

A young man and woman are shown in a close-up, celebrating together. They are both smiling broadly and have their fists clenched in a gesture of triumph. The woman is on the left, wearing a blue and white plaid shirt. The man is on the right, wearing a white t-shirt and a brown jacket. They are looking at a tablet computer held by the man. The background is a soft, out-of-focus indoor setting. A large blue circular graphic is in the bottom right corner.

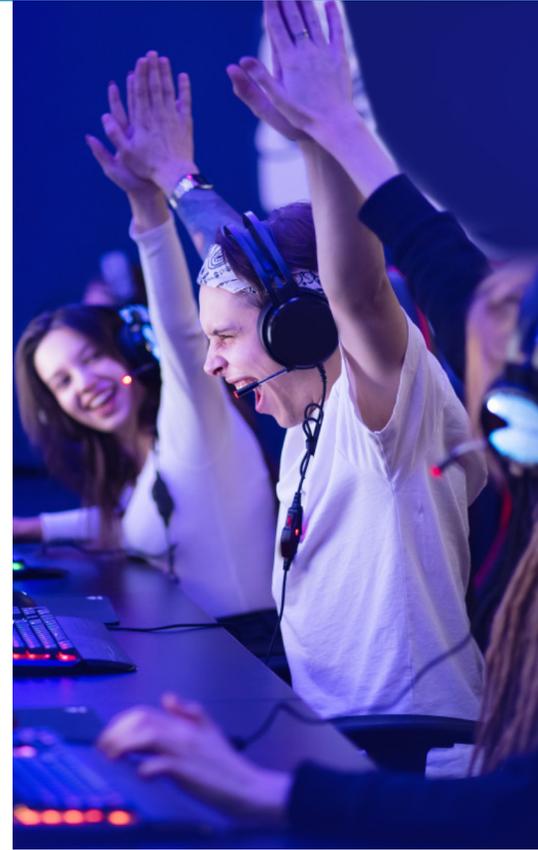
FAST channels usher in a new era of operational creativity

TV in the fast lane

In the face of unprecedented competition, media companies must find ways to innovate — but the cost of delivering content in an era of multiplying platforms is eating into their operations budget for trying new things.

FAST channels represent a significant new opportunity to test ideas, iterate — and bring in extra revenue. In fact, Digital TV Research reported the AVOD market FAST channels belong to represents the fastest-growing video segment over five years (2020–2024). But media companies can't afford to spend months and massive resources to take a channel from idea to launch.

Spinning up FAST channels using traditional TV workflows might mean months of preparation, from defining system requirements to ordering hardware and hiring additional staff. And, it requires significant capital outlay before the concept has proven its worth.



Even once the channel is established, it may take days to move the finished content through ingest, editing, encoding, dynamic ad insertion, content management, traffic administration, and final distribution.

Indeed, a single piece of content might touch a dozen siloed workflows before it reaches one consumer.

In a breakneck race for audience attention — and when a new OTT services for FAST channel launches seemingly every week — media companies are contorting themselves to deliver content how and where audiences want it. But they can't hire a new team and invest in new hardware systems for every new channel and requirement.

Using existing workflows to get the right content to the right platform and audience limits scalability, agility — and ultimately, revenue.

The competition is not going away, and it is not going to bend to media companies' needs. The traditional media organizations themselves must adapt.

IP-powered automation: A new paradigm for content management

Traditional hardware- and staff-intensive workflows that use fiber and satellite transport don't allow the flexibility to quickly add FAST channels. With inherent two-way data transfer capabilities and near-infinite scalability, IP represents a natural progression from satellite and fiber transport. But challenges from reliability to walled-garden technology have prevented IP from getting content — especially high-value live content — everywhere content owners need it to go.

Additionally, content processing runs through many disjointed systems: adding graphics, marking ad triggers and info, conditioning it for various platform requirements, and so on.

But there's a solution that streamlines the distribution and processing: an ecosystem model that links upstream and downstream processes, with connectors between the various services. This model requires an omniplatform vendor partner willing to:

- Develop open APIs
- Continually update support for different protocols, standards, and platforms
- Invest in an open-system approach with competitors across the ecosystem
- Build smart automation to eliminate manual tasks

Omnplatform connectors that provide openness and automation in processing and delivery — going deep on an ecosystem strategy — will allow content distributors to stay light on their feet. The LTN Ecosystem, which has been built around this need for open access, connectors, and automation, is one example.

