

Closing doors on content theft



Protecting assets has always been a vital part of the entertainment delivery world, and content owners are no less concerned about it in the digital era than they have been since the days when someone could walk out of a facility with a master in physical form. *Digital2Disc* has been talking to a variety of companies in the industry – content owners and their vendors – about their personal and business takes on content security. In this issue, we talk to **PAUL CHESNEY**, VP of International Operations for Universal, who found security with a range of accreditation programmes for vendors.

Universal is somewhat unique among studios in that it was the first studio to start mandating that its suppliers work towards accreditation in the CDSA (Content Delivery and Storage Association) content protection programmes. It was, said Chesney, a “no brainer” once he sat down and assessed the issue of security throughout the entire content chain.

“Every studio takes content theft and piracy very seriously, and that comes all the way down from the top here at Universal where the head is very passionate about making sure that we protect our content. That meant rethinking our supply chain all the way along and trying to see if there were any holes. When I looked at the international landscape, I realized that there was no common standard of content protection across the entire supply chain,” he pointed out.

“While there are regular audits, which are good, studios use their own firms, which can take the temperature of the chain at any time but for a real ongoing view of the security of a facility, there needs to be something more. We wanted to see if there was an international standard in the UK we have FACT but that is not international. We looked at what was already in place and it snowballed from there.”

What was already in place was the CDSA, and Chesney turned to that organization, which, he said “appeared to offer the best possibility” of a standard with its independent audit certification system and related family of international standards. “We worked with them to roll a programme out so that anyone who handles new pre-release assets for us would be accredited.”

While it was voluntary for vendors, “We would eventually like to see everyone signing up,” he said. “The relationship for accreditation, of course, is between the vendor and the CDSA but the CDSA is in a position to advise us of any non-compliance issues. In addition, we will check a facility ourselves occasionally.”

Though not in a position to comment on what other studios might be doing along the same lines, said Chesney, “We see it as very important for the home entertainment industry, including games and music, and I know at least parts of those industries have been very keen on this kind of initiative.”

In Issue 2 of *Digital2Disc*, we reported on ‘The Italian Job’ which was an initiative begun by Stefano Goy of Italy-based GD Packaging (the first packaging company in the world to gain CDSA content protection accreditation) to drive forward a unified group of suppliers in Italy. “The market needs to interact with structures that have operating standards at the same level, and customers need to have a choice of vendors who are all compliant with these security programmes,” Goy told the magazine at the time. Was that the kind of thing that Universal is hoping to see in the industry?

“Anything that shows initiative for vendors to sign up to a programme and work together is a good thing,” said Chesney, “as it shows that they appreciate the fact that it is of commercial value. When companies can show their clients that they take pre-release material seriously and intend to handle it responsibly, it can work as a badge of honour.”

Is there any resistance to something that may not be technically mandated, but clearly is pretty important for anyone wanting to work with Universal? Not really now, Chesney felt, though there was resistance from some vendors in the beginning.

“The cost, for instance, can be a challenge but we encouraged the CDSA to work with our vendors to put together a package. That was vital for us: one vendor may be a single-facility company with half a dozen rooms and they won’t have the budget that a multi-national, multi-facility company will have. It is important to have a programme that can be tailored for all vendors – there is no point mandating something to suppliers if the cost is prohibitive for some.”

Now, he added, not only has any initial resistance been largely overcome, vendors are now beginning to approach Universal to find out how they should

go about getting accreditation. “We are at the stage where just about all of our vendors are accredited, or if they are not actually certified, they are well on their way,” Chesney said. “It takes time to get this kind of thing set up fully.”

Has it been successful? “That’s something that’s difficult to measure but no news is good news! We have closed doors and prevented some opportunities for content theft, and there have been no obvious leaks. We have been very, very pleased with our suppliers across the international landscape and we are pleased that our vendors have worked with us on this.”

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DEGE leadership changes

The **DIGITAL ENTERTAINMENT GROUP EUROPE** (DEGE) recently announced two leadership changes. Don Hunton, executive vice president, Europe at Paramount Home Entertainment International, has been named as the group’s new chair while Jonathan Beardsworth, vice president of sales and marketing for Europe, Technicolor, will serve as vice chair.

“I’m honoured to have been chosen by my peers to serve as the DEGE board chair, and look forward to an incredibly productive year,” said Hunton. “Our focus will be on tackling key industry challenges by offering a broad, pan-regional perspective and assisting the ongoing efforts of regional organizations.”

“The DEGE has been gaining momentum since its inception and I’m pleased to accept the newly created role of board vice chair,” commented Beardsworth. “With many exciting initiatives afoot, I look forward to working with Don, the board and our subcommittees to expand and elevate our work across the industry and across the region.”

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