX, ENWS, Media Director, Interplay Production, Interplay Capture, and Interplay Archive from the Media Suite, alongside ISIS 7000 from the Storage Suite, and Media Composer/Software and Media Composer NewsCutter Option from the Artist Suite.

The channel is set to launch in June 2015.

Moby Group to go live with BroadView tools

Dubai-based broadcaster Moby Group has opted for a channel-management solution from U-TO/BroadView. The broadcaster is scheduled to go live with the new solution in May 2015.

U-TO/BroadView is already managing channels for Arabic food channel Fatafat. Moby Group has licensed the entire channel management suite, including planning, scheduling, traffic, and ad-sales.

BroadView is designed to optimize workflow and eliminates the need for repeat data-entry between systems. The end result aids in monetizing content and improving efficiency. It is scalable to meet Moby Group’s future needs.

Speaking about their choice, Andrew Kaszubski, Group CCO of Moby Group said: “The U-TO/BroadView package is an end-to-end solution that will grow with us. Handling growth alongside the rapid changes in media encompassing linear broadcast, radio, and emerging on-demand platforms might be overwhelming, but this gives us the tools needed to manage effectively.”

Michael Atkin, BroadView CEO and President added that the installation will help Moby Group “leverage the full power of our system, creating an end-to-end solution that will grow with us. Handling growth alongside the rapid changes in media encompassing linear broadcast, radio, and emerging on-demand platforms might be overwhelming, but this gives us the tools needed to manage effectively.”

"Many media companies are taking a wait-and-see approach in today’s fast-changing media environment. What Moby Group is demonstrating is that the biggest opportunities are here and now."

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IN FIGURES

$6.22 bn
Pay-TV revenue in Sub-Saharan region by 2020, up from $3.54bn in 2014

Source: Digital TV Research

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Ericsson buys twofour54’s playout business

Ericsson has strengthened its position in the region by acquiring twofour54 playout business and will initially provide playout services for nine different channels. As part of this partnership, Ericsson will establish a media hub in Abu Dhabi to serve clients across the Middle East and beyond. The hub will provide playout services and act as the local base to eventually leverage Ericsson’s portfolio of services in content management, over-the-top (OTT), content discovery, metadata, creative and access services.

Speaking about the deal, Noura Al Kaabi, CEO of twofour54, said: “twofour54 is committed to the growth of the media industry across the MENA region. This long-term partnership with Ericsson is another step towards achieving our goal of being the region’s leading developer of a sustainable, private-sector-led media industry.”

Al Jazeera partners with African Media Agency for online news

Al Jazeera has formed a partnership with African Media Agency (AMA) to introduce its regional news to online platforms in the continent.

The partnership will see news portals from Africa publish Al Jazeera’s Fan African news feed. Given that most media houses have a limited budget to deploy reporters to almost all corners of the continent, most of the audiences for these news outlets have been at a disadvantage missing out on some important news. Al Jazeera has reporters deployed in all corners of the African continent who generate both text and video content that is Africa-related. The initiative aims at permitting selected quality news portals to use this content online.

This partnership is expected to bolster Al Jazeera’s position in Africa further. Internet penetration currently stands at 24.5% of the population of Africa.

ADM ties with Mondo TV for animation series

Abu Dhabi Media has signed an agreement with World TV Suisse, a subsidiary of Mondo TV, for the production of nine animated series over the next three years. Each series will have 52 episodes of approximately 15 minutes each, based on three subjects – Majed, Ammouna and Casslan. The series will be produced with a budget of $28 million, with Abu Dhabi Media contributing 50% of production cost. The series will be developed in both 2D and 3D.

Brightcove video player receives industry support

The new Brightcove player has received broad support across the expansive online video ecosystem. Brightcove partners supporting the new player, whether through the Brightcove Perform player management service or the Brightcove Video Cloud online video platform, span advertising, analytics and quality of service, and include Adobe Analytics, Adways, Akamai, AOL Platforms, Chartbeat, comScore, Conviva, and DoubleClick, among others.

Riedel acquires Tele Comm Sportservice AG

Riedel Communications has announced the acquisition of Tele Comm Sportservice, specialist Tele Comm Sportservice.

Tele Comm Sportservice has been a provider of communications solutions for temporary and permanent installations at live events for more than two decades. As an official International Ski Federation partner, the company specializes in supporting international ski competitions and other winter sports events. Riedel Communications now holds 100% of Tele Comm Sportservice AG shares.

ADM ties with Mondo TV for animation series

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Giovanni Fraeyman, a broadcast specialist based in Dubai, has invested in underwater communication systems as well as 4K underwater camera equipment to enable more efficient and safe underwater filming projects. He has also recently secured the dealership for this equipment for the region.

Speaking about his recent investment, Fraeyman said: “I've done a lot of underwater projects a decade ago before I came to Dubai. This region lacked the right facilities and mindset then to pursue underwater filming as a career. Now, with the facilities at Dubai Studio City and the fact that more Hollywood and Bollywood producers are coming to this region, I believe it is time to tap into this opportunity. My equipment is tailor-made for both documentary shoots and studio setups.”

As an HSE-qualified commercial diver, Fraeyman says safety is his first priority, an element that is often ignored in local underwater filming projects. “I have often seen people jump into the water with their underwater housing and filming. If you were in the UK, you would not be able to shoot underwater if you were not HSE qualified. I prefer a 100% professional and safe approach that is tailor-made for both documentary shoots and studio setups.”

Al Arab goes off air
Al Arab TV went off air within hours after its launch on February 1, 2014. Although the team touted impartial reportage as its USP, it is believed that an interview with an opponent of Bahrain’s government caused the closure of the channel. Bahrain’s Minister of Information Affairs Isa Abdulrahman Al Hammadi, however, announced that the Manama-based news channel was suspended because of the channel’s failure to obtain the required licences.

Al Arab was not complying with the technical and administrative requirements stipulated by the Bahraini Ministry of Information Affairs before starting broadcasting from Bahrain, he said in a statement.

TSL installs HD router at Al Aan TV
As part of its mandate to move to a fully HD environment, Al Aan TV recently replaced its existing router with a new Miranda (Grass Valley) router. The transition was carried out within nine hours with the help of TSL Systems.

TSL’s Suhail Ahmed, who was involved in the deployment, said: “We evaluated various options and decided to go with Miranda because there was good local support available for their products. The biggest challenge in this installation was to replace the router without disrupting the channel’s operations for too long. We were required to train the end user within the same nine-hour window to enable them to operate the new router panels.”

Matthew Allard has joined Ross Video as Marketing Product Management Content Creation Manager. Allard brings 30 years of experience in the broadcast and media sector in a variety of different companies, with roles in product marketing and management.

Alarab TV went off air within hours after its launch on February 1, 2014. Although the team touted impartial reportage as its USP, it is believed that an interview with an opponent of Bahrain’s government caused the closure of the channel. Bahrain’s Minister of Information Affairs Isa Abdulrahman Al Hammadi, however, announced that the Manama-based news channel was suspended because of the channel’s failure to obtain the required licences.

The TV channel did not comply with the technical and administrative requirements stipulated by the Bahraini Ministry of Information Affairs before starting broadcasting from Bahrain, he said in a statement.
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Multi-platform entertainment company Selevision has announced that its over-the-top (OTT) portals will be accessible to users from this month. The service will be launched throughout the MENA region and will offer a core programming package with Video on Demand (VOD) entertainment, Live, Restart and Catch-up TV. This new OTT offering by Selevision requires no commitment, contract, credit check or hardware installation. Consumers will be able to tailor their experience with add-ons for access to additional programming and features on their devices at home and on-the-go. Anywhere a wired, WiFi or mobile broadband connection is available, the service is delivered over supported internet-connected devices including select Smart TVs, iOS, Android, Mac and PC.

"OTT is the next step forward for us and it is where the entertainment world is headed," said Dr Raed Khusheim, CEO, Selevision, in an interview with BroadcastPro ME. "We are proud to be ahead of the curve in a rapidly growing industry, evolving from a set-top unit designer and manufacturer to an over-the-top (OTT) content provider, connecting with different generations, while continuing to incorporate the enthusiasm, audacity, innovation and determination that are the fundamental values of our community," he added.

"This service will enable consumers to access their favourite TV shows as well as the most recent Hollywood, Bollywood and Arabic blockbusters right after their theatrical release on devices that they already use. Selevision also announced its Hybrid Broadcast Broadband TV (HbbTV) service made available on some of the major broadcasting channels in the region, starting late February 2015, to viewers on all HbbTV compatible set-top boxes in the market. The Saudi Arabian service provider has recently entered into an exclusive long-term partnership with Arabsat to deliver the first HbbTV service to the MENA region. The Arabsat Satellite-based HbbTV service will be complimented by the Selevision HbbTV platform and content library to provide different viewer experience for the 26 degree Arabsat hotspot.

With this service, broadcasters can access different standardised applications in addition to the wide possibilities of customised applications. "As of now, satellite is very strong in the MENA and the way forward is to bring the two together by bridging satellite and OTT for value-added services", commented Dr Khusheim. "We have introduced social TV integration in our HbbTV service to make it interactive. Content owners are enabling users to interact with other users on the same platforms," he added.

Selevision is also considering introducing the Targeted Advertising platform, reaching consumers based on various traits such as demographics, psychographics, behavioral variables and firmographics.
**Al Aan TV deploys TalkShow**

Free-to-air Arabic satellite channel Al Aan TV is the first broadcaster in the MENA region to install NewTek TalkShow video calling system at its Dubai facility. The TV channel has deployed three units of TalkShow for its news bulletins, TV talk shows and radio talk shows.

According to Raad Haddadin, Head of Technical at Al Aan TV, the decision to deploy TalkShow was made at IBC 2014, where the product was first launched.

“TalkShow enables broadcasters and news producers to allow any of the 300 million monthly connected Skype users, coming from almost any device at any place in the world to be seamlessly integrated as guest speakers into any live show. Products can easily incorporate TalkShow into any live production or studio environment. In the past we used to face some quality issues with our stringers especially from areas that had weak internet connectivity as that would affect the Skype video quality. However, with TalkShow we have successfully overcome these issues. Its features to optimise audio and video dynamically in real-time without requiring monitoring, have enhanced the quality of our reports dramatically.”

Sky and BT win Premier League rights

Sky and BT have been awarded the live broadcast rights to the Premier League matches for the next three years from 2016-2019. The last TV rights auction in 2012 was also won by Sky and BT. The USD 7.8bn deal has cost the broadcasters 71% more than three years ago. Sky paid 85% more while BT paid 18% more and has increased the number of live matches it will show from 38 to 42 a year.

icflix expands original production

icflix has tapped into new ways to leverage consumer interest in OTT services. To broaden accessibility further, the content streaming company will soon be available on Xbox One and PS4. The company is also growing its original production capabilities in line with international trends.

icflix recently released the second of its original productions, Al Malik. Streaming companies are trying to differentiate themselves based on original and exclusive offerings to their viewers, according to Carlos Titi, CEO of icflix. “icflix’s success led us to bigger ambitions to create our own theatrical movies, four of which have been completed. icflix and Al-Malik want online last year. Our commitment is 12 original productions this year. In addition, six productions are planned for Morocco soon with the Centre Cinematographique Marocain, the local cinematic institution.” He added that based on audience viewing habits, action, drama and romance tend to be watched more.

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**Al Aan TV deploys TalkShow**

3,000 hours of live and recorded content per year from Egypt, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. Speaking about El Deeb’s appointment, Samir Abdelhadi, President and CEO of Orbit Group said: “Youssef’s appointment marks a significant step in our relaunch and growth plans as we continue to focus on developing a more successful bouquet across a range of Arab markets.”
A new international platform for Arab cinema, Arab Cinema Centre (ACC), launched this year’s European Film Market in Berlin, representing 11 Arab production companies and organisations. Organised by Egypt’s MAD Solutions, the ACC delegation included Egyptian production companies such as Film Clinic, The Producers, X-Rated, Crystal Dog and Middle East Films, as well as Jordan’s The Imaginarium Films, Lebanon’s Screen Institute Beirut, UAE’s Emirati Cinema Campaign, Sweden’s Malmo Arab Film Festival and Arab Cinema in Sweden.

The MAD Solutions’ team included CEO Alaa Karkouti, Creative Director Maher Diaa, Managing Partner for its GCC bureau Abdullah Al Shami and Director of International Operations Colin Brown. In addition, Jane Williams, former Director of Dubai International Film Festival’s Dubai Film Connection (DFC), is working as an independent consultant for the ACC.

“We met with more than 20 films festivals from around the world. Our objective is to have more space for Arab cinema on the festivals’ programmes,” said Alaa Karkouti. The ACC’s activities in Berlin included hosting screenings of Arab films, organising networking sessions and meetings with international film companies and organisations and publishing the Arab Cinema Guide to be distributed among the festival’s guests. One of the breakthroughs for MAD Solutions at the Berlin Film Festival was a deal to release the Egyptian film Factory Girl (the Egyptian official entry to the Oscars) in cinemas in Sweden.

The company is now in talks to release it in other countries in Europe. Warda, a short horror film, was also screened at the festival. Karkouti added that there are four new projects in the pipeline, which will be announced in coming months.
ENTERTAINMENT on demand

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For the first time in the history of Al Jazeera Media Network, its worldwide technology and operations teams were combined under one man. In an exclusive interview with Vijaya Cherian, Mohamed E. Abuagla, who is both CIO and CTO of Al Jazeera Media Network globally, talks about his expanded role and sheds new light on the controversial Al Jazeera Workplace Transformation project and the broadcast network’s partnership with Ooredoo.
I hear you now have an even bigger role than the one you previously had at Al Jazeera. That’s true; it’s a huge job, but an exciting one. There is a massive amount of work that needs to be done, and time is the ever-great enemy. When I first came into Al Jazeera, my primary mandate was to lead the transformation of the Technology and Operations teams into delivering world-class operations, which meant we had to not just adopt best practices but also develop new industry-leading ones. Al Jazeera, by nature, has never been in the followers’ category; it has always been in the leadership category, especially on the editorial side of things – whether it is coverage, newsgathering or the quality of journalism, Al Jazeera has led the pack. We wanted to leverage that part of our business and try to step into leadership roles as far as technologies, advancements, operations and the ability to innovate are concerned, and go to the next level.

Al Jazeera Work Transformation (AJWT)
- Objective: Create a workplace of technical excellence for world-leading news and documentary production.
- Client: Al Jazeera Media Network
- Location: Doha, Qatar
- Key vendors: Sony, Avid, Arvato, Belden, Vint, Makagena, Skyline, EMC and Cisco
- SI: Sony, Qvest

Can you share some numbers on investments?
The latest contract we signed with Ooredoo is worth over half a billion Qatari riyals [over $130m]. This is spread across five years so we can implement what we call Al Jazeera’s Global Media Cloud, or GMC. Once implemented, it will connect all of our 80+ global offices with the latest state-of-the-art network that allows us to transport media and data as well as serve growing corporate uses.

