



Creating Workflow Efficiency in a File-Based Domain

PLAZAMEDIA

The Challenge

PLAZAMEDIA, one of the leading full-service TV and new media providers in Europe, is Germany's largest producer of sports TV, and currently transmits 19 simultaneous channels as a 24/7 service. Looking to streamline their operations, while simultaneously allowing for easy expansion both in terms of number of channels and new delivery mechanisms, their challenge was to create a reliable and resilient platform that would provide the ability to work in a file-based mixed-format environment, effortlessly move content throughout the facility and provide seamless integration with other leading third-party applications. This new central facility, the PLAZAMEDIA "eCenter" needed to embrace state-of-the-art workflow solutions in order to satisfy all the challenges in achieving their goals.

The Solution

Having relied on scalable and highly reliable Spectrum media servers to satisfy their playout needs for a number of years, they knew when designing their new eCenter facility that Omneon was ideally placed to provide a range of products to enable the creation of a comprehensive and scalable platform to support future growth. Omneon partner – and solution provider – Netorium were contracted to oversee the design of the solution. In the resultant cutting edge design, the workflow is directed by a Media Asset Management system from Blue Order, playout control is managed by a Morpheus automation system from Pro-Bel, and edit requirements are handled by Avid editing systems. Bi-directional transfers between the Avid systems and the rest of the workflow are managed by a Medway system from Marquis Broadcast.

Incoming material is recorded on 4 multi-channel Spectrum media servers as IMX 50 material, in an MXF wrapper. The ingest of material is controlled by a Pebble Beach automation system under the direction of Blue Order. To facilitate the quick-turnaround requirement, the incoming material is immediately transferred to an Omneon MediaGrid, while the content is still being recorded on the Spectrum servers, using Omneon's "low latency MXF" capabilities. The use of low latency MXF and tail-mode FTP ensures that the content is available on the MediaGrid (and available for processing) as soon as possible, satisfying the low latency demands of applications such as sports production.

In parallel to this transfer, an Omneon ProBrowse system is used to create low resolution proxies of the material. These proxies are not only created while the media is still ingesting and stored on the MediaGrid, but are available to operators as recording occurs. Proxies are also used throughout the facility to enable operators to make editorial decisions about the incoming content and create edit decision lists that can be used to conform the high resolution material later in the workflow.

The IMX 50 material makes its way through the edit and packaging phases of the workflow, and the finished product is stored back onto the MediaGrid. The editing and packaging functions are handled by Avid editing systems, the transfer of material between the MediaGrid and Avid being directed by Medway.

As is true with many broadcast facilities, PLAZAMEDIA have selected a single house format for ingest, production and archive, and another more efficient long-GOP format for transmission. In the future, it is entirely possible that finished product may be delivered by PlazaMedia via some other mechanism, such as web and mobile devices, which will require selection of yet more different delivery file formats. This, coupled with the fact that some of the source content used at the eCenter is received via file transfer in formats other than PLAZAMEDIA's house format, means that bi-directional conversion between multiple file formats is an absolute requirement in the workflow.



SOLUTION AT A GLANCE

PLAZAMEDIA broadcasts 19 channels to air and is the largest producer of Sports-oriented programming in Germany. PLAZAMEDIA installed Omneon Spectrum media servers, MediaGrid active storage systems, ProBrowse and ProXchange as the central storage infrastructure of their new eCenter facility in Munich. Integrating this storage infrastructure with other best of breed management applications, they have created a solution which fills their current requirements, and allows them to continually grow their business as market conditions and delivery mechanisms change.

