



Automating catch-up at CANAL+

It was important to CANAL+ that the new services also be available online and on mobile devices, as part of the company's aggressive multi-platform strategy.

CANAL+ is well established as the leading pay television service in the French market. In 2012 it was offered the opportunity to move into a new area, when two free-to-air channels became available on the French DTT platform. As part of its diversification and revenue growth efforts, CANAL+ took the opportunity.

The plan was to create a new building with all new infrastructure in a very short time scale in order to broadcast its three free-to-air channels: D8 and D17 which were acquired from Bollore group, and i>TELE a channel which already existed in the CANAL+ Group. The objective was to be on air with the rebranded channels by the end of the year, before the opening of new frequencies in the French DTT and the associated launch of new channels by competitors.

This was a challenging timescale, as the slots were not put on offer until April 2012, with commercial agreement in July and regulatory approval in September. The team successfully achieved an on-air date in December.

Today, getting channels on air is just part of the overall mix. It was important to CANAL+ that the new services also be available online and on mobile devices, as part of the company's aggressive multi-platform strategy. So the content had to be prepared for a VOD catch-up service.

"We needed to generate four different H.264 outputs, plus HLS (which is also four files) for Apple devices and others, and an MPEG-2



Charles Lesoil, project manager at CANAL+

transport stream,” explained Charles Lesoil, project manager at CANAL+. “We needed to strip out commercial breaks for the online version, do some content replacement where needed for rights management, and we wanted to insert logos and PG ratings where required.”

“I have been to IBC twice and NAB once and have not found any other company who can do this.”

This was a challenging encoding task, bundled with complex additional processing, which needed to be implemented within an automated workflow, and all to be achieved in a very tight timescale. “Virtualisation was the solution,” Lesoil asserted. “We did not have the time for anything else.”

Lesoil found the solution in the Telestream Vantage® platform, running on Lightspeed® Servers for maximum productivity, with live content by Telestream Pipeline encoding appliances. “I have been to IBC twice and NAB once and have not found any other company who can do this,” Lesoil said of his choice of Telestream.

CANAL+ needed to encode the station output, stripping out the commercial breaks and building the content into a single file per program. “Users do not want to click on each part of a program,” Lesoil observed. “Therefore, we needed frame-accurate control of the encoding process for each part. And, we needed something that could be implemented in a single solution.”

One way Telestream made this project practical is that its “TIFO” file format incorporates markers into the growing file created in the Pipeline encoder. CANAL+ uses these markers to tell the Vantage transcoders whether to include the content in the final output files. The ingest part of the process at CANAL+ runs 24/7, with the markers imported from the playout automation turning the transcoders on and off.

“We have a daily live talk show, Touche Pas à Mon Poste, which runs from 18.30 to 20.30 with three commercial breaks,” Lesoil offered as an example. “We have that online, without commercial breaks, as a single

file, by 21.00 every night without any human intervention,” a remarkable achievement, but just part of the productivity of the Vantage system.

Lesoil made the point that while Telestream Pipeline comes with a user interface, no-one at CANAL+ ever needs to use it. The encoders are running 24/7, looking for start and stop markers delivered by the SGT automation system through a simple web services API command.

As well as encoding live programming for catch-up services, the same platform creates around 20 hours a day of VOD content from packaged programming. This can be planned in advance, with the content released at the right moment. Vantage adds a wide range of content production functionality, such as logo insertion, trimming, and resizing as an inherent part of the transcoding processes.

The Vantage system also provides the management of media file exchange between Dalet, Avid, Omneon, Grass Valley K2 servers, and more. Lesoil underlined the power of the Telestream integration by saying, “When you have three months to make the channel work and vendors do not want to talk to each other, you get Vantage to talk to them.”

“When you have three months to make the channel work and vendors do not want to talk to each other, you get Vantage to talk to them.”

The transcoding platform is also available for other file conversion tasks, for instance bringing in content from the web or from specialist cameras. “We have a car show, Direct Auto, that shoots all week with five HD GoPros, finishing at 19.00 on a Friday night,” he said. “We have all the content converted to DNX 120 HD and checked into Avid Interplay, ready to start editing on Saturday morning.”

Workflows like the GoPro ingest, or content moves from say Dalet to Avid, are managed with simple drag-and-drop control. That, in turn, has spawned new creative workflows, for instance ingesting YouTube videos directly into Avid using the Vantage network.

“...Telestream provided excellent support and working with them was very beneficial for CANAL+.”

Given that the contract was signed on 17 October for an on-air date before the end of the year, progress had to be very fast. Remarkably, according to Lesoil, there were “two installation phases of three and five days.” That provided time to develop the workflows, using the system’s intelligence to use advanced logic based on the metadata, thereby reducing the number of different workflows for simplicity and reliability.

Asked for the lessons learned from the project, Lesoil pointed out that the right infrastructure is critical – he was able to build a 10Gb/s fabric. He also asserted that storage is key, so making sure content could be tracked, particularly when moving from different environments, was vital.

Finally, he noted that some of the less complex workflows proved to be the more demanding in performance, so ensuring you have planned the network for capacity and scalability is also important.

“Multi-screen delivery is the key to an efficient channel launch,” Lesoil concluded. “We were pioneers with the Vantage and Pipeline product combination, but Telestream provided excellent support and working with them was very beneficial for CANAL+.”

Learn More

Visit our website: www.telestream.net

Contact us at info@telestream.net or call

+1.530.470.1300

