

A young boy is shown in profile, shouting or singing into a professional studio microphone. The microphone is mounted on a stand and has a pop filter. The background is a solid light blue color. The overall image has a blue tint.

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MEDIA PRODUCTION IS BEING DISRUPTED — IN MORE WAYS THAN ONE

And the reasons for this industry upheaval are different than any other business



ABSTRACT: The decentralization of content and workflows has leveled the playing field of the creative industry. This shift to the cloud has occurred in tandem with more affordable tools that are breaking open the floodgates for a new generation of creators, such as flexible SaaS cloud solutions replacing six-figure edit systems and servers; affordable high-speed internet unlocking unprecedented speeds for individuals; and modern 6K cameras debuting for less than \$3,000. The modern production industry is profoundly more accessible, diverse, and open than ever before.

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In the past decade, numerous industries have been disrupted by seismic shifts in technology. Many of the emerging titans came with a single, often simple idea: Airbnb let everyday people rent out rooms, Uber allowed drivers to connect with people needing rides, Amazon delivered goods to your door within 24 hours. The elevator pitch was usually easy to grasp.

The media and entertainment world has arguably faced greater disruption than transit, accommodation, and retail — but there is no simple elevator pitch to explain how it changed. Nor is there a single

company that can take credit for revolutionizing the industry. Given how complex the professional creative process is, it's no surprise that the media industry was disrupted by a multitude of new technologies, opportunities, and players — seemingly all at once.

Reflecting on the shifts of the last decade, three pivotal trends emerge: the rise of cloud computing, mainstream high-speed internet, and affordable high-fidelity cameras. These can be thought of in terms of software, infrastructure, and hardware, respectively. The combined result has created a

WHAT TECHNOLOGIES ARE NEEDED to facilitate today's productions? What transformations have occurred across content creation and distribution to facilitate globalization? What advanced workflows are being enabled by the cloud? And what are the data implications across this complex network of platforms?

competitive streaming industry, a massive spike in content creation and a greater emphasis on homegrown creativity and individual expression.

The rise of the cloud is perhaps the most impactful change to happen in the last decade — and it's also the slowest of these three pivotal trends, continuing today. Industrywide cloud adoption has taken two distinct shapes: asset storage and creative workflows. Cloud storage migration is an ongoing effort, as many professionals still rely on on-prem servers and mountains of hard drives to store and archive their content. Despite the obvious benefits of the cloud (security, scalability, flexibility, the ability to collaborate and share files quickly), convincing creators to change systems that seem to work is a hurdle.

From a workflow perspective, cloud computing has unlocked remote collaboration, taking the shape of software-as-a-subscription (SaaS) alternatives, including Slack, Zoom and content management systems like my company, Alteon.io. These applications form a critical bridge between users and the cloud: they are simple turnkey solutions that let content creators bypass cumbersome infrastructure setups and constant IT support. This marks a stark difference from the recent past, when servers required substantial upkeep and companies hosted their own email clients.

The result has been the decentralization of entire systems, pushing past geographic borders and physical limits. The pandemic exacerbated this shift, but the transition was inevitable. These cloud-based solutions are creating a more democratic, open, accessible world where creatives can connect and collaborate, while erstwhile maintenance costs are pushed where they belong — with the technology providers themselves.

All of this has been enabled by a pivotal shift in digital infrastructure: high-speed internet. As I write this, prewar apartments in New York City can hook up to fiber networks with gigabit speeds for less than \$100 a month. That kind of speed, at that kind of cost, was unheard of just a few years ago. While many parts of the country, and

indeed the world, still struggle with basic internet connectivity, the fact remains that a greater percentage of human beings are online — with remarkable speeds — than ever before.

From an industry perspective, the rise of high-speed internet, combined with the power of cloud computing, can redefine the entire creative process, leveling the playing field for smaller production companies and studios to compete with bigger fish. For consumers, both these technologies have given rise to the streaming era, which transformed the way we consume content—and the amount of content being created every year.

The third technological shift has been in hardware. This field has perhaps not been “disrupted” so much as it has evolved rapidly, delivering affordable 4K screens to households and 6K cameras to content creators for only a few thousand dollars. As with the shift in software, this upgrade has democratized the creative industry: movies are literally being shot on iPhones. You no longer need a \$10,000 camera and full edit bay to create an internationally distributed work of art.

It's easy to look at cloud-based workflows and fiber internet as keys to industry-wide decentralization, but hardware plays an important role as well. With affordable, professional-grade tools that address every aspect of the creative process, creators can bypass traditional avenues to get their work produced and seen. And they don't have to sacrifice camera quality for cost — unlike in the early days of digital cinematography, the results are stellar.

The key theme underscoring all these shifts is accessibility. By breaking old boundaries, inviting new creatives to share their stories, and offering a wider range of content than ever before, the industry is creating a more open, diverse and inclusive media ecosystem. Leaders in the media and entertainment space must embrace and support these changes — not just because it makes good business sense, but because it's the right thing to do, and the industry is better for it. ■



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