limecraft

The Content Delivery Process Is Complex, Fractured and Requires Lots of Manual Intervention. There Is a Better Way.

A recent report published by the DPP[1] noted that broadcasters and streaming platforms can often be managing relationships with more than 700 content producers. In turn, content producers can be supplying media to over 500 broadcasters and platforms. Third-party agencies may also be involved in the process, supplying ancillary media such as trailers, press kits, stills and social media content. Add in the need for accurate metadata, subtitle files, language variants and consistent quality control standards, and it's no wonder that things can and do go wrong with the delivery process.

Producers and broadcasters have a common interest in standardising and structuring the delivery process to ensure quality, timely delivery, and to avoid rework. A more robust framework also helps cut down on all of the *ad hoc* emails, phone calls and communication that are inherent in the traditional process.

In response to this complexity and lack of structure, Limecraft has launched the **Delivery Workspace** – a new framework that provides greater security, robustness, and efficiency.

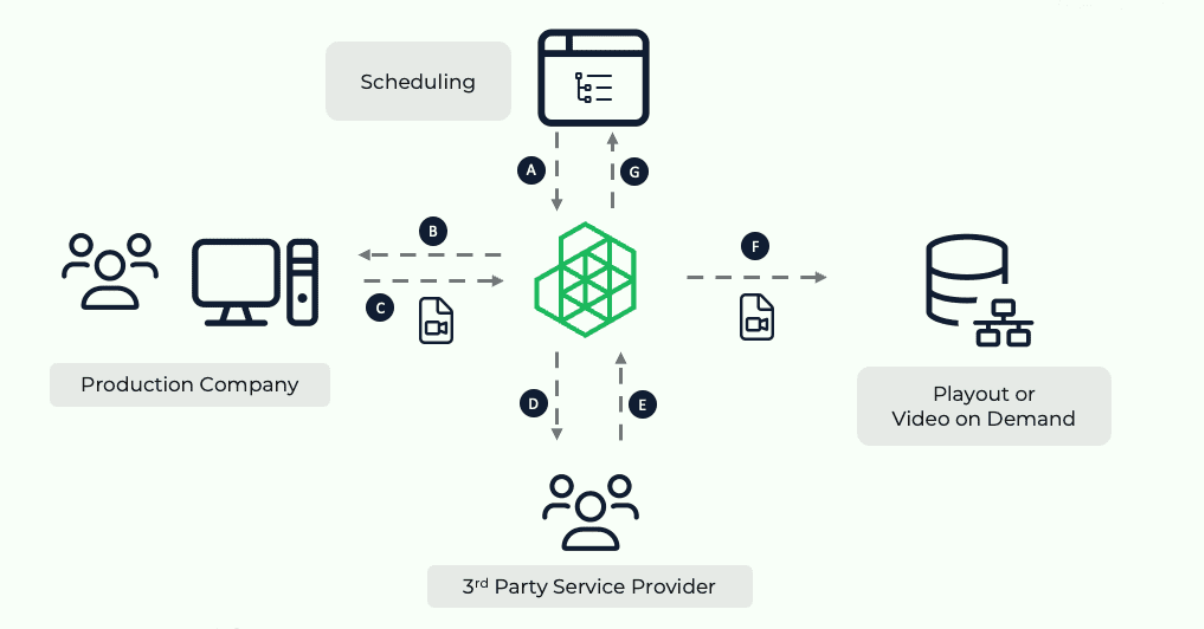
What is a Delivery Workspace?

A Delivery Workspace is a repository of media assets, operated jointly by a producer and a broadcaster, for the purpose of consistent, reliable, and timely delivery of programme material, metadata and collateral media.

The Delivery Workspace replaces FTP and other methods of file transfer on the lower level, creates a distributed ledger of metadata and integrates quality control. It takes care of the dispatching of content and reports to the traffic management system. Throughout the process, it manages overall version control and communication between stakeholders, including producers, broadcasters and any 3rd party service providers who interact.

