The Future is Automated

The landscape ahead for M+E looks uncertain. Automation can ease the journey.

WORKFLOWS AND THE CLOUD
From cloud-based productions to unprecedented storage demands, the supply chain has never been more challenging

SMART CONTENT
The questions around AI, metadata, and analytics are endless. But we do have many of the answers already

SECURITY SOLUTIONS:
Cybersecurity and content protection in M&E is always on defense. Can automation can change that?

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AUTOMATION IN UNCERTAIN TIMES

By Hollie Choi, Managing Director, EIDR

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It's an understatement to say that the entertainment industry has been having a tough time these past few months. Many of the biggest companies are dealing with layoffs, some on a major scale. By my count, in the past 18 months, the industry has seen more than 80,000 people laid off. In 2021, entertainment jobs accounted for 1.1 million employees in California, plus four million jobs in companies who directly support entertainment. That's a significant piece of the California economy. Seeing our colleagues leaving our companies can create a months-long anxiety-inducing trauma that can plague us long after those initial cuts are made.

I'm going to invoke the pandemic, even though I know it tends to result in an eye roll from many. We just passed the three-year mark of that first lockdown. I know we forget how hard those early days and weeks were. I remember having to explain to my (then six-year-old) child that I did not know when we would be able to buy groceries because the stores were empty. In the Los Angeles area, we felt like Daryl Dixon going on a supply run after the zombie apocalypse had begun. Now that our supply chains are less impacted, the uncertainty and fear from those early days have passed. We are psychologically still impacted, though. I only mention it because it's important to remember that we are all at various stages of recovery from that traumatic experience. The recent reductions in force have stirred up anxieties that were just beginning to heal.

If we find ourselves in a situation where our employer has had to make the awful decision to let workers go, there are some things we can focus on to help the company and ourselves recover more quickly. The number one focus area should

> *THE NUMBER ONE FOCUS area should be automation. Reevaluate your pipeline and ruthlessly prioritize. On top of having fewer teammates, you will likely be dealing with a shrinking budget. Make the hard decisions. What absolutely must be done to keep the lights on? Which things can you defer?*

be automation. Reevaluate your pipeline and ruthlessly prioritize. On top of having fewer teammates, you will likely be dealing with a shrinking budget. Make the hard decisions. What absolutely must be done to keep the lights on? Which things can you defer?

Next, look for ineffective or overly complex workflow processes. Are there gaps created by a newly created absence due to a layoff? Duplication of effort anywhere? Are there workflows that when mapped out, seem to fork, or fall off a cliff? Maybe there is a spreadsheet (or 10) that is kept offline? Do you have a mountain of technical debt? Are you unable to automate because of a broken process or a technological limitation?

Create a new, skinnier roadmap. Make sure you communicate these decisions and renegotiate outcomes. Look across functional silos to see where the workflows are breaking down and develop a cleaner repeatable workflow. Look at your post-cleanse

roadmap and your broken workflows and see where they intersect. Work with others to find inventive and innovative ways to solve the problems of the company. Look outside your organization and borrow ideas from others.

Make sure you involve business teams as well as technology teams in all your planning. Create unofficial cross functional teams to tackle the biggest challenges first. Don't forget to get buy-in from your leadership team. Sometimes asking for forgiveness instead of permission works best, but when things are incredibly uncertain, it's better to make your case instead of going completely rogue.

Automation saves time and money. Automation, however, is only realistic if your workflows are clean and repeatable without human interaction. It can also help to align the organization around a common metadata taxonomy. Imagine the following scenario: the title management system uses a three-digit country code, the rights management system uses a two-digit country code, the marketing systems use a territory code which is almost always the same as the other systems, except when it comes to Latin America and the Nordic countries, which it lumps together under another code which neither of the other systems uses.

One of the first steps toward automation is standardization. The Language Metadata Table (LMT) and EIDR are great places to start. Both are workflow automation tools. They provide a standard taxonomy and process flow for media and entertainment digital supply chains and distribution workflows.

It is important to take care of yourself in times like these, but all is not lost. Help is available, so don't be afraid to ask for it. ⊞