On top of that, we have a very large broadcast infrastructure upgrade project. When we talk of upgrades, we are changing everything from the ground up. We are replacing the fibres in the ground, building new buildings, new CAR rooms, new data centres; we are buying brand-new equipment for every single department; we are buying new software, hardware and broadcast gear. We are building everything from scratch, and we are doing it globally. We just completed London; DC is almost done and Doha is ongoing. Next on the cards is New York and most of the other broadcast bureaus. We are also retraining every single person in the organisation to leverage the new technologies and challenging them to become the best in the industry.

Al Jazeera Global Media Cloud (AGMC)
- Objective: Create a unified global platform for content exchange and communication for both Al Jazeera’s journalists and its editorial workforce.
- Client: Al Jazeera Media Network
- Location: Doha, Qatar
- Key vendors: Net Insight, Cisco, Harris, Riverbed, Dataminer
- SI: Ooredoo, Tata Communications

Al Jazeera seems to be working on a lot of projects. Can you put the whole thing in perspective?

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Does that mean that everything previously undertaken has come to nought? Not at all. Al Jazeera, historically, has been aggregating a number of technologies because its growth has been channel-based rather than network-based. My role now is to ensure we consolidate, centralise and unify our workflows as well as optimise the investments that we make on software, hardware and technology advancements.

All of the various projects that have been ongoing are basically sub-projects that come under the umbrella of the Al Jazeera Workplace Transformation (AJWT) project. We want to transform the workplace and be on the bleeding edge of technology to deliver our digital future. This project touches upon the entire lifecycle for us and everything that enables better journalism and better storytelling.

So all of these projects come under AJWT? Many of these are directly under AJWT, and some of them have dependencies on AJWT. For instance, Al Jazeera is rebuilding its digital, mobile and web strategy, and although this doesn’t come directly under AJWT, it does leverage whatever investments we make under this umbrella project. Similarly, we are doing different projects on mobile and connected devices and that also touches upon the various upgrades that will happen across the board.

What’s this project with Ooredoo about? Currently, Al Jazeera has a large number of offices and bureaus scattered all over the world for news.

Mohamed E. Albaglia, CIO and CTO, Al Jazeera Media Network

"Change is the new norm for us at Al Jazeera; we have to continuously evolve, adapt and adopt new paradigms of work that make us better every day"
gathering and content production. But we also have primary broadcast centres in London and Washington, DC, and we have a few international channels like Al Jazeera Balkans, Al Jazeera Turk and Al Jazeera America. We recently launched a new digital initiative called AJ Plus out of San Francisco, USA. All these plus the existing bureaux’ fabric need to connect information and share resources. Al Jazeera has so much content, and literally our content is everywhere. We want to make sure that we can have access to that content from everywhere. Therefore, it is mandatory for our organisation to collect that content, digitise it, store it and make it accessible to everyone in our broadcast ecosystem.

So along those lines, we invested in this project with Ooredoo to allow everyone to have committed fibre and complementary dedicated internet services that basically allow us to transmit information and to exchange media and other data in a consistent, assured fashion. We also have to make sure that we have a secure platform for exchanging information that allows everyone to basically access all the different resources available to them within Al Jazeera Cloud globally.

Can you elaborate on Al Jazeera Global Media Cloud? AJMC will provide the interconnectivity we need to share resources. For example, in the old set-up that Al Jazeera has, say between Doha and London, you have limited bandwidth. The new technologies that you put in on both sides will be producing things at a much higher quality, and therefore, if you want to transmit content from one side to another, it will take less time. We upgraded the links that would allow for that sharing so it would permit sharing within the same amount of time while retaining the quality of service. This project is a huge enabler for the success of AJWT and other corporate projects as a whole.

Al Jazeera will extend itself to the locations, instead of the locations having to come into Al Jazeera to get access to that content.

This is being carried out in phases?
Yes, this is being undertaken in phases. Phase 1 is already underway and will be completed before summer 2014. This is to connect the headquarters in Doha with the various broadcast centres that we have in London, Washington DC and New York. In Phases 2 and 3, we will connect the international channels as well as the remaining bureaux. The entire project is expected to finish by mid-2016, but it’s a five-year deal because it is a cloud-based service; and as such, we certainly expect that technology is going to evolve as hardware, compression, acceleration and security systems continue to improve to provide better quality and higher performance. By keeping it across five years, we ensure that we incorporate the new technologies and the latest standards in a continuous stream.

Our ultimate goal is to make sure that any user of Al Jazeera that sits in any of the 80+ global locations will feel like they are sitting at the headquarters in Doha, so they will have access to all the resources they need, be they media files, accessing the MAM and PAM systems or any other broadcast or corporate systems. They will be truly working as a part of a very large virtual newsroom contributing content to any of the channels that we have.

What were some of the specific requirements you gave to Ooredoo? We had specific requirements depending on each location, based on the analysis of the services they currently provide from that location and projection for growth. For instance, if an office is editing packages for news, the speed requirements and the QoS requirements will be very different from places where they have to do programmes or create packages from correspondents. The relationship between Doha and Berlin is not the same as the relationship between Doha and DC, so it is all dynamic. It is based on the nature of what is required in each location, but we wanted to ensure that we built a platform that could scale up to meet the demands and requirements of the time.

Which technologies will be part of this project? Ooredoo has partnered with Tata Communications to provide an end-to-end solution based on technologies from Net Insight, Cisco, Harris, Riverbed and Dataminer.

The core of the network is based on Net Insight’s SDH technology, which offers maximum quality and availability. The bureaus will be connected to the core via Cisco MPLS, offering flexibility and assured quality for the video, data and voice services. The bureaus, which are located in areas with very poor terrestrial telecommunication infrastructure, will be connected via VSAT. Dataminer will be used to monitor the network and have real-time view of its performance.
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What are the main challenges of this project?
I come from the US market, and I believe that the biggest challenges for us running from Qatar, or the Middle East in general, is the time to market and access to talent. From time to market perspective, I see things move much faster in the US, maybe because of the maturity of the market and the maturity of the different ecosystems that allow expeditious execution. The second largest concern is access to talented and experienced resources. Our goals and standards are set really high; hence we are making sure that we select the cream of the crop. For us, it’s not really just about wanting to fill a position or fulfill a role, but to contribute significantly in a unique way to make Al Jazeera better as a world-class organisation.

So does that mean there will be more change and restructuring?
Change is the new norm for us at Al Jazeera; we have to continuously evolve, adapt and adopt new paradigms of work that make us better every day. We are setting new standards and are investing in training and coaching so that everyone in the organisation can be part of this massive transformation. The biggest challenge is changing mindsets and getting people to understand and appreciate the marriage between IT and broadcast, and running a service-based organisation, and not running in the “if it breaks, we will fix it” mode. We basically want to be proactive and preemptive and less reactive; and we want to encourage everyone to be successful and perform at their peak. We are implementing a results-oriented work environment (ROWE) at Al Jazeera. The focus is on results, which include time to market, excellence and offering a high quality of service while being competitive.

What are the changes you have wrought at Al Jazeera with AJWT?
Everyone says it’s a mess. We need to focus on ROWE. The focus is on results, which include time to market, excellence and offering a high quality of service while being competitive.

How did you come to be running technology and operations at Al Jazeera?
My background is in systems engineering, technology management and business consulting. Prior to joining Al Jazeera, I ran two successful companies in the US and the Middle East for over 10 years. Most of the time, we were required as consultants to identify business operational, technical and efficiency problems, whether it is optimisation, effective use of technology, change management or for an organisation to implement innovative solutions. We have had a very successful track record, achieving success in different organisations across different industry verticals spanning media, finance, healthcare and defence. I started at Al Jazeera as a consultant to identify ways to deliver world-class operations; after a few months, I was able to come up with a game plan to transform the technology organisation. With the merger and integration of Technology and Operations, the plan evolved to a larger scope. That enticed me to join permanently to lead the implementation of the plan and see it through to the completion of the transformation.

At some point, if you really break it down to its elements, it’s just different flavours of the same core. Having worked in different industries, you start to appreciate the importance of problem-solving through providing value to the business, versus focusing on technology-centric approaches. I look at everything from a problem and a desired outcome perspectives, and my focus is to deliver results. We are implementing a results-oriented work environment (ROWE) at Al Jazeera. The focus is on results, which include time to market, excellence and offering a high quality of service while being competitive.
everything with everyone in the mix. From my perspective, it’s a lot of change management and communication improvements, but also a lot of commitments, hard work and dedication. Historically, I agree that AJWT has been a challenge, but we are now making very good progress. We are implementing many great solutions and everyone in the organisation is taking this seriously and supporting it to their fullest. It’s very intrusive into the daily operations of the network, but we have a very capable and committed team that is trying to deliver this and they have different groups working with them. The biggest attribute that could make the change is an involved, committed and supportive management, which has been afforded to this project now.

If you had to break AJWT down into parts, what would you say are the most important elements? AJWT, from a technology perspective, is a game-changer – it is more massive and bigger than whatever we had before, and allows for a lot more innovation to come out of the organisation. Operations that took hours earlier can happen in minutes with this. It challenges the editorial teams to leverage the latest technologies to enhance their workflows and productions as well. It’s a complete reset for our teams from a technical perspective. We haven’t had the ability to upgrade the technology with the changes in the industry. Now, it will allow us to run on the absolute latest broadcast fabric that is available and it will also unify us across the board. They will all run on the exact same system, which means we can share the same resources and our engineers can work anywhere within any of our offices, because the systems will be exactly the same. I think one major element that has not been spotlighted is the need to focus on the change management aspects. As systems are becoming mostly software-based and IT-centric, if a change is made without proper planning and communication, it could have disastrous impact. This means ensuring that all changes are documented, communicated, measured and tested, as well, proper risk analysis needs to be carefully undertaken before actually implementing that change.
Al Ghad Al Arabi, a UK-based Arabic-language TV station that has been broadcasting from London since 2013, recently established a new channel in Egypt. Vibhuti Arora takes a tour of the new facility and brings us exclusive details.

**THE EGYPTIAN CONNECTION**

Al Ghad Al Arabi is a 24-hour free-to-air news channel that started broadcasting from London in 2013 with plans to set up studios and production facilities in Cairo and Beirut in subsequent years. Last month, the Arabic-language TV channel opened its newly kitted-out Cairo facility. The Cairo station was set up with the objective of adding more regional content and live programming to the news channel’s roster of programmes. Work on the Beirut station is expected to begin soon.

The Cairo facility, boasting two studios and master control transmission, has been integrated by AV Solutions, a Dubai-based systems integrator with offices in Iraq and Egypt. The contract to build the TV station in Cairo was awarded to AV Solutions in September 2014. The SI was mandated to supply the equipment, install it and manage the project and its delivery in a studio space at EMPC (Egyptian Media Production City) that was rented out to Al Ghad Al Arabi.

Commenting on the project, Zaid Wattar, Managing Director of AV Solutions, explains that the Egyptian centre is to operate as a second channel of Al Ghad Al Arabi, after London.

The facility was built from scratch, with some equipment supplied by EMPC as mandatory rental equipment along with the studios. The existing equipment, comprising Grass Valley cameras and some control room equipment, has been integrated with the new systems. AV Solutions has been involved in several broadcast projects in Egypt, which was the reason the SI established a base in Cairo last December and was chosen for this job.

"Al Ghad Al Arabi was looking for a partner who could supply and install software broadcast technologies. We have already delivered several projects in Egypt, so we were asked to take on this project," claims Wattar, who adds that AV Solutions has a team of certified Avid and Vizrt engineers.

Since Avid and Vizrt solutions are at the core of the channel’s news and graphics workflow in the London studio, AV Solutions, with its experience and team, became a strong contender to integrate the Cairo facility.

“We were involved right from the supply, installation, project management and delivery. Training services have been provided to the staff. The Cairo facility is now fully operational and the channel started broadcasting in early February,” wattar concludes.
been implemented on-site by the vendors’ teams. We will also provide after-sales support and service level agreement, for the systems installed,” says Wattar.

Built with a budget of more than $3m, the Cairo studios will be used to broadcast the second news channel of Al Ghad Al Arabi TV, with more focus on Egypt. The studios will also be used for some programmes broadcast by the London channel.

The Cairo facility boasts a main studio and a secondary remote studio 1km apart, connected through a fibre optical solution that is capable of transporting uncompressed video signals and reliable high-speed 10Gbps IP data, as well as handling IP intercom communications. In addition, AV Solutions also deployed an advanced IP-based intercom system from RTS to connect the Cairo and London studios with centralised communications capabilities.

The TV channel’s main studio houses six Grass Valley cameras, while the second studio is equipped with three Sony cameras and a Vizrt virtual studio set. The main and secondary studios also have a Sony MVS-6530 and MVS-3000 vision mixer.

In addition, there are playout servers, automation, master control, router and core processing units from Imagine Communications. The news production and news playout are from Avid, and the on-air graphics for studios and MCR have been supplied by Vizrt. Both studios offer full modular expansion-proof capability for the future, including video servers, Avid system, Vizrt graphics, routing and intercom.

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managed by ADC Automation, and Nexio Motion media management for the near-line archive system. Imagine’s fully redundant server, automation and media management handles the direct-to-air video playout and is part of the MCR systems, which also include a fully redundant Imagine Platinum router with integrated Multiviewer processors as well as Imagine IconMaster as a master control switcher. Media Central Platform in this installation allows the news channel to streamline and simplify its workflows by tightly integrating all products and services onto a single, open and customisable platform, providing the underlying media services, connectivity and orchestration capabilities to support the entire media value chain.

“We are happy with the scalable architecture of the system, which allows us to expand the systems as we grow. The template-based workflow helps us to ensure brand consistency and gives us the ability to put news on air with speed and accuracy”

Yasser Youssef,
Head of Technical Operations,
Al Ghad Al Arabi TV
PROCASESTUDY

comprehensive design, installation and commissioning of the system and workflow, as well as training of the end users at Al Ghad Al Arabi TV. The system is built on Vizrt’s template-based workflow, designed to enable journalists, designers and operators to manage their work with ease and efficiency.

Yasser Youssef, Head of Technical Operations, Al Ghad Al Arabi TV, explains that the channel’s graphics playout is based on Viz Engine, which can also be used for the playback of video clips. “Vizrt’s news graphics will be used within the creative, studio and transmission areas of Al Ghad Al Arabi TV. Vizrt’s solution is well proven in news workflows, and we are already using this in our studios in London with great success. We are happy with the scalable architecture of the system, which allows us to expand the systems as we grow. The template-based workflow helps us to ensure brand consistency and gives us the ability to put news on air with speed and accuracy. We are happy with the excellent support that Vizrt has offered us during the entire process of pre-sales discussions, and the fact that they have installations and support available in Egypt, ensuring maximum utilisation of our investment.”

