

Contingency During Contagion

By Phil Sandberg.

RESPONDING TO THE COVID-19 Pandemic and customer requests, Ideal Systems has launched a cloud-based broadcast platform for Disaster Recovery and Business Continuity.

According to James Taylor, Head of Cloud Solutions with the Ideal Systems Group, "How the DR solution came about was we were seeing a lot of need for disaster recovery in the market, especially just after COVID time. We'd also seen a general need and an identification of Cloud DR as being the first logical step to take in a transition into the more cloud-based workflow and a cloud-based ecosystem. We'd already been looking at this as an easy path to entry - especially for our Asian customers - where we'd seen a lot more caution with the uptake of cloud compared to Europe and America. There have been some things that have been very successful, of course, the OTT platforms being launched in Asia that have become huge and generated a lot of revenue. And archiving, things like DIVA Cloud, several companies have moved to take advantage of those solutions. But more general-purpose cloud platforms and more adventurous, shall we say, uses of cloud, people had stayed away from."

The Ideal Systems platform offers three quickly deployable services:

- The first service is cloud-based automation and playout for live linear broadcast TV channels. The system which can be remotely deployed and operated allows operators to run their TV channels with all of their branding, graphics, subtitles, languages and SCTE triggers in SD, HD or 4K and deliver these channels to DVB-S, T, IPTV or to other platforms.
- The second service is a low latency bandwidth efficient multi-viewer which provides the remote monitoring for Program Control Rooms, Master Control Rooms or Studio Galleries that can be operated securely off-site from the broadcast facility. It supports multiple operators in multiple locations thus enabling the physical distancing as recommended by the WHO in a situation where access has been restricted to any of a broadcasters control rooms.
- The third service is a remote live studio workflow that enables the quick setup of offsite or remote studios for the situation where access to TV studios becomes restricted. Full studio operating functionality is created using cloud-based NDI infrastructure that enables remote camera operation, all signal mixing, processing and routing for video, audio, graphics, multi-viewers, and distribution over SRT.

The Ideal DR platform is cloud agnostic and can be deployed in the customer's choice of provider such as AWS, Tata or Alibaba Cloud. The end-to-end platform is based on Ideal's own cloud integration fabric which has been pre-integrated for speed of delivery with best of breed solutions from BCNexxt, Sienna and Caton. Ideal supplies the platform as a rapid turnkey solution with all

of the bridges and adaptors for content, signals, schedule files, graphics and data in to and out of the physical world to the cloud.

Those best-of-breed solutions include:

- BCNexxt's VIPE is a virtualised cloud-based publishing ecosystem for both linear and non-linear content. VIPE manages multi-channel operators and service providers' IP channel playout as well as their OTT and VOD deliveries. Being virtualised, there is no fixed relation between number of streams that are published (in either linear, OTT or VOD) and the number of physical servers that are needed.
- Sienna.Cloud for NDI allows users to get content to and from the cloud over private or public connections, with manageable bandwidth, low latency and high reliability. Sienna NDI's module-based Processing Engine allows users to build complete signal chains in the cloud using Sienna.Cloud NDI Contributions, other IP stream contributions, and connectivity to other NDI based software running in the same cloud. NDI Processing Engine also allows users to build Multiviewers to visualise large numbers of sources, then download the Multiviewer as an NDI Stream via Sienna.Cloud. The platform also includes a vision mixer module. Meanwhile, Sienna NDI Router allows for remotely controlled IP Video routing within a cloud-based system.
- Caton provides secure transport solutions for video. The company's solutions include Reliable Real-Time Transport Protocol (R2TP) and Fast Files Transfer Protocol (F2TP) technologies.

"The basic idea of our cloud platform is we're a system integrator," says James Taylor. "We want to help our customers find the products that fit their workflows the best, that give them the optimal priced performance for their budgets rather than just try and sell them a single vendor solution or just provide the easiest solution for a use case.

"The first thing we started doing was ditching the cloud sales approach and we went back to representing signal flows and topologies as a traditional broadcast system, leveraging Sienna and BCNEXXT to sort of give a very traditional visualised interpretation of that signal flow, which is much more graspable for broadcasters."

The Ideal Systems integration platform brings all functionality into a single platform with a single dashboard.

"If I move to an à la carte solution which has got seven products, I've got seven different UIs to learn, seven different support teams to contact, seven integration layers to go wrong," says James Taylor. "Well, we basically give that single platform type experience. I've got a single user management. I've got a single sign on. I've got a single set of backups I need to do.

"As an SI, we will deal with that integrations bit, that communications bit, give you that dashboard, that single sign on entry point to your system, but it's still your system, still your



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Ideal Systems Group.**

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licences, not our SaaS, it's your infrastructure. We've just helped wrap that up into what we call a bespoke platform experience."

Meanwhile, at the back end, the platform renders ahead, cutting down on processing and delays in the cloud.

"So, if I want some subtitles, some audios, I need it muxed together, I need to deliver it - our solution does that stuff out of the box," says Taylor. "Because it doesn't have down streaming coding, it renders ahead. Stuff like QC, DVB subtitles, audio, it's kind of already solved. A lot of that complexity of doing that stuff in the cloud has already gone.

"In terms of DR, within a few hours we can have the system spun out And, if you can give us a playlist, we can start to get basic content and a logo up really quickly. Then we can backfill the detail.

"You've still got that experience of a vendor pre-defined platform, the big traditional MAM, playout, and live TX systems, you've still got that kind of single UI experience as much as possible, the single point of contact, single dashboard, single logging point, all those good things.

"For us to take that to a DR scenario was the natural step, where infrastructure is code, we've got all of the integration layers all around it so that we can very quickly hook into the sources we might need to make that integration step, which is always the thing that people overlook in DR. It's not about the technology anymore. It's about how do I hook these technologies into the business?"

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