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Television across screens – five things you need to know

A checklist for success, brought to you by: IBM Cloud Video

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Audience levels are over the top, video devices are multiplying and time devoted to viewing is at an all-time high. No wonder you're serious about enabling seamless video experiences across screens.

As you write your game plan for multiscreen video success, here are five critical issues to address:

1 Prepare your content the right way, each time

The challenge
Remember when all it took to prepare digital video was a couple of different media formats? Neither do we. In the new video environment, getting video to play and perform flawlessly over a wide constellation of devices and in synchronization with lots of multichannel video affiliates requires a complex interplay of file ingest, transcoding, content marking, quality assurance, metadata integration and Digital Rights Management (DRM) wrapping. It all has to accommodate massive video libraries with enterprise class performance. And there's more: You also need to get it done fast to take advantage of monetization plays including C3 advertising inclusion and prompt fulfilment of pent-up subscription demand.

The solution
Insist on a partner and a platform that are tightly aligned with the realities of video delivery preparation. Centralized systems, processes and workflows that accommodate rapid ingest, simultaneous preparation of multiple file renditions and, especially, the nuances and variations of metadata are essential.

Case in point: not everyone realizes large multichannel video providers require different approaches for virtually everything from character limitations on program descriptions to how poster art displays on the screen. Some want horizontal, some want vertical, some want .jpg files and some don't. Then there are device iterations, and lots of them: varying screen sizes, video resolutions and user interface controls multiply the number of renditions you need to prepare and optimize before your content ever gets planted on a server. Before your viewer presses "play," make sure your content is treated the way it deserves to be.

2 Prepare to cross over. And over

The challenge
Today's viewers demand seamless video experiences at the press of a button. Pausing a program on a tablet and resuming it on a smartphone or a connected TV set without a hitch or interruption is the given expectation of the online video consumer environment. Yet what appears simple to the user actually demands a complex orchestration on the back end. For instance, little do viewers know they're evoking an entirely discrete video stream each time they switch devices to resume a session. Achieving harmonious interplay among multiple video devices requires careful management of files, user requests, mobility environments and network knowledge. It's a "must" for participating in the online video world today.

The solution
Managing video for an expanding device array doesn't have to mean staffing up an entire video processing department. The smart solution is to let automation reign. Removing complexity by leveraging platform and workflow resources to deliver consistent, direct-to-viewer streaming experiences lets you focus on managing your content catalog, not operating your own video processing infrastructure. Intuitive, checklist-style setup menus that trigger behind-the-scenes preparation and processing for viewing environments you support make a huge difference in navigating a seemingly endless array of session and stream combinations in today's cross-media, cross-device world. Make sure you're armed with easy-to-use video management systems and you can be a step ahead in solving an essential demand of multi-device video streaming success.

3 Align your business strategy with your technology program

The challenge
Online video economics don't abide by a one-size-fits-all approach. Even within the same company, multiple monetization strategies and complex business models can prevail. Some types of content demand a direct user payment model. Others depend on optimum audience exposure to elevate advertising revenues. There are user authentication models that integrate with third-party billing databases, and

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there are targeted advertising approaches that require granular reporting of views, devices and demographics. It's important to build in support for multiple monetization strategies from day one. Because in online video, things change fast. And being tied to a limited economic model can be costly.

The solution
Make sure you work with a partner that has exposure and experience to multiple monetization approaches – and the processes to support them. Reliable mechanisms for integrating with multichannel video authentication systems are critical, for instance. So is the ability to instantly cross-reference authorization databases and integrate with leading verification platforms to make sure that access to premium subscription content is properly protected – and paid for. And if your business depends on advertising integration, it's critical to work with a partner that has experience in preparing your content to accommodate the injection of the right advertisement to the right viewer at the right time.

4 Get your content out there. Fast

The challenge
Getting video to play nicely in the crossmedia marketplace demands more than just creating multiple adaptive bitrate streams for varying network conditions and then hoping for the best. It requires intimate knowledge and established relationships with key content delivery networks and with multichannel video providers, so that the processes associated with dropping content onto optimal server locations or affiliate destinations happens automatically and seamlessly. Especially important is the need for speed: A suboptimal delivery network can mean your content waits, hidden and unseen, until network capacity finally catches up. In an environment where rapid access to content is essential, that can mean lost opportunity, and lost revenue.

The solution
Take advantage of modern data networking technologies that allow for multiple, simultaneous deliveries of your content to multiple destination points. A case in point: choosing a high-speed, terrestrial IP network over a satellite distribution alternative dramatically speeds up delivery time, getting your content into the marketplace without having to wait in queue. It's also important to choose a partner that knows how to play the field by packaging content for origin servers, publishing platforms and/or content delivery networks alike. That way, your content can find its way quickly to distribution points that optimize response times and translate to faster playback for consumers.

5 Know who's watching. And what's happening

The challenge
Online video makes it possible to apply sophisticated analytics techniques that the television world has not known before. What viewers watched, when they watched it, what device they watched it on and whether they applied pause, fastforward or other controls are just some of the components of online viewing intelligence your organization can put to use, if you're set up to track and evaluate them from the start.

The solution
Insist that your video solutions provider has experience integrating and interacting with leading analytics providers that can produce exactly the sort of information you and your business partners require. While you're at it, demand intuitive, responsive web-based tools that present captured intelligence about purchases, rentals, stream plays and more in a way that invites comprehension – and produces insights. IBM Cloud Video opens up new possibilities in multiscreen video delivery with a robust, built-for-scale platform that's carefully aligned with marketplace dynamics in a changing television environment. From managing multiscreen content to delivering direct-to-consumer video services, IBM has solutions that can work for you.

About IBM Cloud Video
IBM Cloud Video delivers reliable and scalable video streaming services globally. Combining robust video functionality and exceptional cognitive abilities, IBM Cloud Video provides one of the most comprehensive video offerings available today. For more information on IBM Cloud Video, please visit www.ibm.com/cloud/video.

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