The designers working with Viz Artist and Viz Curious Maps are responsible for creating the branding and the on-air looks, which include graphics templates for the Al Ghad Al Arabi TV journalists to use. The journalists work on the Viz ActiveX newsroom component integrated with Avid iNEWS to select the graphic templates, add text, video, maps and images as required by the story, and publish the rundown for playout. The operators load the new rundown created by the journalists and play it out on air.

The workflow allows journalists, designers and operators to work within their domains of expertise.
shifting the focus from process to content, increasing productivity and efficiency across the workflow chain. Before the transmission goes on air, the Viz Ticker3D is used to add the logo, on-screen tickers and additional channel branding. Viz Content Pilot is integrated with the Avid iNEWS NRCS, while Viz Pilot easily integrates into the editorial workflow as the templates (designed in Viz Artist) can be accessed by any major newsroom system.

The newsroom component is a small but advanced graphics editing tool that enables journalists to add images, text, videos and maps, and to select the graphics concept and variant. It also supports a real-time preview and snapshots. The MCR branding graphics are also handled by Vizrt and controlled by Imagine Automation.

Another system integrated smartly is the R&S AVHE100 redundant intercom matrix, which allows both IP and analogue audio interfacing for high flexibility. Video Signal Transport between the second virtual studio and the main station is handled by Newton Technologies, and the data is transferred through Cisco high-end 10Gbps switches. Soundcraft digital audio mixers for both studios and video monitoring by Barco and Sony are also deployed at the Cairo facility. The free-to-air channel employs more than 90 journalists, technicians and support staff in various bureaus worldwide, including the US, the UAE, Egypt and Palestine. Al Ghad TV’s remit covers 24-hour Arabic-language news and entertainment programmes from London. The channel will be available in the Middle East, North Africa and Europe via Nilesat and Hotbird. While Al Ghad Al Arabi TV will have regional studios across the Arab world, its newsroom operations will be chiefly coordinated through the London, Cairo and, in the future, its Beirut station.

"It enables broadcasters to share content between locations on different continents, in this case between the UK and Egypt. This is a real Avid Everywhere success story”

Amro Elbouhy, Territory Account Manager, Avid

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Please visit us at CABSAT in Dubai, March 10 to 12, booth A1-10, hall 1
Extended or even brief periods of service outage can result in severe financial and reputational losses for broadcasters. That’s why the ability to quickly restore operations following a service-disrupting natural disaster or man-made catastrophe is an increasingly important business requirement.

The reality, though, is that many broadcasters have failed to put in place reliable and comprehensive disaster recovery plans due to the expense, complexity and deficiencies of existing options. The good news for broadcast operators, especially those in regions highly susceptible to severe weather or other disasters, is that a new and versatile method of disaster recovery is now available to them.

Cloud Disaster Recovery (CDR) is a new approach to disaster recovery that provides private or public cloud-based restoration of broadcast and video playout operations.

Increasing threat
Outages resulting from severe weather and other natural disasters have always posed threats to broadcasters. Evidence suggests, however, that events capable of disrupting on-air operations are increasing in frequency. According to multiple sources, the number of natural disasters has risen dramatically in the past two decades, claiming hundreds of thousands of lives and inflicting massive financial damage.

But it’s not just severe weather or natural disasters that threaten the operational viability of broadcast facilities. Cyber attacks, equipment failures, sabotage and activities associated with political unrest can also disrupt the ability of broadcasters to stay on air. Recent cyber security breaches in the US, as well as violent and politically motivated attacks in Australia and Paris, suggest that media companies are increasingly being impacted by human-perpetrated disasters.

Downtime damages
Whether man-made or natural, a
disaster can often create a further catastrophe due to the lack of information reaching the populace struck by the disaster. Broadcasters also risk substantial revenue losses and audience alienation. According to a 2013 media buyers survey conducted by Ad Age magazine, 24% of advertisers associated with national sporting events or top-rated shows can sell for several hundred thousand dollars per 30-second spot.

The chart below illustrates how advertising revenue losses can mount during an extended outage, assuming that an average 30-second ad costs $1,000 in a local market. If a TV station runs 14 ads per hour, the lost revenue would work out to $14,000 per hour. In just a few days off the air, revenue losses from advertising can exceed a million dollars.

But it’s not just money that’s lost when a broadcast station goes off the air for an appreciable amount of time. The company’s reputation and the loyalty of its viewers is also at risk. Television broadcasters are now competing with numerous alternative sources for news, information and entertainment. The inability to quickly restore service or play out valuable content from a backup facility could result in the desertion of viewers, who may switch allegiance to a competitive broadcaster that remained on air or to an alternative news and entertainment source available online. The bottom line is that broadcasters — for social, financial and reputational reasons — cannot afford to be off air for even a minute. Unfortunately, many stations lack the resources and technical expertise to construct reliable and full-service disaster recovery facilities. Even in regions where regulators require broadcasters to have workable disaster recovery plans in place, many stations remain vulnerable to severe business losses in the event of a service-disrupting natural or human-inflicted disaster.

Disaster recovery options

Until recently, broadcasters were limited to two categories of disaster recovery options: redundant systems or recorded programming. A redundant system approach typically involves mirroring a playout system at a remote location. It is both complex and expensive. The cost to duplicate a facility often exceeds hundreds of thousands of dollars and, depending on the size of the operation, could easily exceed a million. And this price tag does not include the personnel required to operate the remote facility. A partial list of equipment needed for a redundant disaster recovery scenario includes transmission equipment, decoders and encoders, master control switches, video editing software, file servers, file storage and multiviewers. As the name suggests, a recorded programming disaster recovery strategy enables operators to replay content from a remote site. While playing content from past programming might maintain a revenue stream for the short term, its value, as well as viewership, decreases over time. Customers will soon lose interest and switch channels. The brand and reputation of the station can be ruined in a matter of hours.

The CDR solution

Recently, a third option has emerged that uses the cost-efficiencies and elastic resource allocation capabilities of cloud computing. By leveraging the latest data centre advances, CDR architectures have become viable alternatives to traditional approaches, exceeding both redundant systems and recorded programming approaches in cost efficiency and reliability.

CDR is now the most affordable and practical choice for ensuring business continuity in the event of a disaster. The advantages of cloud playout over existing premises-based disaster recovery solutions are numerous:

- Software-based solution that is easily commissioned and maintained
- Video and advertising content can be made available on-air within moments of a main playout system disruption
- Unlike premises-based backup facilities where costs are incurred daily, cloud-based playout can use “as a service” model pricing, broadcasters pay for CDR services only when they are activated
- Localised disaster risks associated with premises-based backup systems are eliminated
- CDR is free of bricks-and-mortar restrictions, enabling broadcasters to protect multiple broadcast locations in the cloud
- Channel capacity in virtually limitless, allowing media companies and broadcasters with diverse channel operations to construct reliable and full-service disaster recovery facilities. Even in regions where regulators require broadcasters to have workable disaster recovery plans in place, many stations remain vulnerable to severe business losses in the event of a service-disrupting natural or human-inflicted disaster.

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Disaster recovery options

Until recently, broadcasters were limited to two categories of disaster recovery options: redundant systems or recorded programming. A redundant system approach typically involves mirroring a playout system at a remote location. It is both complex and expensive. The cost to duplicate a facility often exceeds hundreds of thousands of dollars and, depending on the size of the operation, could easily exceed a million. And this price tag does not include the personnel required to operate the remote facility. A partial list of equipment needed for a redundant disaster recovery scenario includes transmission equipment, decoders and encoders, master control switches, video editing software, file servers, file storage and multiviewers. As the name suggests, a recorded programming disaster recovery strategy enables operators to replay content from a remote site. While playing content from past programming might maintain a revenue stream for the short term, its value, as well as viewership, decreases over time. Customers will soon lose interest and switch channels. The brand and reputation of the station can be ruined in a matter of hours.

The CDR solution

Recently, a third option has emerged that uses the cost-efficiencies and elastic resource allocation capabilities of cloud computing. By leveraging the latest data centre advances, CDR architectures have become viable alternatives to traditional approaches, exceeding both redundant systems and recorded programming approaches in cost efficiency and reliability. CDR is now the most affordable and practical choice for ensuring business continuity in the event of a disaster. The advantages of cloud playout over existing premises-based disaster recovery solutions are numerous:

- Software-based solution that is easily commissioned and maintained
- Video and advertising content can be made available on-air within moments of a main playout system disruption
- Unlike premises-based backup facilities where costs are incurred daily, cloud-based playout can use “as a service” model pricing, broadcasters pay for CDR services only when they are activated
- Localised disaster risks associated with premises-based backup systems are eliminated
- CDR is free of bricks-and-mortar restrictions, enabling broadcasters to protect multiple broadcast locations in the cloud
- Channel capacity in virtually limitless, allowing media companies and broadcasters with diverse channel operations to construct reliable and full-service disaster recovery facilities. Even in regions where regulators require broadcasters to have workable disaster recovery plans in place, many stations remain vulnerable to severe business losses in the event of a service-disrupting natural or human-inflicted disaster.

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Five years ago, a team of senior executives at du were brought together to develop a premium OTT service, which is slated for official release this month. In an exclusive interview with Vijaya Cherian, the team behind the project, speaks about what it has entailed to design and execute an OTT project from the ground up.

When you have 180-odd nationalities in your database — and that is only one of several variables, such as age group, genre and VOD — how do you create customised OTT packages? This was the challenge for Samer Geissah, who is now Vice President – Consumer Home & Multimedia Services; Ghassan Saad, Director Consumer Video Services; and Ali Dernaika, Senior Manager – Video Planning, Operations, as they sat together to conceptualise a plan for an OTT service in 2010. The research, and subsequent planning and work that took place over the last five years will result in du’s OTT service, du View, which is slated for official release this month.

Geissah, who has headed the du View project since its initial days, puts the whole project in perspective. “The idea was envisioned back when the first iPad was launched in 2010. The large-screen portable tablet led us to think of whether people would view live TV channels on it. Then we decided to work on several parallel streams. First, we did a feasibility study to explore their potential and see if our customers would enjoy watching live and VOD content on their multiscreeen devices. Then we split the project into several streams, each driving a specific area. "The technology stream focused on building high-end encoders that can deliver the various formats of the streams for the variable sizes. A second stream evaluated if it’s better to own or partner with an OTT platform solution provider. The marketing stream assessed the needs of the customers in terms of linear and VOD usage and performed several customer-focus group studies to understand behaviour, from GUI [graphic user interface] preferences to content-watching behaviours and regional content preferences.”

The research helped the du team understand that building a user-friendly GUI was crucial, and getting it right the first time was even more critical. Geissah explains that “many people use an app for the first time and never use it again if the GUI experience is not optimal.”

The team enlisted the help of Frog Design, which has created designs for Apple and other major brands, to create
the GUI for du View and ensure that the same look and feel was retained across all the various platforms – mobile, tablet, web and TV.

In the meantime, the team looked at addressing three major groups from a content POV, with initial offerings on du View split into Arabic, Western and Asian entertainment. Within these offerings, there was a need to further specify the content to cater to the demand for French and German content among expatriates, for instance. Within the Asian entertainment, there was further segmentation required for the South Asian community, where there were different linguistic preferences, with Malayalam, Tamil, Telugu and Hindi being the most popular.

“Content is very complex, in that the UAE has many different nationalities and trying to offer something that everybody likes is challenging,” explains Geissah.

“These packages, therefore, have been based on a lot of research on what kind of content is appreciated, which channels are the most popular; and more importantly, we have addressed the issue of affordability.”

On the technical side, the project called for a lot of expertise within the OTT space. Geissah, who headed the technology part of the project, moved up to the role of Vice President of Consumer Home & Multimedia Services, while Ali Dernaika continued to drive the OTT and IPTV systems.

Dernaika has worked on du’s IPTV project since 2007 and has gained expertise in OTT, networking, compression and, now, middleware. He explains that a lot of “new technology was involved to create an end-to-end solution” and that “different sets of skills to those we see in broadcast” were needed.

The project required an RF expert to receive the channels from the dishes; a headend engineer who understood compression...
“Content is very complex, in that the UAE has many different nationalities and trying to offer something that everybody likes is challenging”

Samer Geissah, Vice President – Consumer Home & Multimedia Services, du

So these three brands constitute 90% of the ecosystem that we have built for this project.”

The other major players are Cisco, which provides the network, and HP, which provides a big virtual farm in terms of hardware and storage. This was required, as du’s VOD assets are stored at its data centre in Samacom. Without any doubt, a strong IT infrastructure was crucial to this project.

One of the big challenges of working on the tech aspect of this project was supporting different devices. When du View launched late last year, it was made available on Apple, Android, Xbox One and Samsung TV platforms.

“Apple iOS and Android platforms use completely different technologies. While iOS works cloud-based platform such as theirs for our needs, and thePlatform seemed the appropriate solution for our service,” explains Geissah, adding that their leading partner in the IPTV project was Ericsson.

“We built our OTT service, du View, which is a Comcast platform, on top of our IPTV layer. This is managed through a relationship with Alcatel Lucent.

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mostly on HLS, Android relies on HLS as well as streaming. We had to talk with a lot of vendors in order to bring this ecosystem together,” explains Geissah.

Du eventually used CRM to develop its Android and iOS applications.

“We used TV App Agency to develop the smart TV apps, Sony PlayStation and Google Chrome. We used Plain Concepts for the Microsoft Xbox One app and Windows 8 apps,” explains Geissah, adding that unlike a set-top-box environment, where the quality of service can be controlled all the way to the remote, the support requirements for an app are very different.

“There are too many variables on the app side, and it can’t be controlled as much as we can control the box. Training people on how to troubleshoot was an important part of this exercise, and we spent a lot of time training customer operations.”

One of the key aspects of this infrastructure was a robust CDN solution. Rather than outsourcing this to a CDN network, du deployed Velocix, an advanced content-delivery solution designed specifically for network service providers. This CDN is used by telcos across the world to deploy an advanced digital media delivery platform that builds on its existing network investments and assets.

Once installed, network service providers are fully equipped to launch new revenue-generating premium-content services to their customers, while also achieving a highly differentiated delivery performance level. As du already had an infrastructure in place, deploying a CDN like Velocix was a better option than outsourcing it to outside operators.

“We own the infrastructure, so we manage the software and our operations colleagues control it completely. Velocix was already

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This whole infrastructure primarily supports two important workflows in the du View OTT service: live TV streaming and VOD. In the live TV workflow, the channel is received from du’s dish farm stations at its teleport in Dubai. These channels, which are received by the stations, are not formatted to be displayed on smart devices. Thus, real-time transcoding is performed on each channel to transform the main format into multiple resolutions with different bit rates.

In du’s case, there are four profiles per channel in standard definition and five profiles per channel in high definition. Bit rates vary from 400Kbps to 1.2Mbps for SD, and from 400Kbps to 4Mbps for HD. All channels are streamed to the origin server, which serves as a temporary buffer, in order to serve the customers. The CDN then pulls the traffic from the origin server when it has to serve a subscriber.