The result will be that media companies can quickly take advantage of ever-changing viewing trends while implementing networked distribution systems that reach the desired audience on every screen with 24/7 reliability anywhere in the world.

Evolving toward a virtualized global infrastructure

With deep investments in proprietary technology and systems — and staff who know how to use them — media companies cannot simply transition to cloud-based workflows overnight. Many are skillfully navigating the transition by deploying hybrid cloud arrangements built on internet transport. These arrangements leverage customized software modules and components, or microservices, to manage the entire process of getting content from glass to viewing device. In doing so, they are finding new ways to leverage existing resources — on-premise hardware, software, and other physical gear — to drive more content to more platforms.

The devil in the details: Hybrid architecture for content management

New FAST channels can use cloud-based storage and fulfillment services, as well as integrated media asset management systems, to easily repurpose content from existing libraries and create new types of programming for online and mobile SVOD, AVOD, or linear consumption. Software-centric, tightly integrated platforms are natively designed to intelligently manage and distribute ad-supported video content — including dynamically inserted ads, closed captioning, and interactive program elements.

The key to benefiting from this infrastructure is understanding the right transport, storage, and processing solutions for different scenarios, like using public cloud solutions like AWS for their ability to scale live ingest quickly — albeit expensively.

The video chain stripped of inefficiencies

Systems engineers and operations teams need ways to manage a huge volume of metadata and content coming into their plants more efficiently, especially in the face of new opportunities and burgeoning complexity.

Automating important functions like transcoding, commercial insertion, captioning, and multiplatform distribution saves significant time and effort. In addition, it allows content owners to take control of monetization by inserting technical triggers that tell the platform exactly when to insert a commercial or program within a channel. A fully managed network — with its low latency and high reliability and scalability — enables seamless monetization.

When processing content across unified or streamlined origination or linear channels — that might include several versions of the same content for different distribution channels — the workflow starts at the beginning of the ingest process with systems like traffic, automation, and asset management solutions.

The signaling information (“here’s break one, here’s spot one, spot two, spot three, and here’s the content it has to be — or cannot be — combined with”) traverses the entire platform, along with the related audio and video files. Automating this will also help ensure content rights agreements, country or regional compliance demands, and security requirements are met every single time.

A connecting ecosystem has to work closely with various vendors to provide automated cross-platform compatibility. Given the ever-expanding requirements, media companies should strongly consider whether it makes sense to take on this never-ending work on themselves.

A user interface brings it all together

Perhaps the biggest task when designing any content delivery network — especially for demanding live news, sports, and entertainment workflows — is to create an easily accessible interface that everyone on the team can operate, most times simultaneously, no matter where they sit. Along with automation, the right interface brings ease-of-use and actionable visibility to enable media companies to compete like never before.

An interface should be designed to help different cloud environments and services talk to another, becoming the central point of the distributed workflow, like an orchestrator guiding content via many points of access and throughput.



Getting started

So, how do media companies deploy such a system? Most leverage what's available now, like public or managed IP, and add new automated processing features on top. A virtualized network helps keep risk low and the possibility for experimentation high while doing all of the multi-stage heavy lifting involved with content payout.

Increasing revenue and delivering a positive user experience to viewers means driving value from any source to every screen. To achieve both, content must be processed quickly and distributed at high quality. Leveraging omnichannel, omniplatform partners and managed IP transmission offers the full package.

From creation and acquisition through monetization and delivery, connecting the world with transformative video experiences makes content more valuable and relevant. But navigating this sea of channel delivery options requires operational ingenuity. Integrated, highly intelligent content management and delivery platforms can significantly reduce the time it takes to serve up content to new audiences. Faster time-to-market means everyone — media companies, distributors, and global audiences — wins.



LTN® Global is a worldwide leader in video technology solutions for producers and distributors of broadcast-quality content. Built on the world's fastest and most reliable IP multicast network, LTN's universal media ecosystem unites modular services and integrates with other leading technologies to bring full-video-chain workflows, driving scale from creation and acquisition to monetization and delivery.