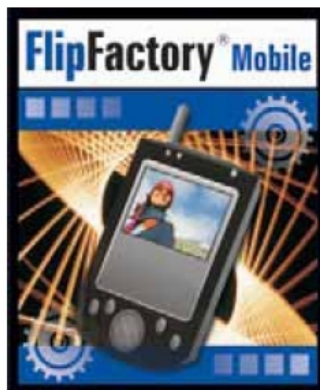


Getting the process right

Mobix Interactive has come a long way since it was founded in 2001. The company lays claim to being the first outsourced video service in the UK, and sends over 500,000 video clips to mobile subscribers around the world. Without the correct process automation software it is almost certain that it would not be able to do this as effectively as it does.

The journey for Mobix Interactive in the mobile TV arena has not been achieved without a deft and substantial investment in the appropriate technology. As the company has expanded it realised that not only did it have to have the necessary aesthetic and visual acumen, it also had to streamline its processes in order to improve the efficiency at which it could satisfy the demands of the network operators and content owners with whom it does its business.

Essentially, Mobix makes made-for-mobile content for mobile network operators and for content owners provides licensed content and new revenue streams. It also has a direct to consumer offering which preserves the media owner's brand and creates a close relationship between the consumer and the media property. The company acts as an aggregator of content which arrives in a number of different formats such as satellite, FTP and digibeta. Mobix's customers include operators such as O2 for whom it does mobile video production, delivery and encoding with reporting systems embedded within the technology.



It also has business to consumer customers such as Arsenal football Club, 118 118 and BBC Properties.

As a standard, Mobix offers downloading or streaming of assets, but from June 2006 it has been marketing a new platform that it says introduces technological firsts for clip delivery by offering features such as time delayed asset delivery and pre-set shelf life for content; state of the art digital rights management (DRM); intelligent content adaptation and device optimised rendering; and real time dynamic feed translation to support diverse operator systems.

Mobix says that its

proposition is to create value from video content in the mobile space, which offers a lot of potential says operations Director Rob Grant. Grant believes that the key is understanding what people want and not to try to replicate a 'normal' TV experience. Grant says: "The mobile phone is not the sort of thing that you want to sit around and watch TV like you do at home; it's for more bite-size stuff that - you'll never watch a feature film from mobile phone. But you might watch 25 minutes of [soap operas]. I don't believe that a full TV experience replicated on a mobile phone will be the full winner. I think that bespoke content delivered in a TV style will be more the thing."

Grant also rails against the truly speculative approach that some are advocating in the mobile TV space which he calls a 'let's throw everything at the wall and see what sticks' approach. He is a prime believer in creating a bespoke made for mobile experience. The key for Grant is a fundamental understanding of the medium and its limitations: acceptable mobile TV content is based on close-up shots; not too much movement; no fast zooms or whip pans, or anything that really will just break up on the screen. Grant outlines the job: "[It's about] making a nice steady easily available, easily palatable version of the content with the right shots in the right place."

But the process of making such content is rather complex. It may be the case that for one particular video stream, Mobix may have to make copies of it in up to 16 different formats; that

includes versions with different bit rates, different streams for downloads, and in different standards such as Real Media, Windows media etc.

As Mobix's business grew, so did the pressure placed on it by the operators and content owners that it serves. It saw great advantage in being able to take one clip, transcode it, make whatever changes were needed and then produce all of the required versions and to distribute it. All without having to manually interact with each and every different version.

There was no real tipping point, says Grant, just a realisation that the company had to look at technology to improve the automation process. "As we grew we took on more producers to meet the demand for content. Also we took on people with experience in specific areas, such as extreme sports, where they could bring to the table their sensitivities to edit that content. We have specialists in all manner of areas but to bring on more content your need to encode grows; and you need to do that in an automated fashion rather than do that manually."

After a search involving an investigation into a number of solutions Mobix decided to base its automation on Telestream's FlipFactory Mobile, a file-based content repurposing automation solution for mobile distribution markets. With the software, source media and metadata files can be automatically ingested and transcoded to a variety of mobile video, audio, metadata and wrapper formats, ready for

delivery to distribution servers and then to mobile users.

Explains Grant, "The one thing that computers are good at is doing the stuff that needs to get out of door quickly. From an aesthetic point of view, the producers can concentrate on making the best clip that they possibly can have to make without worrying about the type of format or where it has to go. They can just concentrate on making a great clip the best way they can, and then just deliver that. FlipFactory Mobile takes care of who gets what, when."

FlipFactory Mobile is one of a number of systems in use by Mobix who uses several different solutions for different jobs in different ways. However it is true to say the FlipFactory Mobile is at the core of production and delivery to mobile platforms, purely and simply, says Grant, because it is versatile, it does what Mobix wants it to do right out of the box and without too much work on Mobix's part in terms of handling the profiles in and creating fit for mobile content.

Like with all software installations, Mobix encountered one or two teething problems in deploying FlipFactory Mobile but these, assures Grant, were nothing insurmountable and did not detract from the software being part and parcel of the company's substantial technology armoury. Says Grant: "We have a broadcast quality production studio with 18 seats of Final Cut Pro churning

out video all day long so it was more a question of [we needed] to build a studio in double quick time to get stuff out the door. FlipFactory Mobile was one of thing that we'd use and it [was just a] question of bedding down the entire system. FlipFactory Mobile was one of the things that we could take out of the box, plug into the system and set up the factory quickly and be productive pretty much straight away."

But Mobix can't afford to install technology for technology's sake and the automation solution had to deliver value. Of the lessons learned in making the deployment of FlipFactory Mobile, Grant concedes that he initially underestimated the amount of

horse power needed to produce the amount of clips that the company produced using FlipFactory Mobile running on HP servers. Once the problem was recognised, he felt able to get the best from a future addition. "We introduced a second FlipFactory Mobile in to the factory and had [the two automation solutions] load balanced and clustered and that improved the speed of production no end. We would have done that from the outset; the only thing was to improve the horsepower."

Such horsepower will be essential to drive the future offerings as Mobix comes to terms with not only added content work from the traditional operators but also the significant

increase in user generated content. Another issue that will occur in the future is a move from working on a revenue sharing basis with clients towards a more advertising-driven model. That is great news for a company like Mobix says Grant. The significant future development is a solution called Shoot and Share' from which people will be able to shoot a mobile clip once and then share to friends and families or whomever via buddy list regardless of what network the people are on regardless of the size of the clip etc.

Supporting such a feature will mean more work for Mobix but Rob Grant gives the impression of being confident that the tools he has are more than up to the task.

The technology challenges for content repurposing

"Auto repurposing is what we do," is how Telestream President and Chief Operating Officer David Heppel rather succinctly and purposefully describes what his company does for those involved in getting content fit for purpose in the mobile.

President and COO. Heppel reveals that at present mobile solutions currently form just less than 10% of the Workgroup and Enterprise Solutions business that he heads, yet he knows that this will change as mobile grows.

Of all the different areas which he is responsible for, mobile presents Heppel's team with some particular challenges, especially in terms of standards. He says, "right now there's a challenge technically as there are so many different formats and standards to work to." Heppel believes that this is a problem issue that will exist for the next three years but ultimately companies like his will have to make decisions as to what to work with. "We want to try and be compatible with [every format]

but there are some things that you just can't do".

That said, Heppel exudes confidence of addressing the issues in what will be an expanded and more challenging market as his company provides solutions not only in the telecoms space but also for those providing DVB-H services and other broadcast mobile content. The other key differentiator says Heppel will be developing products that make best advantage of meta data.

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