This element of the CDN is called a web cache, and its main role is to offload the traffic hitting the origin server. Each web-cache node can serve around 60Gbps of traffic, which is distributed within the network in order to achieve optimum performance.

For video-on-demand (VOD), the assets are received from the studios. Here, a workflow engine orchestrates the mechanism to automatically push the asset to the user. This workflow starts automatically when the workflow engine detects an asset available in the folder (every asset has a video file and an XML file). First, it applies offline transcoding to bring the asset to the OTT format; it is then encrypted. Du uses PlayReady encryption to protect its content. Once done, the asset is moved to and stored in the origin server, ready for user consumption.

Again, when a customer wants to use VOD, the CDN pulls the asset from the origin server exactly as it would for live TV. The workflow engine updates the client’s VOD catalogue with the new entry. Each VOD asset has metadata attached to it with programme information. One of the big aspects of the du View service is content, and securing licences to broadcast the origin server, which serves as a temporary buffer, in order to serve the customers.
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content on du's OTT service is part of the remit of Ghassan Saad, Director – Consumer Video Services. At the moment, du View is still a fairly young service with 50 to 60 channels of content offered free-of-charge to du's IPTV subscribers. However, this service will soon be available to users across the UAE, irrespective of which telco operator they use. The team explains that they needed to ensure that 30% of the content was changed regularly.

“We have also done it slightly different from the rest of the crowd, in that we started with linear TV and then added 50 channels to our OTT platform. Slowly, we intend to add more channels as we get the rights to more channels,” explains Geissah.

One of the big challenges here, especially with free-to-air channels, is creating an electronic programme guide (EPG). This is an ongoing project for du. For now, du View complements du’s fixed services and its subscribers are being encouraged to use one user name to download the app and start watching it free-of-charge. In the meantime, du has already partnered with icflix to ensure its content is available to its mobile customers but is also looking to collaborate with more local partners.

VOD is a special element of the du View service. Du research showed which VOD services would appeal the most to online viewers. In particular, children’s content and binge watching of TV series seemed to be the most attractive media assets.

Besides content, the du team is also working on some exciting features that could take its OTT service to the next level. For instance, there is a plan to introduce a remote DVR function enabling users to record content from the du View app onto their set-top box at home.

“There are too many variables on the app side, and it can’t be controlled as much as we can control the box. Training people on how to troubleshoot was an important part of this exercise”

Samer Geissah, Vice President – Consumer Home & Multimedia Services, du
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Your box from your mobile with this feature. The remote DVR will enable you to record one episode with one click or the whole series with two clicks. At the moment, we are trying to provide the best of both worlds – our IPTV and OTT services to our clients,” explains Geissah.

There is also a plan to introduce music content, and in the near future, a karaoke feature as well. These, according to Geissah, will place du View in the big league with international players and enable du to look at the possibility of taking its service outside the UAE.

Of course, no project is complete without a business model. Although a return on investment is still quite distant, the team would like to experiment with small and simple targeted advertising, or the ability for viewers to watch more assets free-of-charge with some advertising in between.

“We are evaluating this model at present, to see how it can generate some revenue to offset some of the costs of development and the features that we are developing,” clarifies Geissah.

“We dreamed of a product that was very rich from a content point of view (and) easily navigable ... we desired [an] audience outside the existing fixed network. This service will take us to new subscribers and places”

Samer Geissah, Vice President – Consumer Home & Multimedia Services, du

By beginning this project while OTT was still in its infancy in the region, du has had a significant advantage in terms of market research, experience and learning from the challenges it has faced while building this product from the ground up. Clearly, the team is proud of what they have achieved.

“We dreamed of a product that was very rich from a content point of view, was easily navigable, and we desired a lot of audience outside the existing fixed network, because our fibre footprint is quite small – unlike our mobile footprint, which is very extensive. This service will take us to new subscribers and places. In addition, what makes du View beautiful is the fact that it is a powerful platform that is scalable, reliable, consistent and feature-rich,” concludes Geissah.

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Abu Dhabi Media has made quiet inroads into the OTT space by streaming its ten HD channels and two SD channels online and offering a catch-up video on demand (VOD) service through the ADTV.ae website, as well as through its ADTV Now and AD Sports Live apps. The state broadcaster partnered with Deutsche Telekom to deliver this project last year, and the service is now available on both iOS and Android platforms.

“The primary objective of this project was to make ADTV content available to customers on their smart devices. ADM was looking to deliver live streaming for its 12 channels and catch-up VOD for its website and apps,” comments Isam Al Jammal, Head of Digital Services at Abu Dhabi Media. Besides enabling worldwide OTT distribution of live channels and VOD content on multiple screens in HD quality, such an objective entails that the service include satellite downlink for channel acquisition as well as geoblocking for rights management control, with token and domain authentication services to secure the rich media and proprietary content.

“Abu Dhabi Media needed support with the global delivery of its live content that would ensure reliable connectivity to a variety of terminals in HD quality from one single provider. It also wanted the ability to record live content and provide it as VOD catch-up in real time,” explains Karim El-Khazen, Vice President, Business Development and Innovation (BDI) at Deutsche Telekom.

“Deutsche Telekom BDI was able to meet the customer’s requirements by providing LiveStream Perform based on Octoshape technology, complemented by the acquisition, encoding, ingestion, delivery and storage of the content.”

The deployment of the LiveStream Perform solution involved the following workflow:

• Acquisition of Abu Dhabi Media’s channels through a professional satellite downlink provided from two redundant locations
• Encoding of all the channels with different profiles for adaptive bit rate (ABR) and multi-device support, including HD for most devices to support requirements for multiscreen HD quality
• Recording and preparation of content for VOD based on EPG information, cleaning of ads from the linear content, storage of content and online provisioning of content after a few minutes, making content available for ADM customers if they miss it live
• Geoblocking to ensure content reaches only according to ADM’s preferences and rights management
• Token and domain authentication to secure the content and ensure compliance with local requirements
• DVR functionality on linear channels, with playback up to six hours enabling end users to rewind linear TV according to their preferences
• Picture-in-picture on linear channels to allow end users to simultaneously watch several channels on the same screen so they do not miss any content they would like to watch

One of the big concerns that Abu Dhabi Media’s Digital team had was that the incorporation of an OTT service might have an impact on its traditional workflow. This project, however, is cloud-based and required no integration with the state broadcaster’s existing systems. “Providing this service traditionally would have required changes to any broadcaster’s workflow and would have been subject to connectivity limitations,” clarifies ADM’s Al Jammal.

“Deutsche Telecom BDI’s approach to the project did not
require any changes to the broadcast workflow. With their UDP Multicast technology, they were able to deliver higher quality streaming to clients with limited connectivity as well. DTP BDI also provided standard delivery of feeds for mobile web use. As for catch-up operations, Deutsche Telekom BDI provided a service to record programmes and make them available as VOD assets via our CDN partner Limelight, making programmes available as clean, ad-free catch-up assets in a very short time after airing them.”

Since the launch of this project late last year, ADM has had more than 10,000 assets, daily programming and TV series made available on its catch-up service. In fact, the UAE League was made available to its viewers over the web and apps. “The reception was great, and higher than anticipated. On the three FTA channels where the stream was available, we had more than 400,000 live views via the sport app over Q4 2014,” claims Al Jammal. In addition, Deutsche Telekom provided ADM with remote support for all its requirements. El-Khazen is also proud of the fact that the solution implementation, from conception to service launch, took only two months. “Our biggest challenges were the tight time frame and service localisation. In addition, special attention was needed for the development of processes to remove advertisements within live TV and making a catch-up TV service available in real time,” he says. He sees this project as a real-life example of how a cloud-based, high-quality OTT service can be more quickly deployed, while offering global reach, than any other content delivery technology presently on the market. “The LiveStream Perform solution enables the worldwide online playback from Admedia.ae of its sports-, news- and drama-based content on multiple screens. Abu Dhabi Media is leveraging the acceleration technologies of LiveStream Perform for both live and on-demand streaming of content from ADM’s channels.”

The Middle East broadcasting market is, no doubt, a challenging environment for most international players, but the last few years have seen a paradigm shift in the market. “There is an increased understanding that the digital value chain is made up of the assets, attributes and capabilities of multiple companies,” El-Khazen explains. This project is Abu Dhabi Media’s first entry into the OTT space. As Al Jammal says, the next objective for the state broadcaster is “to create even better experiences on its apps and web.”
The Arab region has experienced a revolution of sorts in the digital arena, with more content being delivered on tablets and smartphones in recent years. Cisco has predicted that video will account for 69% of all consumer internet traffic and Video on Demand (VOD) will triple in the next couple of years. One of the key contributors to this online revolution has been YouTube. As YouTube celebrates its tenth anniversary this year, the video-sharing website is looking at the Middle East as a region with immense potential to embrace online content.

This paradigm shift has led to newer business models, with major broadcasters branching out into the digital realm. The growing demand for online content has also spawned a new genre of content development companies that produce media assets exclusively for online platforms. These multi-channel networks (MCNs) are a growing force in the region. Companies such as Diwan Videos, Uturn, Kharabeesh and the newly launched Qubba are household names now, and their programmes are increasingly seen as competing with regional satellite TV.

Six years ago, when Diwan Videos was launched in Cairo, online platforms were seen as secondary outlets for content that was primarily aired on television. "We started as aggregators and signed up major broadcasters and content owners under our MCN to take care of the copyrights, monetising and so on," says Ossama Youssef, founder and CEO of Diwan Videos.

"Back then, clients only wanted to have their content protected and there was some live streaming. We had the know-how to manage content on YouTube then." Diwan had the early mover advantage in Egypt and was quick to sign up big names to offer its services. Today, original programming is a new but quickly growing segment of online video that includes entertainment content created specifically for an online audience. However, many of the medium’s early successes have been driven by content tied to traditional TV programming.

"We signed Sono Cairo as one of our first clients. The Egyptian government owns all the archives for TV content, and our job was to digitise this big portfolio of content for Sono Cairo and make it available on YouTube. We did the same for the children’s TV network Toyor Aljannah, developing it into one of the biggest YouTube channels in MENA in terms of viewers. Diwan Videos was also behind the successful YouTube management of the political satire Al Bernameg, which was the first YouTube channel to achieve one million subscribers in the MENA. While we still aggregate content, we began to produce original content as well, knowing very well that the dynamics of TV viewing were shifting," comments Youssef.

As a YouTube Partner, Diwan Videos follows a revenue-sharing business model. Diwan Videos initially launched with YouTube Spain in 2009 because the video sharing platform did not have a partner programme in the Arab region then. Today, original programming is a new but quickly growing segment of online video that includes entertainment content created specifically for an online audience. However, many of the medium’s early successes have been driven by content tied to traditional TV programming.

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in 2012 to include Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the UAE. This allowed users in these countries to generate revenue depending on the number of views their uploaded videos received.

Diwan Videos also has partnerships with Dailymotion, a video sharing website and Vuclip, a mobile platform from India. Based on the client’s requirement and contract agreements, the content is distributed to various online platforms.

The company now has offices in Cairo and Dubai. The Dubai office was opened with the objective of expanding regionally and internationally. The MCN currently handles content for Turkey, India and some countries in Africa, and is seeking clients from Europe as well.

“We specialise in copyright and legal issues and provide the clients with a full set of digital solutions for mainly three types of content – for live streaming, original programming and branded content,” explains Youssef.

Original videos were short to begin with, mostly up to five minutes and its viewers include Arab and Muslim expats all over the world, who want to connect with their home. There are talk shows, live streaming of political commentary and programmes from TV networks that are not available in these countries. Diwan’s services enable Arab expats to watch these shows on OTT media.

Diwan Videos with 25-member team has now aggregated eight billion views and 24 billion watch minutes and its viewers include Arab and Muslim expats all over the world, who want to connect with their home.

There are talk shows, live streaming of political commentary and programmes from TV networks that are not available in these countries. Diwan’s services enable Arab expats to watch these shows on OTT media.

Diwan ranks among the top 100 global YouTube MCNs in terms of subscribers and views. It is also the first MCN in the region to have signed up for a new offering where YouTube lets the MCN patch the content directly to the clients for ads. Youssef says that YouTube is very scalable, and the reason for its success is that it has evolved with time.

“There was no live streaming on YouTube earlier, which we have now. The platform has also introduced 4K and 3D content. It is now considering ad-free content based on the subscription model, which has already taken off quite successfully in the US,” he explains.

Digital is already competing with linear TV, and is likely to take over in the next five years or so, predicts Youssef.

“One of the challenges that we face today is illegal downloading of content. Even bigger players take content from online sources and ingest it, which clearly conflicts with our interests. We can counter this by using technology such as content ID fingerprint,” he adds.

Digital has much more potential to open newer revenue streams, according to Youssef, who says that spending on digital is not at par and doesn’t tap the full potential of the medium.

“We have not monetised digital media to its fullest. The digital spend on ads needs to go up, especially in the Arab region. We have to come up with a creative way to monetise it.”

Product placement in videos is one way of giving visibility to a product. Creating mobile apps for YouTube content that have a substantial fan base also works well, according to Youssef.

With more than 400 clients, DiwanVideos is furthering its digital content management services in the region by offering new means of channel optimisation and copyright protection. The company has also developed custom-built revenue reports in the “Diwan Videos Management Tool” – a platform that allows clients to view statistics and analysis of the performance of their channels as well as videos and generated revenues.

Diwan’s offerings have viewers from Malaysia to the US, with more than 40% of viewers residing outside the Middle East.

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“In 2010, we used to apply 100% content ID fingerprint to try as much as possible to avoid infringement, but following up on infringement cases takes a lot of energy and resources,” he adds.

Digital has much more potential to open newer revenue streams, according to Youssef, who says that spending on digital is not at par and doesn’t tap the full potential of the medium.

“We have not monetised digital media to its fullest. The digital spend on ads needs to go up, especially in the Arab region. We have to come up with a creative way to monetise it.”

Product placement in videos is one way of giving visibility to a product. Creating mobile apps for YouTube content that have a substantial fan base also works well, according to Youssef.

With more than 400 clients, DiwanVideos is furthering its digital content management services in the region by offering new means of channel optimisation and copyright protection. The company has also developed custom-built revenue reports in the “Diwan Videos Management Tool” – a platform that allows clients to view statistics and analysis of the performance of their channels as well as videos and generated revenues.
Dubai Media Inc’s OTT service has gone from strength to strength since its launch in 2011 with a premium sports channel added to its portfolio recently and a smart app scheduled for Q1 2015. Vijaya Cherian takes a closer look at the technology that is driving DMI’s OTT service.

Dubai Media Inc (DMI) has been successfully delivering an ongoing OTT experience to its online and mobile device audience for four years under the leadership of Digital Media Director Heba AlSamt, with continuous additions to the existing service.