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■ CASE STUDY

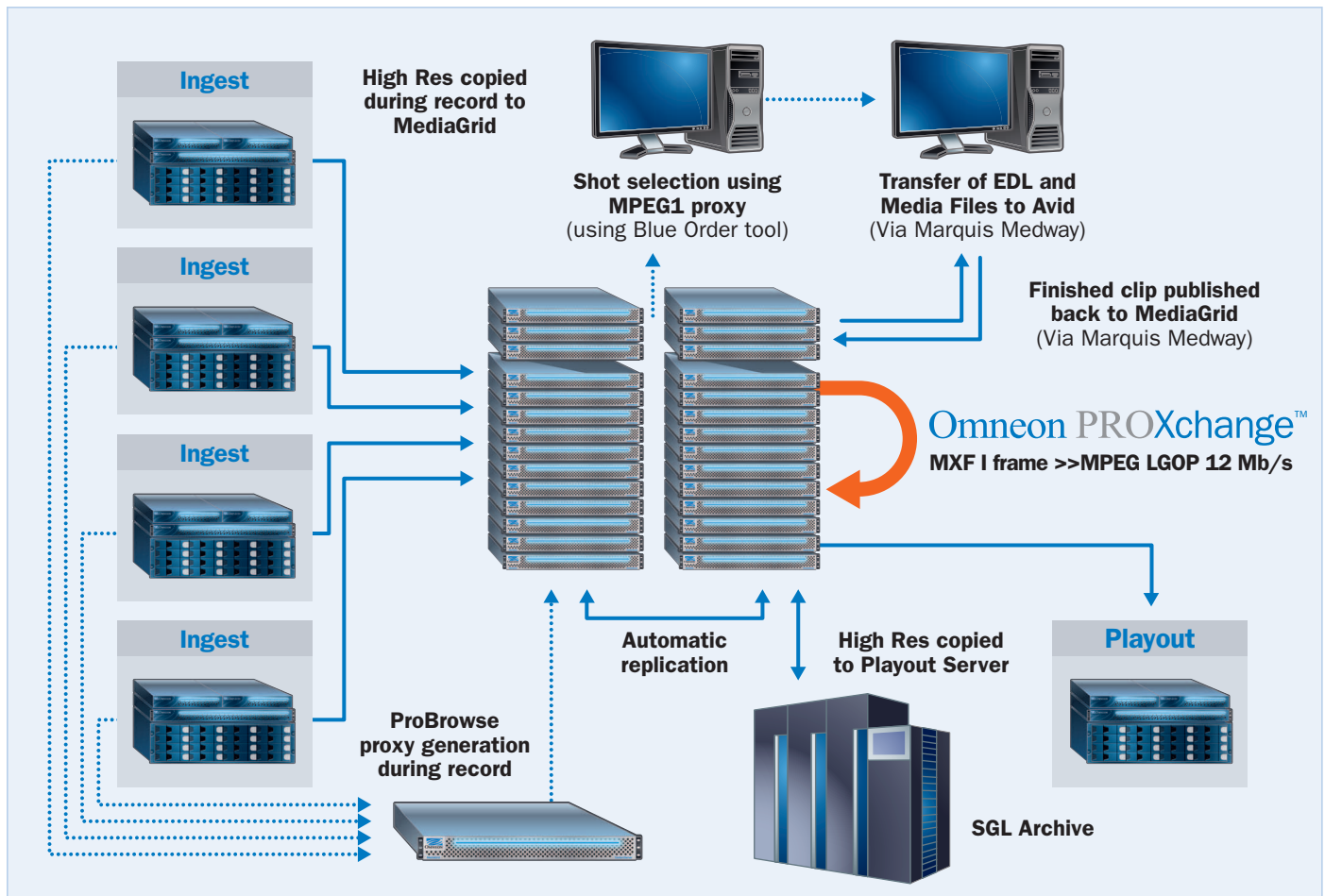
Since the speed of these transcodes has a fundamental impact on the end-to-end latency, PLAZAMEDIA looked for a solution for their broadcast requirements which offered high quality, low latency translation to and from multiple formats. To fit these requirements, PLAZAMEDIA has deployed a number of transcoding mechanisms, including ProXchange, the Omneon grid-powered transcode solution, for their file conversion needs. The ProXchange system utilizes the excess CPU capacity of the MediaGrid to perform the transcode functions. By capitalizing on the parallel processing capabilities of MediaGrid, and eliminating the need for network transfer of material to stand-alone transcode "farms", ProXchange eliminates the bottlenecks found in most transcode solutions.

The real-time playout duties of the system are handled by another set 4 Spectrum systems, under the control of a Pro-Bel automation system. Material is transferred from the central MediaGrid system to the playout servers over the network.

Omneon system APIs are used extensively in order to ensure a productive and coherent workflow. Blue Order uses the Omneon APIs for media management, the ProBrowse API to order the generation browse proxies, and ProXchange is also controlled and managed through its API. The use of these APIs ensures a level of integration which is not available through other legacy control methodologies.

The Result

The resulting system is a platform that enables PLAZAMEDIA to provide unrivalled service to their customers, and produce and manage content in a previously impossible way. Retaining all workflows in a purely file-based domain, their operators are able to work in the most efficient manner possible and are shielded from all complexities of the system. The improvements in efficiency in the workflow, enabled by Omneon's innovative products will provide additional benefits as those workflows expand to embrace new formats and delivery mechanisms. Omneon products continue to grow and adapt to this changing landscape, and PLAZAMEDIA can be confident in its ability to respond to the changing needs of their clients.



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