

How to Launch a Custom Dynamic Live Linear Channel in Minutes

By Luke Durham, CTO, Switch Media

As we all know, online video consumption has grown massively around the world across the last decade or so. But it's not all a bed of roses. Across the OTT space there have been ongoing questions around the quality of the end user experience, especially when it comes to live linear channels and matching the excellence of a broadcast service. Questions have also remained largely unanswered as to how to monetise OTT services via a seamless and targeted ad experience, while also satisfying the all-important experience for the viewer. This can all be wrapped up under the banner of maximising the monetisation of existing services and content across the online space while satisfying the needs of viewers in a highly competitive market. At Switch we've been developing applications that allow service suppliers and content owners to answer these questions for more than a decade. But how? A key challenge has been to create solutions that allow content owners to easily launch custom and dynamic live linear channels in minutes, personalising the entire channel, including the

ads. How can this be achieved? By taking assets from an existing VOD library and generating a linear channel from the data. We've removed the need for re-ingesting, linear encoding or additional complex playout solutions; they simply use a set of metadata to generate the channel. VOD2Live, which we launched in August, is the result. Using a content owner's existing library of VOD assets, VOD2Live creates a broadcast-equivalent channel with no need for playout software, live video encoding or to re-ingest the media. This greatly simplifies video delivery workflows, lowers costs and reduces time to market while making the channels more personal for viewers with programming and ads based on viewer location, demographics or viewing behaviour. The idea for VOD2Live arose from Switch Media's Server-Side Ad Insertion (SSAI) technology 'AdEase', which centres on stitching ads and media content together on-the-fly to create high-quality, seamless, targeted ad insertion. Recently, we have seen SSAI technology garner increased press coverage and for good

reason. With it, broadcasters and content owners can significantly increase OTT revenues while not just maintaining but enhancing the viewing experience. Switch Media worked diligently on AdEase, positioning it as a revenue-enabling middleware that helps shift the dial towards things like addressable advertising whilst improving the user experience. VOD2Live is another example of this; it reduces the cost and effort involved in creating new channels tailored for different regions, demographics or viewer groups. For example, a broadcaster may have an existing live linear channel with encoding and playout for local areas. They may have rights to launch channels in other countries but a limited budget to do so. VOD2Live allows them to leverage their existing investment in their on-demand media workflows and apply that to linear channels for different markets. VOD2Live can be used to leverage the investment of an existing live linear channel by broadening distribution to other markets. This can be done quickly and easily, without investing in

additional playout software and live video encoding. With it, content owners can test new offerings like regional, time-shifted and culturally targeted programming, with relevant audio and subtitle tracks. They can also examine personalised channels based on genre, viewer preferences or a feed from an existing recommendation engine. Because of the low cost and fast delivery to market, VOD2Live allows content owners to be experimental; they can target niche markets without having to invest in large infrastructure. They can also test content that might be slightly unusual by putting it out into the market for a few weeks and removing it if it doesn't gain traction. VOD2Live isn't just a product for broadcasters. Taking the education sector as an example, schools and universities can create personalised programmes within a channel that's tailored to specific subjects and courses taken by students. The leisure industry is another potential market. Cruise ships can tailor their content based on cabin class and can use the ship as an ad server for local businesses at every port. As



the ship approaches the port, those businesses can promote their wares to different demographics within the 5,000 passengers onboard. Switch Media is also currently looking into a public service announcement concept. There are hundreds of bushfires every year in Australia, and by using VOD2Live, Switch Media can offer a personalised service that allows potentially life-saving fire information to be broadcast to residents with a voiceover provided by a well-known figure or celebrity. This concept has been shown to make people more aware of the danger and to leave their properties. We are allowing content

owners and service providers to think differently and to be able to take advantage of technologies that maximise the power and flexibility of online video delivery. Our focus is to support our customers through what is a rapidly evolving market by offering innovative technologies that they can use to truly maximise their assets and be competitive.

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