Since AlSamt established the Digital Media Department back in 2011, DMI’s digital services team has focused on providing services from OTT to premium content and social media. DMI is the first local broadcaster to provide a catch-up TV service and live streaming of all its channels for free. AlSamt, who plays an active role on social media platforms, says, “DMI has embraced OTT wholeheartedly” and “merged it with our strategy to provide our audience with the best viewing experience so they can access our content anytime, anywhere.”

DMI’s most recent notable addition has been a premium sports channel, which was launched online in November 2014. The subscription-based service gives users access to live HD sports programming, including the 2014-15 Arab Gulf League season, on supported devices including PCs, Android phones and tablets, iPhones, iPads and Blackberries. It has also developed an HD OTT video channel on LG Smart TV that is launching this month, and is working towards developing a wider smart TV app that is expected to be available this quarter.

The state broadcaster’s entire OTT workflow is driven by the Endavo OTT Video Services Platform, which is used to distribute seven live TV channels, four catch-up TV channels and a deep video on-demand (VOD) library of approximately 30,000 titles. The platform supports user-generated video services, which DMI uses for video competitions, primarily held during Ramadan. Endavo has also developed DMI’s VOD website and DMI OnDemand and DMIOne apps, which are available on Android and iOS tablets as well as phones. The OTT solution provider is currently developing the smart app for DMI, which is due for release in Q1 2015.

Endavo’s end-to-end OTT video services solution includes the multiscreen, global delivery of linear TV channels, catch-up TV, VOD, radio and user-generated video (UGV). Starting with DMI’s VOD website, the state broadcaster has pulled all these video formats into a single user experience.

“For the DMI ecosystem, Endavo serves as the central component, providing the OTT middleware and the content/services management platform,” clarifies Paul D Hamm, CEO of Endavo Media and Communications Inc. “Endavo’s platform supports the entire workflow necessary for DMI to actively manage this website and service daily, including the management and organisation of all VOD titles, associated metadata and marketing assets, such as title images, thumbs, banners and channel category images,” he explains, adding that the company has worked with other partners including Wowza, Internap, Microsoft (Playready), Apple (iOS), Amsan Web-Services, Google (Android), T-Pay Mobile and LG Electronics to deliver various phases of this project.

A significant part of the OTT workflow is the cloud-based Endavo Media Management System, on which DMI organizes titles into channels, categories, shows and seasons, and which manages all publishing rules, such as release windows, DRM and geographical restrictions. The OTT solution is also able to tie into existing workflows, such as MAM and OSS/BSS.

DMI ingests its linear TV channels and EPG over IP into the Endavo cloud, at which point Endavo repackages the live streams for adaptive bitrate and multiscreen playback.

“We are heavily focused on content creation, and our aim is to push the envelope to create highly shareable digital content in a revolutionary new way and position DMI as a broadcaster that is also leading on the OTT front”

Heba AlSamt, Digital Media Director, Dubai Media Inc
The service provider also archives the linear streams and EPS data in order to create a 24/7 start-over service on the live channels, as well as a standalone catch-up TV service for select TV channels. Catch-up TV allows users to view a rolling previous two days EPG look-back, then click and play any previously aired programme on their favourite TV channel.

DMI claims that its monthly online viewership runs into millions. This depth of viewership is represented by more than 15,000 video titles viewed each month on average along with viewership on its nine live TV channels. The broadcaster’s VOD website also includes seamlessly integrated social and interactive services. For example, a user-generated video competitions section is used during the month of Ramadan. DMI initiates and manages video competitions on EMMS.

DMI recently launched an interactive feature that allows registered users to choose their favourite TV shows and receive an email notification each time a new episode is published on the service. The technology enables DMI to launch a new subscription service, as well as transactional VOD or PPV live service at any time. Endavo has already integrated a mobile payment gateway to support premium services, owing to the fact that most regional viewers tend to use their mobile phones rather than credit cards for digital purchases.

“Endavo technology allows us to make payments through their mobile phones rather than through credit cards. This allowed us to successfully address it. One of the benefits of the Endavo system is that we can easily integrate with credit card gateways, PayPal, other payment systems and even OS/HESS systems for telco and cable service providers. This allows complete flexibility for OTT video service providers, like DMI, to authenticate existing pay-TV subscribers or accommodate preferred payment options for new subscribers. The result is that DMI can easily launch new premium services without having to worry about outside technologies or systems,” Hamm explains.

The OTT solution provides several layers of support. For instance, it supports video and display advertising for DMI, as well as full-video sponsorship around a specific show or event, with completely branded destinations seamlessly integrated within DMI’s overall user experience. It provides DMI with user interface (UI) and user experience (UX) design, development and maintenance services. Besides maintaining DMI’s VOD website, it has also developed multiple Android and iOS applications for DMI’s overall OTT TV service, as well as for individual channels, such as Dubai One.

By partnering with an end-to-end solutions provider, DMI has been able to focus its attention on getting its content right and leaving its technology to an enabler like Endavo. Hamm adds, “Endavo also has the ability to take DMI’s OTT experience to smart TVs and IP TVs such as Roku and Amazon Fire TV.”

DMI’s digital arm is now focusing its energies on providing more unique content through its OTT services – and there’s no better place to start than its huge library of content. “DMI has a vast library that we are now working on digitising, with the aim of making it available on VOD,” AlSamt elaborates. “We also intend to invest more in premium and encrypted content, which will be available only on our OTT services. We are heavily focused on content creation, and our aim is to push the envelope to create highly shareable digital content in a revolutionary new way and position DMI as a broadcaster that is also leading on the OTT front.”

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Paul D. Hamm, CEO of Endavo, says that as audiences turn to mobile phones rather than through credit cards in the MEA, this technology to be addressed.
The broadcast industry in the Middle East is thriving, with original content productions on the up alongside increased demand for international channels and movies. Research group Ovum expects the number of pay-TV subscriptions to increase from 10.6 million in 2013 to 15.2 million by 2019 in the Middle East and North Africa. This can be explained by increased investment in fibre broadband, video infrastructure equipment and software, which has enabled providers across the region to enhance their programming offerings and increase subscriptions. However, easy access to high-quality content is also allowing pirates to more easily stream and illicitly redistribute copyrighted material, directly impacting the industry’s revenue. These figures reflect a combination of factors that are specific to the region. While some content owners, such as Hollywood studios, can leverage multiple release windows to increase their revenue in other markets, the lack of cinemas in the Middle East means that studio content can only be monetised on premium channels and through Video on Demand (VoD) services. The positioning of TV as the first screen puts considerable pressure on operators, who must deter all forms of piracy and fully meet content owners’ security needs before they can offer high-quality premium content.

Although studio content remains the main reason consumers subscribe to premium services, regional appeal for sports is growing, with a record 8.4 million online fans across Europe and the Middle East watching Germany’s World Cup semi-final victory over Brazil. This is proving lucrative for rights owners of Formula One, Premier League football and major golf tournaments such as beIN Sports, which owns the exclusive Middle East rights for major football leagues including the English Premier League and Spain’s La Liga.

There has been a quick uptake of VoD and catch-up services in the region, with major players like leading broadcaster MBC and large provider of Arabic content The Rotana Group launching their own VoD and catch-up solutions. Regional service offerings also include pay-TV provider OSN and Arabic-centred TN Live and Istikana. However, these legitimate products have to compete with the illicit sharing of content over P2P networks and live P2P streaming, which can now be streamed across devices at HD quality.

The unified content security head-end Conax Contego™ provides any pay-TV operator with a future-proof and flexible platform to introduce new services. Conax Contego™ is a sophisticated, modular and fully scalable content security solution that supports any business model for any TV operation and a multitude of consumer devices. Conax Contego™ supports a wide range of consumer devices, tablets, smartphones, CAM, PC/MAC and STBs – with or without smart cards. All consumer devices are pre-integrated and easily managed in the highly intuitive user interface in Conax Contego™.

What happens when content and audience connect is an everyday magic. More than 380 digital TV operators in over 85 countries rely on us to sustain that magic by protecting their content and revenue. At Conax we work hard to innovate so that consumers can experience everyday magic; on any device, anytime, anywhere. So let the magic begin!

securing content - sustaining magic

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While the industry has seen a big shift towards digitalisation, pirates have also become more tech-savvy. Digital video and broadband networks make it particularly easy to share content quickly and cost-effectively. However, if it is easy to manipulate and transfer a movie for professional purposes, then pirates can easily use these new tools to stream and share content illegally. Additionally, a growing number of sites offering illegal content come with a professional layout and HD-quality streams, making it difficult for consumers to tell the difference between an illegal site and a genuine legal way to stream movies or live sport. The proliferation of devices used to watch and stream content, combined with the increased amount of unauthorised content, makes it exceptionally difficult to prevent the illegal streaming of content on the internet.

To address the piracy issue and enable broadcasters and operators to offer high-quality content securely, broadcasters in the Middle East have developed the Broadcast Satellite Anti-Piracy Coalition. The initiative was started by Arabsat, du, Eutelsat, Gulfsat, JMC, MBC Group, Motion Picture Association of America, NileSat, Noorsat, OEN, STN and ViewSat. During its second meeting in Cairo, on September 22, 2014, the coalition announced six new members – ART, IAA, the Egyptian Chamber of Commerce, Gulfsat, Hotana and WWE – demonstrating that the industry in the region is determined to tackle piracy.

This is particularly pressing, as premium video piracy has spread from Hollywood studios content to Arabic productions, affecting the entire regional industry, especially in Egypt and Syria, the region’s two major cinema producers, alongside neighbouring Turkey. To ensure that operators can satisfy consumer demand for international content as well as promote regional productions, they need to ensure that the content industry is willing to licence content. This is why initiatives like the Broadcast Satellite Anti-Piracy Coalition play a crucial role within the industry. However, these need to be complemented by technology solutions that can be easily implemented and are robust enough to prevent pirates from illegally streaming high-quality content. Forensic watermarking allows service providers to find the source of the illegal stream so they can put strong policies in place to limit the unauthorised streaming of content online. Combined with takedown notices as well as Condition Access (CA) and Digital Rights Management (DRM) systems, it provides an efficient piracy deterrent.

Pay-TV and VOD services use CA and DRM systems to encrypt content at the source. However, these security solutions do not protect the content beyond decoding by the STB or the media player. DRM takedown notices offer a complementary solution that works on the fly in the case of illicit re-streaming of live sport or movies on near-VOO services, or after the fact in the case of file-sharing, but can be hindered in markets without strong legal frameworks and is inefficient when illicit live redistribution is over P2P streaming technology with no identifiable party to send a takedown notice to.

“Takedown notices entail removing content from a website at the request of the content owner. However, an individual can easily re-stream premium video content from the HDMI output of the STB, or by running frame capture and re-streaming software.

Forensic watermarking enables operators to locate the ID of the device or client stream that has been pirated, which allows them to take appropriate action, thereby preserving the value of the content and the relationships with the studios and other content owners. So while takedowns address the consequences of re-streaming from a set-top box or OTT service alongside the concern for black-market DVDs created from their distribution feed, only a method such as forensic watermarking of the content’s picture, which identifies the source of the illegal stream, can provide the ultimate takedown, since it ensures that the original stream will be identified. If a pay-TV subscriber is sharing or streaming content illegally, it can be traced back quickly through watermarking, as every piece of broadcast content is made unique for the subscriber. Forensic watermarking is currently the only method in place that enables operators to track a piece of content regardless of how it is shared. It is paramount that operators in the Middle East ensure that they offer the best content protection, to win content owners’ trust and give consumers access to the best international content in the comfort of their home.”

Mathieu Bonenfant, VP Product and Solutions, Civolution

Mathieu Bonenfant is VP Product and Solutions at Civolution.

MEASAT-3b: Strengthening Asia’s Most Vibrant Video Neighborhood

With the launch of MEASAT-3b, 91.5°E is now the home to three collocated satellites. Providing 84 Ku-band and 36 C-band transponders, 91.5°E is the ideal choice for broadcast and video distribution services across the Asia Pacific region.

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Dubai-based cinematographer Harvey Glen road tests the newly released Sony PXW-FS7 while filming CrossFit athlete coach Carlo Milo at the Smart Fitness gym.

For Purpose

The Sony PXW-FS7 delivers long-form recording capabilities with 4K resolution in a compact, handheld design. It shoots codec XAVC-I with a maximum resolution of 3840x2160, from 1 to 60 frames (59.94p, 50p, 29.97p, 23.98p, 25p). Once you drop the camera down to 1920x1080, you can shoot high speed, up to 180fps in NTSC mode and 150fps in PAL. It records 10bit 4:2:2.

So far so good! The camera can also record in XAVC-L and MPEG, should you require it.

The sensor is a Super 35mm Exmor CMOS sensor, so you can easily shoot with a shallow depth of field and keep backgrounds defocused. Sony claims it has a wide dynamic range of 14 stops, which is a vast amount of exposure latitude.

As advertised, it does also have the ability to record RAW, but to do this, you need an additional recorder. RAW recording ability is a feature that you could argue, does future-proof your invest, but only with further investment.

The native ISO is 2000, which is incredibly high. Anyone who remembers 35mm film will know that when 500T stock came out, people were amazed at such a fast stock and low-light capability. The RED’s and Alexa’s native ISO is 800, and a similarly priced camera to the Sony FS7, the Canon’s C300, is 850, so the camera promises a lot in low light. It would be interesting to test them all against each other and really see if the ISOs do marry up.

With such a high native ISO, for day shooting, especially in bright conditions like in the Middle East, you’ll definitely need a neutral density filter (ND). It’s a good thing the FS7 has built-in NDs: 2 stops, 4 stops and 6 stops.

Media

The SD and SXS cards are gone; the recording medium is Sony’s latest XQD card. The camera can record a range of regular gammas, along with S-Gamut3/S-Log3 and S-Gamut3, Cine/S-Log3. Cine/S-Log3 is a great advantage for images that have much more scope in grading. Once you shoot in S-Log3 Cinemode, the ISO is locked to 2000.

This camera has very similar specs to the FS5, but for a much cheaper
price, approximately $8,000.

So now we’re all geeked up on the specs. How are the ergonomics?

The Sony PXW-FS7 comes straight out of the box with an adjustable hard grip. Coming from a deep-rooted background of shooting documentaries with traditional broadcast cameras from Sony that are well-balanced and ergonomic, the hand-grip is welcome. One of my absolute pet hates with smaller camera units like the RED Epic, Canon 5D and Canon C300 is that you need third-party shoulder rigs. They quickly become Frankensteined – bulky and unbalanced, making traditional speedy operating somewhat slow.

The FS7 has looked back in time on how cameras used to be and thought about the person behind the lens. The handgrip is completely adjustable, and within a few minutes of playing around, I was able to set it for comfortable operating.

For this review, I was shooting at the Smart Fitness Gym. I wanted it to look organic, so I knew I’d need to shoot handheld. I also knew I would have to react quickly, as I wouldn’t be directing the athlete too much as I was documenting his actual CrossFit training session.