The challenges of consistently managing content delivery are numerous. Shipping a series or a season of programmes is much more complex than delivering a single file, and it can take as long as the time for post-production itself. Apart from the actual assets, the broadcaster will ask for marketing collateral (e.g. posters, trailers, press kits, social media assets) and other deliverables (e.g. subtitle files, clean audio for localisation). In addition, parties must consistently communicate about and deliver metadata, and, due to a lack of standards, ensure they are using a common nomenclature (producers, genres, etc.). In some cases, the workspace needs to be accessible by third-party service providers delivering subtitles or promo materials.

By embracing a joint Delivery Workspace, producers and broadcasters stand to reap significant benefits. The platform's imposition and control of conventions leads to improved operational efficiency and the seamless exchange of content. More importantly, a standardised delivery process fosters an environment of trust and collaboration, where parties can focus on producing compelling content as they entrust the technical intricacies to a streamlined system.



The Delivery Workspace in Action

1. Before the process can be initiated, ingest/delivery templates are predefined. The definition comprises a Table of Content or Bill of Material including but not restricted to the actual content assets, visuals, press kits, subtitle files, their file format and content specification, as well as a metadata model supporting thesauri and mandatory fields.
2. As a starting point, content managers use their scheduling system to create a 'Delivery Request' based on a given delivery template. The Delivery Request is processed by Limecraft (A), thereby creating an empty collection ready for upload, and adding complementary metadata.
3. This collection is shared with a list of named users at the producer (B). As of this point, authorised crew from the producer can start delivering files, ancillary media, and metadata (C). All stakeholders are kept updated in real-time. Content can be verified online, and any feedback or comments exchanged instantly.
4. If necessary and defined by the template, or if not necessary but required by the verification process, the asset can be shared subsequently with any third party for further post-production (E). The same method applies for requesting complementary deliverables such as promo material or subtitle files. Any third parties will also

upload their deliverables to the already existing stack (F), whereby the completion of the delivery process is consistently managed and visualised to all involved stakeholders.

5. When the full collection is delivered, quality-controlled and approved by the receiving broadcaster, authorised staff instruct Limecraft to forward the collection to the respective delivery platforms, play out systems or archive repositories. Eventually the full transaction is committed to the scheduling system, thereby releasing the assets for distribution.

The Business Case

The primary business benefits of adopting a more formal content delivery framework can be summarised as follows:

1. Greater structure, which equates to improved scalability, with centralised metadata and material.
2. Improved security and peace of mind - understand exactly where your content is at each stage of the process and receive stakeholder notifications whenever changes are made.
3. Faster turnaround - a more structured process provides greater efficiency and shortens workflows, saving you time and money.
4. Improved quality control - mandated QC standards remove uncertainty and ensure content is delivered to the correct standard every time.
5. More efficient collaboration - a more structured framework removes the need for *ad hoc* emails and phone calls, improving communication, taking away uncertainty, and cutting out costly and frustrating rework.

Conclusion

As the content production and distribution landscape becomes increasingly intricate, with a multitude of sources and distribution windows, the delivery process has grown exponentially complex. The sheer diversity of file formats, metadata complications, and localisation demands underscore the need for a decentralised yet integrated approach. The use of a Delivery Workspace is critical in the dynamic realm of content production and distribution. A collaborative repository, jointly operated by producers and broadcasters, serves as a catalyst for consistent, reliable, and timely delivery of program material, metadata, and collateral media. The evolution from traditional file transfer methods to a distributed ledger of content ushers in a new era of efficiency, standardisation, and seamless interaction.

The key success factor for successful implementation is standardised collaboration. Conventional methods of *ad-hoc* data transfer and disjointed metadata exchange are giving way to a shared platform that enforces conventions and streamlines communication. Such a platform not only optimises efficiency, but in turn cultivates an environment of trust and cooperation, where creative output can flourish, and no time is lost on technical considerations.

To arrange a demo of the Delivery Workspace solution, please email us at contact@limecraft.com and we'll get in touch to arrange a suitable time.

[1] Supply Chain Today: The Key Insights. A summary report from the DPP Media Supply Festival, New York, 1-2 June 2023.