

**M+E**

**JOURNAL**

# WHAT'S NEXT?

An M&E industry that's learned to adapt and excel after a year like no other, for one

## **LOCALIZATION**

Dubbing from home is a work in progress

## **SECURITY**

How to beat piracy and secure your business during a pandemic

## **SMART CONTENT**

The new ways content players are using data to connect with consumers

## **NEW WORKFLOWS**

Adopting the latest tools fuels a successful change to remote work

20.02





# HOW TO WIN AGAINST PIRACY IN THE PANDEMIC ERA

Combatting pandemic-driven, industrial-scale piracy with an intelligence-first approach

By Avigail Gutman, VP, Intelligence, Security Operations, Synamedia

**ABSTRACT:** Before COVID-19, piracy in North America cost video service providers \$4 billion-plus annually. Now, piracy is growing rapidly and pirates' tactics are evolving. To address current and future security needs and to combat industrial-scale global streaming piracy, the industry must shift anti-piracy strategies from 'technology augmented by intelligence' to intelligence-led models.

Before the pandemic, piracy in North America was costing video service providers more than \$4 billion yearly as a result of 7.5 million households reportedly accessing pirated content. Enter 2020 and COVID-19, and those piracy numbers are increasing as demand for content grows and pirates' tactics evolve. During the pandemic, three in four TV viewers admitted to streaming more in light of the virus, and 42 percent of subscribers have shared or received a password since the spread of COVID-19.

Illegitimate services are becoming more sophisticated, so much so that consumers may not even know they are paying for illegal access to content — and if they do, they might not necessarily care if they're paying less per subscription than they would for a legitimate service. In fact, according to recent global surveys, more than half of sports fans regularly consume sports content from pirated services, and almost a third of those using illegal sites have knowingly paid for them.

While this spike in piracy is relatively unsurprising given the increased demand for content, Synamedia, the world's largest independent video software provider, observed some interesting changes in behavior and tactics from video pirates, including an assumption of mutual responsibility among groups selling credentials or illegal services. Some groups engaging in piracy even launched promotion-

al sales during stay-at-home orders, and others experienced service disruptions such as shortage of content — similar to what happened across legitimate sites.

The increased level of sophistication in pirate services and resilience from criminal actors has led to an industrialization of video piracy which has established cybercriminals as not just threats, but competitors to the legitimate players. This means video services and content owners need to do more than just stop the distribution of pirated content — they need to proactively fight the illegitimate organizations which profit from piracy.

### PAINTING A BIGGER PICTURE TO DISRUPT PIRATE ECOSYSTEMS

Traditional preventative video security offerings today prioritize short-term fixes over long-term effectiveness. To get to the root causes of piracy and stay one step ahead of often sophisticated and resilient criminal enterprises, video providers and content owners need to adopt a much more strategic approach and long-term view.

In response to constantly evolving pirate tactics and in an effort to stay ahead of pirates, Synamedia's security practice launched a new intelligence-first security model focused on eradicating streaming pirates' businesses and protecting legitimate providers' revenues. In an industry first, this data-led model is also able to measure the efficacy and ROI of anti-piracy initiatives.

The new security model features a continuous monitoring and managed service that is equipped with watermarking and other smart agents embedded in the headend and/or client devices as well as a cloud-based set of dashboards that incorporate intelligence to help understand credential sharing and fraud activity across customer user bases. Furthermore, in order to determine the most effective action to terminate pirate activity, Synamedia provides a counter-piracy operations center which manages and analyzes multiple data sources to provide insights into pirate ecosystems.

The new approach, which combines innovative technology with cyber and human intelligence to zero in on streaming piracy, provides unparalleled forensic insights into pirates' minds and their business models, enabling a more powerful, targeted anti-piracy response.

*THE INCREASED LEVEL of sophistication in pirate services and resilience from criminal actors has led to an industrialization of video piracy which has established cybercriminals as not just threats, but competitors to the legitimate players.*

These intelligence-derived insights, combined with best-in-class technology and collaboration with law enforcement agencies, can provide winning strategies to take down piracy and protect legitimate service providers' revenues.

### LOOKING AHEAD

In addition to tracking an increase in users subscribing to pirates' networks that provide sports and VOD content during the pandemic, Synamedia's anti-piracy intelligence group observed that pirates are hard at work making their networks more resilient and robust to plan for the expected high demand when sports matches fully return. Registrations of piracy-related domains jumped dramatically in the first half of 2020, and pirates have added servers to support the new domains created. These new domains provide an extra layer of security for pirates, who can immediately move their service to a different domain if one of their sites is taken down.

Illicit services are reacting to past anti-piracy measures, and what worked yesterday may not work tomorrow. In a pandemic and post-pandemic world, technology-centered security models augmented by intelligence are no longer enough to stay ahead of video pirates.

As the video landscape continues to evolve at a rapid pace, and the lucrative sports industry makes its return, a new, intelligence-led approach to video security that can build a detailed picture of the pirate ecosystem and execute the most effective actions to shut down pirates' businesses is necessary to arm service providers with the tools and knowledge they need to prevent and fight the next generation of sophisticated piracy. ■



*Avigail Gutman has been a hacker-tracker since the early days of broadcast piracy to today's streaming and content piracy. She leads a global team that disrupts piracy by turning information about pirates into actionable intelligence, informing field and legal operations, and resulting in new counter measures. The anti-piracy team works alongside industry organizations, government and law enforcement agencies.*

*[agutman@synamedia.com](mailto:agutman@synamedia.com) @SynamediaVideo*





Synamedia

∞ Infinite Entertainment

## Stand out in the Age of Infinite Entertainment

With more content, more channels and more platforms than ever, you're still competing for the same thing: people's attention.

Transform your customer experience by delivering secure, high-quality entertainment on any network and any screen and get the attention you deserve.

We're Synamedia. We help companies like yours do just that.



Find out more at [synamedia.com](https://synamedia.com)