I needed to be able to move freely and quickly from shoulder-mounted position to under-slung. The handgrip and the lightness of the camera really helped.

I was shooting mostly in available light and needed to adjust the Iris on the fly. Normally, I like to use a real lens with the iris on the barrel. For my set-up, I had Canon EF lenses mounted using the Metabones speed adaptor. I realised, I could adjust the stop using a wheel positioned perfectly for easy access with my right hand on the handgrip. Being able to adjust the iris with my right hand allowed me to keep the camera steady and my left hand on the focus or supporting the camera, instead of fumbling around near my left cheek, like you have too on other cameras.

Pulling iris is still a little clunky and not ideal for on-shot changes, but that’s down to the digital nature of the lens. The location is also a vast improvement. You can also set up custom user buttons on the handgrip including the ability to magnify the image. This is a real help to check focus on the fly, while remaining comfortable and keeping the camera steady.

When moving on to a tripod, you might have to move the handgrip up to the base plate, depending on its position. This can be a little frustrating, but it’s a small price to pay.

Viewfinder

The viewfinder is on adjustable rods, so you can easily move it forwards and backwards and up and down, allowing the operator to get it into a comfortable position. I like to operate from the actual digital level was a surprise for me, and even when the viewfinder was off angle I could continue to shoot with confidence. Sony has clearly been talking with end users, something that, in the race for resolution, many camera manufactures have forgotten to do."

Harvey Glen, Cinematographer
viewfinder. It allows me to be the 'world' I’m filming, and bright sunlight doesn’t cause any viewing issues.

The viewfinder resolution is 940x560, decent enough to see what you are recording, but it’s not OLED (organic light-emitting diode). In future models, I’m sure further improvements will be made.

You can also remove the tube, which makes the viewfinder like a flip-out monitor. This is an advantage for shooting from the hip and viewing from difficult angles.

Similar to traditional broadcast cameras, the FS7 has the peaking and zebra function and a contrast knob on the side of the viewfinder.

I like to turn peaking and zebra on and off when physically recording, just to double-check focus and exposure. The FS7 allows you to do this very easily, again without fumbling around near your left cheek, whereas on other cameras you can accidentally change something you didn’t intend and cause instability with operating.

Another handy function in the viewfinder is a horizon level, something I’ve only seen on the Alexa, when using an external monitor. One of my other biggest pet hates with cameras like the C300 is that when operating handheld, you are sometimes not 100% sure the camera is

“Overall, shooting on the Sony FS7 was efficient, comfortable and easy to use. So how do the images look? Well, the answer is: pretty good! That’s thanks to the 10 bit. The footage holds highlights very well, and if shot in S-Log, it grades up very well too.”

Harvey Glen, Cinematographer
Editor and Director Acen Razvi shares his thoughts on how the PXW-FS7 footage fares in post.

“The post production workflow with the FS7 is a very smooth process, especially with FCPX and Premiere Pro. I personally like to use FCPX, it’s as simple as selecting File Import and you are ready to cut natively within seconds (depending how much footage you are ingesting, of course).

“When it comes to grading, I like to use Da Vinci resolve and LuTs such as Film Convert or Vision Colour to grade the footage, and there is a whole host out there now for S-Log 2 and 3. There is also Sony’s own post solution with Catalyst Browse, a free clip-management tool specifically designed for Sony camcorders and decks and includes cameras like the FS7.

Catalyst Browse offers the following:

- Browse – Quickly browse the files on your device using a thumbnail view or detailed list.
- View – See the details of each clip, check focus, mark in and out points, adjust colours and edit metadata.
- Fast Copy – Copy all clips on the media, a subset, or only the desired portion of a clip to save time and space.
- Ultra Wide Colour Gamut – Review with confidence the full range of colour captured by your S-Log and RAW Sony cameras.
- Clip Lists – Create, import and export Sony Professional Disc clip lists for quick play-out needs.
- Transcode and Cloud Upload – Transcode clips to the most popular video production formats.
- OpenCL GPU accelerated video engine for smooth playback and fast rendering.
- Precise colour engine featuring ultra-wide colour gamut and large dynamic range capabilities for previewing and adjusting S-Log, S-Log3, S-Log, RAW and Rec.709 source footage.
- Comprehensive format support for all the Sony Professional cameras.

“I downloaded the software and found a very intuitive clip browser with the ability to grade S-log footage; it’s actually quite a powerful tool where you can recover over-exposure with great results. Built into the programme is also the ability to do basic colour correction and have split screen views. You can apply basic colour correction and then export clips for editing, probably a good solution for on-set shoots and not dissimilar to Red’s REDONE X.”
The Berlin International Film Festival (The Berlinale), which concluded last month, hosted the 13th edition of Berlinale Talents, with Canon as the Principal Partner for the third consecutive year. BroadcastPro ME was invited to attend the exclusive media sessions hosted by Canon.

During the six-day Berlinale Talents programme, 300 emerging film professionals from 75 countries and a variety of fields met with more than 100 experts. In addition, the participants had a wide range of opportunities to continue developing their film projects.

"Once again, the new talents of 2015 found inspiration in the creative atmosphere of Berlinale Talents, and made many contacts amongst fellow participants and the film industry. We will undoubtedly soon welcome some of these talented filmmakers back to Berlin with their films," commented Florian Weghorn, who was in charge of the Berlinale Talents programme for the first time this year.

The mottor for Berlinale Talents this year was “2015: A Space Discovery”. Emerging filmmakers and established industry professionals got together to discover new ways of looking at cinema. Discussions revolved around how technological innovations and new media formats have allowed filmmakers to reimagine onscreen space.

Top-notch experts, including Howard Shore, Marcel Ophüls, Joshua Oppenheimer, Wim Wenders, Joanna Hogg, Bong Joon-Ho, Andreas Dresen, Ursula Meier, Walter Salles and Sebastian Schipper, expounded on the creation, exploration and transmission of cinematic space.

Reflecting an ongoing commitment to helping develop and nurture the skills of new industry creatives, Canon offered attendees an exclusive, hands-on experience at the Canon Camera Studio, showcasing the latest Canon equipment. As a principal partner of Berlinale Talents, Canon presented workshops and discussions centred on ways to integrate technology with creativity at the Berlinale. BroadcastPro ME brings you the highlights.

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on experience with their newest technologies, and hosted a series of workshops with industry experts. One of the highlights of the Canon programme was cinematographer Peter Zeitlinger’s masterclass. Zeitlinger, who most recently brought desert landscapes to the big screen in Werner Herzog’s Queen of the Desert, looked in-depth at how he did the camerawork in the Chauvet cave for Herzog’s documentary Cave of Forgotten Dreams. During his talk, he stated that “depicting space on the screen only works if I, as the cameraman, accept the properties of the real-life surroundings.”

In another presentation titled ‘The Survival Guide to Digital Workflows’, DoP Stefan Ciupek, who has worked on films such as Slumdog Millionaire and Antichrist, and colourist Dirk Meier, discussed Ciupek’s latest project, The Dark Side of the Moon. Attendees had a chance to learn about the changing role of digital image technicians with the ever-evolving digital workflows. For hands-on experience with the latest technology, the Canon Camera Studio showcased a range of Canon products for participants to use, helping them to develop their skills. In addition, Canon’s space in HAU 2 offered product touch and try, and workflow demonstrations to all attendees – spanning both the EOS and XF ranges. For the first time, the manufacturer offered 24-hour loans of the EOS C100, giving attendees an extended, first-hand experience of using all the features of the device.

The manufacturer also unveiled several short films, commissioned from aspiring cinematographers from the 2014 event. Ahead of the event, aspiring filmmakers were given the opportunity to post a 15-second ‘microfilm’ to Facebook. The top prize was a red carpet VIP experience at the 2015 Berlin International Film Festival, which premiered some of most awaited films of the year and welcomed the likes of Christian Bale, Cate Blanchett and Natalie Portman, among other Hollywood A-listers. Acclaimed portrait photographer Rob Oades captured unique portraits of the 300 selected talents at the event.

For the first time, Berlino Talent was open to participants with experience developing and producing high-quality drama series. Within the scope of the festival-wide Drama Series Days, Matthew Weiner, the creator of Mad Men, took delight in his conversations with the talents.

The 65th edition of the Berlinale welcomed 86 alumni with 63 films. Taken together, the Talents embodied the great plurality of the global filmmaking industries.
Piracy in the world of video content is not a new phenomenon, but in the past 15 years it has reached unprecedented scale and has undermined ground rules of content distribution. There are now so many forms of video piracy that it’s hard to enumerate them all. Smart card piracy is rapidly becoming a back story, partly because of new encryption technologies, but primarily because it is now dwarfed by internet redistribution.

Video and file sharing account for over 90% of all internet traffic, and illegal VoD and streaming services and video file sharing are the main sources of pirated content around the world. The perceived industry wisdom is that internet piracy can only be resolved through regulatory, technical and legal means. This paper proposes a solution which is loosely bound in regulation, but is essentially a commercial answer to internet piracy.

The content industry still hasn’t figured out how to respond. There have been several attempts to combat piracy by making legitimate OTT services more affordable. Most recently, producers such as HBO have resorted to creating video and file sharing accounts for over 90% of all internet traffic, and illegal VoD and streaming services and video file sharing are the main sources of pirated content around the world. The perceived industry wisdom is that internet piracy can only be resolved through regulatory, technical and legal means. This paper proposes a solution which is loosely bound in regulation, but is essentially a commercial answer to internet piracy.

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**Internet traffic, in exabytes per month (2013-2018)**

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**Source:** Cisco Visual Networking Index, 2018 Annual Report

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**Source:** Cisco Visual Networking Index, 2018 Annual Report

The perceived industry wisdom is that internet piracy can only be resolved through regulatory, technical and legal means. This paper proposes a solution which is loosely bound in regulation, but is essentially a commercial answer to internet piracy.
“Telcos must be properly regulated, but we assert that it is essential for the growth of the content industry that they participate in the success of OTT providers, as this incentivises them to improve their infrastructure to support those OTT providers”

Nick Grande, ChannelSculptor

Licensing OTT video services

The TRA is also critically important in the licensing of legitimate video services. Any OTT video service provider wishing to be eligible to be whitelisted by domestic telcos would first be required to be licensed by the TRA.

It is important to note that unlicensed video sites are not blocked – they are still accessible to consumers. The reason service providers choose to be licensed by the TRA is to be in a position to be whitelisted by telcos so that consumers never need to pay data charges for their services.

The licensing process centres on criteria relating to the legitimacy of the OTT provider, and specifically whether that provider holds proper distribution rights for its content in the regulator’s territory of jurisdiction.

Of course the TRA cannot be expected to check the rights agreements for every movie and series distributed by licensed OTT platforms. Some whitelisted OTT platforms would likely test their boundaries by distributing content without having the rights. However, the market is self-regulating: any third party could issue a complaint against an OTT operator, and the TRA would issue a request to the operator for proof of rights. If it repeatedly distributed content illegally, then the TRA would revoke its licence to be whitelisted.

White listing agreements with telcos

Whilst licensing by the TRA is a necessary condition for content service providers to avoid the data cap, it is not a sufficient condition.

White listing is a commercial agreement negotiated between the licensed content service provider and the operator. For example, subscription service providers might agree a revenue sharing arrangement with a telco partner for delivering their services. For free services such as YouTube or Facebook, there might be a fee arrangement between the service provider to the operator, or more likely some kind of barter deal.

The commercialisation of video services over IP is inextricably linked to the delivery provided to them by telcos, and infrastructure costs money. Telcos must be properly regulated, but we assert that it is essential for the growth of the content industry that they participate in the success of OTT providers, as this incentivises them to improve their infrastructure to support those OTT providers.

This solution would be particularly beneficial in GCC markets, where: • content piracy is largely unchecked • data connectivity is excellent (supporting the launch of new OTT services), and • regulators are able to take rapid and assertive action

Rollout

Initial impact of the data cap

Of course this policy will not immediately be assimilated by the market, and consumers will likely go through a number of stages as they adapt to a new paradigm.

In the first month or two, consumers will experience bill shock as they begin to realise the cost implications of using unlicensed video services. With this in mind, it is critical that the policy is clearly communicated by regulators and telcos alike, that whitelisted services are properly marketed, and that consumers are given warnings when they are going to be charged for incremental data consumption.

As consumers become more familiar with the data cap, heavy pirate streaming and torrent users will begin to adapt their behaviours; they will start to be more selective in the services that they download in order to remain within their data cap: • choosing smaller video files (in other words lower resolution videos), and/or • limiting the number of videos downloaded per month

By driving users of illegal services towards lower resolution content, the benefits of licensed subscription OTT services begin to emerge. If consumers can see that the content they are downloading in standard definition is offered by services such as OSN (in high definition for $10 a month) they begin to ask the obvious question: is $10 really too much to pay to watch premium TV?

The content creation effect

In the short and medium term, unlicensed pirate and grey market OTT services would still be able to differentiate themselves by providing access to selected content that is unavailable on whitelisted services, namely content that is: • too recent to be released to TV by the studios (new movies for example), and • not mainstream Hollywood content, and therefore not yet commercialised by existing regional OTT service providers

This is where things start to get interesting though. An consumption of authorised OTT services starts to increase, these operators begin to invest more in their offerings, and at the same time other would-be OTT providers start to look at the
market. An increase in OTT players translates into greater demand for original content. Specialised OTT providers start to emerge, focusing on genre-specific, country-specific and/or diaspora-specific programming which would otherwise not be available on mainstream services.

The Netflix effect

Netflix supports grey market subscribers over virtual private network (VPN) connections around the world. They are believed to be supporting several hundred thousand subscribers in the MENA for example. Without legitimate content rights, Netflix could not be whitelisted, and would become prohibitively expensive for consumers if they had to pay on a per MB basis for content above their data allowance. As a result, legitimate MENA OTT service providers would begin to take customers that would otherwise have been Netflix customers. In the face of losing subscribers in the MENA for example, Netflix could not be whitelisted, and would become prohibitively expensive for consumers if they had to pay on a per MB basis for content above their data allowance.

Of course, establishing a licensing body for video services could have unhelpful repercussions for the industry if the scope of the licensing body strayed beyond the legitimacy of content rights into editorial considerations. It should be clearly noted, however, that this paper has nothing whatsoever to do with editorial control of media. That is a matter for governments.

Equally, this paper does not support or condone the activities of individual telecoms operators in prioritising speeds of one internet service over another. On the contrary, this paper asserts that any “data cap” is illegal under current laws if it disproportionately affects established and legitimate providers. Without legitimate content rights, OTT providers could pass on these savings to consumers through:

• lower price points (compared with pay-TV)
• exclusive content not available on satellite
• lower price points (compared with pay-TV)
• fewer ads (compared with FTA)

On the contrary, this paper asserts that any “data cap” is regulated at an industry body level rather than at operator level.

The sole purpose of this paper is to offer a commercial solution to the problem of illegal redistribution of video.

•

Nick Grande is Managing Director of ChannelSculptor.
The NAB Show to be held from April 11 to 16, 2015 in Las Vegas, is expected to welcome 1,600-plus exhibitors and more than 98,000 attendees from 150 countries. This year’s show will feature several new highlights and an expanded conference programme to address the changing needs of broadcast professionals.

Attendees representing every sector of the industry will be attending the largest expo of media and entertainment technologies in the world, covering broadcast, digital media, film, entertainment, telecom, post-production, education, houses of worship, advertising, military/government, retail, security, sports and IT.

New attractions will include Connected Media IP, focusing on the consumer experience; the Drone Pavilion, featuring a fully enclosed “flying cage” for demonstrations; the New Media Expo (NMX), hosting celebrity bloggers, podcaster and digital content creators; SPROCKIT, where market-ready startups present their new ideas; and StudioXperience, a live studio using all the latest tools.

Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Chairman Tom Wheeler will address the show on April 15 to provide insight into the FCC’s policy and regulatory objectives related to broadcasting, technology and communications law generally.

Other star speakers at the show include Boyhood film editor Sandra Adair, a featured session speaker at the Creative Master Series; and Marilu Henner, a five-time Golden Globe nominee, New York Times bestselling author and nationally syndicated radio personality who will speak at the NAB Show Radio Luncheon.

The show this year will also host the first-ever Online Video Conference (OVC), on April 13-14. The Conference will feature sessions on key issues facing online video providers of original content, as well as those seeking to monetize video across multiple platforms. Will Richmond, Editor and Publisher of VideoNuz, will be the host.

One of the seven separate Conference tracks at the NAB Show, the OVC will cover topics such as virtual MVPDs, the migration to OTT, online original content, gaming and sports, user-generated content, cross-screen targeting, online advertising metrics and new online video platforms. The Conference is designed for senior executives from digital media firms in the subscriber-based world of video on demand, OTT and cable, as well as pure broadband and internet firms.

New this year is the NAB Digital Leadership Award, which will be presented to an individual at a broadcast station, group or network who has had a significant role in transforming a traditional broadcast business to succeed on digital media platforms in a measurable way. There will be newer features added to the Broadcast NAB Show will return this year with a host of new conferences and programmes to cater to the rapidly evolving broadcast ecosystem.
Management Conference and Broadcast Engineering Conference.

The new Digital Exchange Strategies for Television workshop (formerly Digital Think Tank for Television) will take place on April 14 and 15. This two-day workshop covers issues of importance to TV managers moving their operations into the digital space. High-level presentations will include the value of digital partnerships, social strategies and monetisation ideas, including TV Everywhere. The workshop will also focus on the use of aerial robotics in broadcast, cybersecurity and programmatic options.

Additionally, Digital Strategies Exchange for Radio (DSX4r), presented by NAB Labs, returns with a one-day workshop on April 15. The workshop will focus on new technologies affecting radio and provide non-technical managers with the tools needed to leverage their digital assets. Radio digital leaders and others will share a variety of best practices and updates on connected car technology, hybrid radio, digital audience measurement, branding, social media and emerging services.

An Aerial Robotics and Drone Pavilion, presented by Drone Media Group in partnership with the NAB Show, is yet another highlight of the show this year. The new exhibit area in the South Upper Hall of the Las Vegas Convention Centre will feature dozens of aerial robotics companies, a flying cage, a demonstration area with seating and daily sessions.

"Unmanned aerial systems are increasingly being used to cover live events and breaking news, and in industries such as real estate, law enforcement, search and rescue and more," says Mannie Frances, Drone Media Group. "Drones were one of the hottest technologies at the 2014 NAB Show. We are excited to unveil the Aerial Robotics and Drone Pavilion in 2015."

Exhibitors currently participating in the Pavilion include DJI, Canon, Amimon, DSLR Pros, XFly Systems, TeraLogics, Go Professional Cases, ArrowData, Sky High Media, ZM Interactive and Unmanned Vehicle University. The Pavilion will also feature sponsored presentations on topics including laws and regulations surrounding drones, the use of drones for news gathering, drones in space (NASA Project Case Study), capturing aerial video and employing range extenders.

Radio engineer Thomas F. King of Kintronic Labs and television innovator Richard M. Friedel of Fox have been named the 2015 recipients of the NAB Engineering Achievement Awards. The NAB Service to Broadcast Engineering Award will be presented to Ray Conover, Senior Engineering Consultant for Hubbard Broadcasting. The recipients will be honoured during the show.

Snapshots from last year’s event.

Optimo Style Lens Series

The new Optimo Style family of zoom lenses inherits the virtues of the famed Optimo Cine lenses, yet offering extra compatibility and production efficiency for a large variety of cameras, configurations and budgets. Optimo Style lightweight lenses will be offered with or without the ASU – Angénieux Servo Unit.

Bring your content to life with true cinematic looks and 4K+ quality.
Meet us at CABSAT
March 10-12, 2015
Hall: B 8-10

Our world.
The largest Arab community in the sky at 26° East. Your world.
As part of its mandate to fuel regional companies’ growth in the MENA, CABSAT 2015 will feature a series of world-class knowledge exchange initiatives including the second annual CABSAT & NAB Show Collaborative Conference, the inaugural Middle East Post Production Training Conference, the GVF Satellite Hub Summit and the Content Delivery Seminar.

The CABSAT & NAB Show Collaborative Conference will see more than 40 global media industry thought leaders deliver compelling real-life case studies on disruptive technologies, the transition to digital broadcasting and monetising multi-platform services. In total, 16 sessions will feature voices from regional and global media houses – both visionary independents as well as mega corporations and blue-chip companies.

Future Media Concepts, the company behind CABSAT’s Post Production Conference brings its expertise in the field of training for Adobe, Apple, Avid and Autodesk to the show. Ben Kozuch, President and Co-founder of Future Media Concepts says the CABSAT Conference will feature the most popular and well-attended topics from NAB and introduce them in Dubai with the same certified instructors: “The goal is to create an effective mix of software and techniques to bring the most efficient and diverse two days of training. “We assume that local professionals are savvy on their tools but are mainly self-taught. The advantage of learning from certified trainers is that it maximises their efficiency and creativity on theoretical software. Attendees will walk away with few good tips from each session they can apply to their very next project. In addition, attendees will be able to add new tools to their toolkit and expand the scope of creative services they provide.”

The changing role of the editor will be addressed at the workshops in view of the rapid advances in technology with the lines between professions blurring. This calls for editors to constantly expand their skills. “Not each topic will be news, but we ensure that one can take away a few good tips from each session. By the end of the two days, attendees will have acquired a long list of new techniques they can apply to their daily work. In addition, benchmarking with other professionals and comparing practices is always efficient and rewarding,” he adds.

The 21st edition of CABSAT will roll out an expanded schedule of sector-specific conferences, training programmes and seminars.
Argosy will demonstrate the breadth of its range of infrastructure products at CABSAT. This includes a range of products to connect, interface and test IP data streams, as well as traditional audio and video architectures. One new device on show at CABSAT for the first time is the Enterprise data stream analyser from Hamlet, which Argosy distributes in the region. Like all the instruments in the Hamlet range, this is designed to be a practical tool, used every day in operational settings. The Enterprise is a handheld device, capable of providing all the data analysis needed to check signals are performing perfectly, across all the formats and streaming protocols in popular use.

Canon launches C100 Mk II, offers 24-hr loan
Canon’s EOS C100 Mark II is a digital HD camera that is tailor-made for the growing short-film and documentary production community in the MENA region.

With the region poised for an audio-visual transformation, Canon aims to serve as a facilitator of the revolution by showcasing and providing access to its latest technology offerings to some of the world’s leading content producers at CABSAT,” said Hendrik Verbrugghe, Marketing Director, Canon Middle East.

Canon will also facilitate a 24-hour loan of the camera for attendees wanting an extended, first-hand experience with the camera. This will cover the EOS and XF ranges.

Canon also launches C100 Mk II, offers 24-hr loan

Avid will showcase the Avid MediaCentral Platform and its associated modular application suites, delivering on Avid Everywhere, the company’s strategic vision for the media and entertainment industry, centred on connecting creative professionals and media organisations. Avid has also sponsored the two-day Middle East Post Production Training Conference at CABSAT with a daily training session on Avid Media Composer.

Avid drums up support Everywhere
Avid has also sponsored the two-day Middle East Post Production Training Conference at CABSAT with a daily training session on Avid Media Composer.

FOR-A takes it super slow
At CABSAT, FOR-A will launch its FT-ONE, claimed to be the world’s first 4K camera capable of capturing 810 frames per second. The FT-ONE is capable of simultaneously recording and playing back in full 4K resolution. It incorporates the FT1-CMOS, a global shutter CMOS colour sensor. RAW material is recorded at high speed to the internal RAM memory of 4K content shot at 900 fps. For convenience, material can then be transferred to optional internal SSD cartridges.

Visilink’s NewStream of thought
Visilink’s NewStream multi-mode mobile vehicle transmission system now features a new antenna array, that claims to offer more than 72% efficiency across all cellular bands. The upgraded NewStream is equipped with a universal modem design for use on a variety of frequency bands outside the US. NewStream can be integrated with other Visilink uplink products for additional data and video applications.

ScheduALL will demo its self-provisioning scheduling solutions at CABSAT. ScheduALL Portal is designed to simplify the process of making complex bookings of occasional use transmission feeds in real-time, directly into a transmission provider’s system. Portal utilises a browser-based user-friendly wizard for selling transmission feeds, minimising unused capacity, maximising revenue and drastically reducing operational overhead in the selling process. It uses the complexity of ScheduALL’s LINK software to deliver efficiency and streamline the entire booking process for satellite, fibre and ethernet transmissions. Broadcaster can also use Portal’s interface without possessing in-depth technical knowledge.

ScheduALL takes its super slow

Hall 1, Stand 104
Hall 2, Stand E2-20
Hall 3, Stand G3-30
Hall 4, Stand A2-20
Hall 1, Stand B4-10
Hall 4, Stand B4-10
Hall 2, Stand F2-32
Hall 3, Stand G3-30
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Advanced Media to sport new look at CABSAT

AMT intends to have a brand new look and design at CABSAT, with a number of latest products and technologies on display. The distributor will use the CABSAT platform to announce its new showroom in Dubai.

Commenting on the company’s plans for CABSAT, Kaveh Farnam, CEO of Advanced Media Trading, said: “2015 will be an exciting year for the entire Advanced Media family and customers, with our new showroom.”

AMT will demonstrate DJI’s latest drones, Phantom and Ronin, family of products at the show. A dedicated area will also enable visitors to fly the drones and view the short live on the monitors. Sony’s latest 4K cameras and recorders will be a key highlight of the stand.

Hitachi brings world’s first OB-BOX to Dubai

Hitachi Kokusai Electric Turkey will present the world’s first showcase of its new OB-BOX concept at CABSAT. Hitachi’s OB-BOX is a fully-featured modular OB facility, which is delivered to the customer and then mounted onto a vehicle’s chassis using a proprietary fixing kit. It comes in three different configurations which support four, eight and 12 production cameras. The option of a booth-side extension adds further flexibility to unit sizing.

In addition to this, the OB van’s ability to connect two OB-BOX units in a cascade configuration adds more versatility to its functions and facilitates many different sizes of OB unit, up to 20 camera mobile facilities. Each OB-BOX is specifically designed and manufactured at Hitachi’s Istanbul facility. The unit provides all of the video, audio, transmission and infrastructure capabilities needed to create a stand alone outside broadcast facility.

GatesAir tunes into CABSAT

GatesAir will demonstrate a low-power version of its high-efficiency Flexiva FM transmitter, which can modularly scale to power networks up to 80kW. The company’s Flexiva AM transmitters also offer performance for power levels exceeding 2 MegaWatts, ensuring broadcasters a long-term solution that reduces operating costs and energy bills over many years.

The company’s Maxiva VhF transmitters for DAB Radio will be demonstrated for broadcasters. Its current-generation transmitters are claimed to reduce transmitter footprints and rack space requirements by up to 75%.

Calrec Audio on the cards

Calrec Audio will showcase two new network interface cards for its popular 3U modular Hydra2 I/O box at CABSAT. The MADi interface card offers a MADi stream input and output, via copper BNC or SFP fibre. The output streams simultaneously over both copper BNC and fibre SFP. It also offers user switchable Sample Rate Converter (SRC) on the input and a user switchable SRC on output. Also on show will be the Calrec Dante interface, which works in conjunction with Hydra2 across the entire range of Calrec Bluefin2 consoles.
UBMSTRENGTHENSPARTNERSHIPS

UBMS will highlight products from international brands, such as Sony, Sachtler, ARRI, Libec, Jano, Mathews, Clyde Broadcast, TVU Networks, Blackmagic Design and Tiffen, among others at its stand. On display will be the latest professional cameras, top-end camera support systems, wireless transmission technology, the full spectrum of lighting solutions, post production and playlist systems.

Imagine to unveil Magellan

Imagine Communications’ Magellan SDN Orchestrator is a next-generation control system that allows traditional and IP-enabled workflows to be managed from the same interface. By facilitating integration of IP technology with legacy systems, the Magellan SDN Orchestrator protects existing infrastructure investments to maintain operational and workflow integrity in a hybrid environment, while on the path to an all-IP network.

Get compact with Vizrt

Vizrt will demonstrate its Viz Opus compact control room system and Viz Multiplay multiviewer studio control system for the first time in the region. Also showcased will be a number of exclusive integrations undertaken with local data providers such as weather data from ArabianWeather and financial data from Mubasher.

ContentWise personalises video

At CABSAT, ContentWise, a personalisation, discovery and recommendations solution for digital TV content, will demonstrate the importance of personalisation to local operators in the MENA. Visitors to the stand will be able to see how the ContentWise solution is helping broadcasters and pay-TV providers around the world to deliver profitable content search, discovery and predictions across any screen, at any time.

Oasis Enterprises sheds more light

Oasis PPD, which has been part of CABSAT since 1994, will bring a range of international broadcast, AV and studio lighting equipment that it represents in the region to this year’s edition of the show. This show gives us a platform to showcase services and products offered by us in professional AV, broadcast equipment and studio lighting,” says Basel Al Aref, General Manager – Professional Projects Division. “Having over 30 years of experience in the region and more than 500 projects in the UAE and GCC region and beyond, we demonstrate the latest technologies and work with our partners at CABSAT every year.” Oasis PPD’s partners include JVC, ETC, Datavideo, TVone, Rosco, Link and Egripment.

AV Solutions broadens networks

AV Solutions will be exhibiting for the fourth time at CABSAT this year. The SI will focus on value-added services and project marketing at the show.

“We hope to see our existing clients and new ones at the show,” says Zaid Wattar, Managing Director of AV Solutions, adding that the company’s engineering team will be present to talk directly with visitors. “CABSAT is a very significant show for us, because this is where all our vendors and clients of the Middle East get together. It provides us a platform to demonstrate our services to the industry. We have been seeing an increase in the number of clients from the entire region, especially from Iraq,” he explains. Some of the customers expected to visit the AV Solutions stand at CABSAT are Al Shaid Al Arabi TV, Al-Tahrir TV, Iraqi Media Network, Al Baghdadia TV, Al Sharjah TV, Al-Rashed TV, Waves Studio Productions, CBC TV, Iraq Ministry of Culture, Iraqi Ministry of Higher Education and AI-Bahar TV.

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With our expanding fleet of over 50 satellites, SES combines a strong local presence in the Middle East with global reach. We cover the Middle East with 9 satellites, offering our customers a balance of capacity, customized support and local market knowledge to fuel the Middle East’s demand for innovation and expansion.

Find out more about how we can extend your reach across the Middle East and beyond at www.ses.com

Extron will showcase the SMP 351, a high-performance streaming and recording processor for capturing and distributing live AV presentations. Featuring up to five inputs, it combines a presentation source and camera video of the instructor with a background image into flexible layouts that enhance the live experience. The SMP 351 offers extensive streaming and recording capabilities, allowing clients to distribute their message anywhere the network can reach. Requiring no licence fees, the SMP 351 is a flexible, cost-effective solution for delivering presentations to a larger audience. The SMP 351 stream and record simultaneously and can stream concurrently at two different resolutions and bit rates using a range of transport protocols and session management options. The SMP 351 is complemented by Extron Streaming Content Manager - SCM software.

Hall 2, Stand E2-30

Cerebrum makes the control and monitoring of multiple video and audio signal paths easier, more efficient and cost-effective than ever. Cerebrum provides comprehensive tools to configure, monitor and maintain products from any manufacturer within and beyond the broadcasting industry. The result is that multiple users can take total control over multiple and complex routines.

Hall 2, Stand C1-20
Custom Consoles has chosen CABSAT 2015 as the launch venue for a major aesthetic uplift to its broadcast furniture range. The Module-R, SystemTwo and SystemTwo Lite ranges of technical furniture are now available with robust profiled panels offering a wider selection of finishes.

CABSAT will see the debut of the Ikegami HC-HD300 3-CMOS studio camera system in the MEA market. The HC-HD300 is a compact docking-style camera for studio or field operation. An aggressively-priced addition to Ikegami’s broadcast-ready Unicam HD product line, it promises the same standard of imagery and rugged construction as its predecessors. The Ikegami HC-HD300 is equipped with a 1/3-inch bayonet lens mount and employs three 1/3-inch CMOS progressive-scan 1920 x 1080 native sensors in RGB prism formation. The camera delivers pictures in all commonly used video formats. Supporting features include the focus assist and lens aberration correction functions employed in Ikegami’s UnicamHD range of cameras.

The Riedel RSP-2318 Smartpanel is claimed to be the world’s first control panel designed to serve as a multifunctional user interface. The Riedel device boasts a new feature set that includes three high-resolution, sunlight-readable, multitouch colour displays; quality stereo audio; a multilingual character set; and 18 keys in just 1RU. These features make Riedel’s Smartpanel a powerful user interface that can be further expanded through the use of apps – Riedel’s first app for the RSP-2318 turns the Smartpanel into a smart intercom panel. RAENNIA/AES7 and AVB connectivity are standard, with AES3 over CAT/coax optional. Additional features of the Smartpanel include exchangeable headset connectors for mono or stereo applications, an integrated power supply, individual volume controls for each key, two USB ports, two ethernet connectors, GPIO, audio I/O, an option slot, a removable gooseneck microphone, an SD card slot and an HDMI output.

Pebble Beach Systems’ suite of Web Client tools will be demonstrated at CABSAT. The suite offers a range of functions, from straightforward monitoring of a single playlist to highly granular remote control of multiple Marina automation systems and Dolphin integrated channel devices across geographically dispersed locations. Developed using HTML5 and the latest web server technology, the web client tools are designed to offer close to real-time access to single or multiple systems of all sizes and architectures on PC or tablet devices using Chrome, Safari, Internet Explorer or Firefox browsers.
4K with Sony

Sony Professional returns to CABSAT for the 19th consecutive year with a focus on 4K products and solutions. Attendees will be able to experience the 4K CineAlta cameras and the workflow behind it. Sony experts present on the exhibition floor will demonstrate the products and answer visitor queries.

BFE gets to the core with KSC

At CABSAT, BFE will showcase the next generation of the KSC product line, KSC Core, along with the new line of furniture manufactured by BFE in Germany, and BFE professional services including BFE’s role as a consultant and systems integrator. KSC Core, the next generation of the KSC product line, offers workflow-optimised functionalities for mobile production, studio, control room and playout centre. Based on many years of experience in product-neutral control and monitoring of broadcast components, KSC Core is a milestone for future controller solutions.

Telestream brings enterprise to CABSAT

Telestream will demonstrate its enterprise-class software products. Visitors will see the company’s flagship Vantage product family, which offers GPU-accelerated transcoding and intelligent workflow automation for broadcast, cable, post-production, IPTV, OTT and multiscreen delivery. A focus of Telestream’s CABSAT showcase will be Vantage’s capabilities as a news ingest solution when integrated with Avid Interplay – a system solution that has been adopted by numerous broadcasters throughout the Middle East region. Vantage products can be integrated into a variety of Avid workflows, to support operators using simple standalone solutions up to complex Interplay/ISIS shared storage systems. With hundreds of news stories received each day, Vantage automates the creation of multiple resolutions of media assets and associated metadata on content.

Blackmagic goes intense with Pro 4K

This new Intensity Pro 4K includes all the features of the Intensity Pro model, it replaces and now adds deep colour support in HDMI, higher frame rate 1080p60 capture as well as playback and high resolution Ultra HD capture and playback up to 2160p30 via HDMI. This new model now allows customers to connect to an even wider range of video products and in higher quality. The new Intensity Pro 4K is the only consumer video capture and playback card that’s built using the same broadcast quality video components that professionals in the film and television industry use.

Sony 4K Live Production not only provides 4K resolution, it also brings new capabilities to HD production. Sony is demonstrating the workflow from shooting to viewing. Also on the stand are Sony’s streaming solutions and Vision Presenter and the world’s 1st 4K Ultra Short Throw laser projector.

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Hall 1, Stand C1-10

Hall 2, Stand B2-10

Hall 3, Stand A3-20

Hall 2, Stand D2-10

Hall 3, Stand A3-20

Hall 2, Stand D2-32
Broadcast Wireless Systems debuts at CABSAT

A new company, Broadcast Wireless Systems, which has been established to offer expertise, agility and objective advice on specialist broadcast RF requirements, will make its debut at CABSAT 2015.

The company was launched by wireless experts Stuart Brown and Max Zaja, who have experience with the likes of Cabham, Link Research, Tandberg/Ericsson,

Ericsson takes TV Anywhere

Ericsson will showcase its portfolio of TV video compression solutions at CABSAT. This will include a wide range of compression technologies for multiscreen, multisite, platform video processing, as well as solutions for contribution and distribution.

CreateCtrl debuts at CABSAT

CreateCtrl 40 will participate in CABSAT for the first time, bringing broadcast management solutions that allow media organisations to collaborate on their content.

The Munich-based company focuses on the new, web-based media asset management system with integrated HTML5 video editor.

The solution provides comprehensive content and metadata management, combined with flexible programme scheduling. Movies, series, trailers, contracts and licensing information are handled in the workflow-based media applications suite, while numerous wizards make the scheduling process secure, quick, and simple.

These products are already being used by globally known programme suppliers like Discovery Channel and Fox International.

Broadcast Wireless Systems brings a range of products for radio and television customers. Ericsson FM transmitters and IP audio codecs will be on display for radio broadcasters. On the TV side, the company will showcase products in monitoring and facility management, with the new Audemat DVB-T2 Monitor, which provides 24/7 signal monitoring, analysis and full remote control of a DVB-T2 transmitter site.

It provides both RF monitoring and content (T2Mi) monitoring in one box and eliminates the need for an additional remote control unit. The Audemat DVB-T2 does not only allow remote control of its own but also of other pieces of third-party equipment at the site, including the transmitter, IRD and several sensors.

With comprehensive and programmable remote control, the central user is able to closely monitor everything that happens at the remote sites, view analysis and trends, and control various parameters and settings remotely.

VSN explores new media

VSN will show its complete portfolio of broadcast solutions, which fully covers the main areas of audiovisual content production, management and distribution.

An end-to-end solution, covering news and live production, media asset management, MCR and studio automation for live broadcasting and second-screen distribution, will be displayed at the show.

VSNEXPLORER, a Media & Business Process Management solution, will receive special attention at CABSAT. The VSNEXPLORER family consists of VSNEXPLORER PAM, focused on production and post-production environments; VSNEXPLORER MAM, which offers all the necessary tools for complete management of the media lifecycle, such as advanced cataloguing tools; and, for the most demanding clients, VSNEXPLORER BPM, which adds an orchestration layer that enables the user to define business processes in a simple way.

WorldCast Systems comes to Dubai

WorldCast Systems will be on display at the show. The company will showcase products in monitoring and facility management, with the new WorldCast VSneXPLOReR PAM, which adds an orchestration layer that enables the user to define business processes in a simple way.

The stand will feature the AVP 3000 Voyager, the RX8200 advanced modular receiver, SVP 2000 ABR contribution encoder and decoder, virtualised encoding and its AWP 6000 system encoder.

Hall 3, Stand C3-42

Ericsson will showcase its portfolio of TV video compression solutions at CABSAT. This will include a wide range of compression technologies for multiscreen, multisite, platform video processing, as well as solutions for contribution and distribution.

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Hall 3, Stand C3-42
AVIWEST will show new enhancements to its DMNG (Digital Mobile News Gathering) system, including cloud capabilities. Using the advanced live video contribution platform, broadcasters can capture and broadcast live HD or SD video over multiple networks, including bonded 3G/4G cellular wireless, Wi-Fi, ethernet and satellite. Offering seamless integration into existing workflows and headends, low-power consumption, high MTBF and mobility, the DMNG system offers broadcasters a fully integrated, cloud-based solution for breaking news and live events coverage. AVIWEST will launch a new version of its DMNG Studio server, which can receive incoming streams from DMNG video uplink systems as well as IP cameras and other equipment through a variety of formats such as RTP, RTSP, TS over UDP and RTMP.

AXON to demo SMART DVB
Axon Digital Design will demonstrate its latest range of customisable monitoring and master control solutions and unveil SMART DVB, its new platform for live MPEG-2 and DVB transport stream reporting. SMART DVB is a complete suite of tools to monitor, report and analyse live MPEG-2 and DVB transport streams. The SMART DVB suite enables owners and operators to ensure health, conformity and quality across the digital distribution chain and to drive performance at the highest level.

Harmonic showcases the Electra
Harmonic will showcase its fully converged platform for broadcast and OTT delivery of SD, HD and Ultra HD (UHD) content. Featuring real-time encoding of SD, HD and UHD media, integrated high-quality branding and graphics, and reliable transport stream playout, Electra X offers content and service providers function integration and increased operational flexibility in a cost-effective appliance. The family includes the 1-RU Electra X2 for all SD and HD media processing applications, and the 2-RU Electra X3, designed specifically for UHD encoding and supporting formats up to 2160p60 (HEVC Main 10). Electra X boosts video compression efficiency across an extensive range of formats and codecs – including MPEG-2, AVC and HEVC codecs – over CSR, VBR and ABR encoding schemes, to support a broad array of devices from handhelds to UHD TV. It also offers audio functionality, including E-AC-3 and Jünger Level Magic audio level adjustment.

Exterity powers IPTV
Exterity will launch its new range of products to stream beyond traditional networks at CABSAT. Organisations increasingly look to expand the reach of their video communications beyond their internal IP network to ensure that remote staff, visitors and guests can access authorised video content on their personal devices across a wide range of networks, including the corporate wired LAN, Wi-Fi, WAN and the internet. Built on Exterity flexible professional IPTV systems, the new range of products facilitates the distribution of high-quality video content to Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) screens. The system caters for streams originating from all types of sources, such as cable, DTT, IP and satellite. Visitors to the Exterity stand at CABSAT will discover the new range of applications for the Middle East to deploy in streaming VOD and OTT.
Monetising multiscreen in the Middle East

The pay-TV market in the Middle East is one of the fastest growing markets. According to data from Digital TV Research, the number of pay-TV homes across MENA is set to double to 21.3m by 2020, by when pay-TV revenues in the region are set to grow by a staggering 75% to $5.6 billion.

Monetising multiscreen is not as easy as it may seem, and is no longer a case of simply extending services across multiple devices. With more viewing options than ever before, service providers need to know how to drive subscriber revenues throughout the whole customer lifecycle if they want to create profitable services that last.

So how do pay-TV providers create profitable services in the Middle East? First and foremost, a successful multiscreen strategy will have a streamlined process across devices for sign-up, billing and payment. With more viewers in the Middle East turning to connected devices, the first interaction a viewer is likely to have with a pay-TV brand is within an app downloaded from an app store, or via a market store on a games console. This means that subscriber management systems must understand the device profile, limitations and user authentication processes, as well as have the ability to validate a range of debit, credit and online payment systems.

Sign-up, billing and payment must also be tailored to a global audience. Whether it offers multiple currencies, pre- and post-pay models, local payment options, vouchers or e-wallets, the system must work in both international and local markets. And the viewer looking to pay on their tablet, smart TV app or web browser should have no idea of the complexity involved. The user interface should simply ask the comfortable validation questions associated with the payment method, and at the click of a button the viewer should be exposed to the wonderful world of content. But paying for the odd piece of content is not going to drive significant revenues for pay-TV providers, which means companies need to move from a TVOD to a SVOD business model, and will need a flexible system to support that. A SVOD model enables pay-TV providers to increase key metrics such as customer lifetime value, as well as ARPU.

Pay-TV providers also need to get more familiar with their consumers, with the aim of understanding exactly how they consume content and of using that knowledge to deliver services that consumers want. This is where actionable insights come into play. Having access to relevant and marketable subscriber data means pay-TV providers can fully understand their viewers and launch targeted campaigns based on what they are watching, when they are watching, and how they are watching. This is why more and more companies are looking to implement a data strategy. By collecting and analysing data, pay-TV providers can understand consumer behaviour across each platform, enabling them to effectively market to viewers through up-selling and cross-selling products, ensuring they retain subscribers, reduce churn and boost profits at the same time.

Individual personalisation is key to monetising multiscreen, and insights into subscriber data are playing a key role in this, giving pay-TV providers the opportunity to target customers on an individual level. Pay-TV providers also need to get more familiar with their consumers, with the aim of understanding exactly how they consume content and of using that knowledge to deliver services that consumers want.

Jonathan Guthrie is CEO of PayWizard.
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